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1939 Outbreak of Second World War

English Literature

and Its Backgrounds

VOLUME TWO

English Literature

and Its Backgrounds

REVISED EDITION

VOLUME TWO: From the Forerunners of Romanticism to the Present

BERNARD D. GREBANIER, BROOKLYN COLLEGE · SAMUEL MIDDLEBROOK
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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

TEN YEARS AGO *English Literature and Its Backgrounds* appeared with a twofold aim: to provide a generous anthology of English prose and poetry and to give pertinent selections from foreign writers who had notably influenced English literature. Although the editorial differences between the original and revised editions are many, that basic aim remains unchanged. In format the new volumes bear little resemblance to the pair that appeared in 1939; but they embody—far more satisfactorily, we hope—the same teaching principles that shaped the original edition.

We have sought, above all else, to produce a stimulating anthology of English literature, and our new departures have all been directed toward that objective. In preparing this edition we have given particular attention to five aspects of the general procedure of teaching English literature to college students. Our colleagues may be interested in the principles that have guided us:

(1) Without violating the canons of long usage, we have sought freshness in the choice of the added selections. The following are some examples of works included here that are not usually found in anthologies: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue;* Book II of *Troilus and Criseyde;* Florio's *Montaigne; The Shoemaker's Holiday; Othello;* Swift's *Description of a City Shower* and the *Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms;* Paine's *The Crisis, Rights of Man,* and *Age of Reason;* Godwin's *Political Justice;* Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland; Alastor; Epipsychidion; Lamia; The Pentameron; In a Balcony; The Dream of Gerontius; The Descent of Man;* Meredith's *Idea of Comedy; Erewhon.* There is, moreover, a considerable selection of comic poetry and an unusually wide representation of twentieth-century writing.

(2) Like the original work, this revised version of *English Literature and Its Backgrounds* presents pertinent selections by Boccaccio, Petrarch, Molière, and other foreign writers who are always mentioned in survey courses but seldom read and discussed. As our colleagues have often remarked, the foreign writings in question have, thus far, been scattered through too many volumes to enable teachers to have them at hand for classroom discussion and student use. This anthology offers the student enough of the foreign backgrounds to make him aware of their existence and general character. Complying with the suggestions of many teachers, we have placed the foreign selections at the end of each volume. By this new arrangement the chronology of English literature is not interrupted. References to foreign materials appear whenever they aid in the discussion of English works. A table of contents (pp. xx-xxi) shows the interrelationships of English and foreign writers.

(3) We regard the pictures included in the period introductions as an added dimension to the standard anthology. More than two hundred halftones appear in the two volumes; many of them strike us as beautiful in their own right and all

of them as pertinent to the study of English literature. In our search for illustrations we have found many items new to us; perhaps they will be discovered with pleasure by our colleagues. Rather than portraits, we have usually chosen pictures of wider implication to illustrate the spirit of the times. But we have not excluded portraits as such; witness the rarely reproduced paintings of Milton (p. 535) and Johnson (p. 781).

(4) Our varied experiences as teachers have made us eager to place the learning aids of these volumes at the student's level. We have written our introductions and notes with his assimilative capacities in mind, and we have designed a number of additional aids. The front endpaper of each volume presents a chart of important historical dates related to the careers of seventy-three British writers; the back endpaper offers a large-scale literary map to enable the student readily to identify regions so often referred to in his study of England. Each interchapter begins with a large map or chart related to the period under discussion; where desirable—as in the introduction to Elizabethan literature—a street map of London has been added. We have included in each volume a glossary of literary terms and an up-to-date bibliography arranged by periods and writers. Prosody is discussed in the essay especially prepared for this anthology by Prof. Ralph Gordon of The City College of New York.

The date at the end of each selection is the date of first publication unless otherwise noted. With the plays, however, the date is that of the first production unless otherwise indicated.

(5) Like many of our colleagues, we favor long—and, wherever possible, complete—selections. *English Literature and Its Backgrounds* is, among other things, virtually an anthology of drama, with the unabridged texts of the following: the Brome *Abraham and Isaac; Everyman; Doctor Faustus; Othello; The Shoemaker's Holiday; Samson Agonistes; The Way of the World; The School for Scandal; In a Balcony; The Importance of Being Earnest; The Playboy of the Western World; The Corn Is Green.* Of the foreign dramatic works, *Oedipus the King* and *The Misanthrope* appear in entirety.

Among the nondramatic works presented in extensive or complete form are these: *Beowulf;* the *Prologue, The Pardoner's Tale, The Nun's Priest's Tale,* and *The Friar's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales;* Book II of *Troilus and Criseyde;* Books I and II of *Paradise Lost; Absalom and Achitophel; Mac Flecknoe; An Essay on Criticism; The Rape of the Lock; Eloisa to Abelard;* Epistle I of *An Essay on Man;* the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot;* Book I of *Gulliver's Travels; Alastor; Adonais; The Eve of St. Agnes; Lamia;* Wordsworth's *Preface; Fra Lippo Lippi; Andrea del Sarto; Saul; The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam; Ave Atque Vale; The Ballad of Reading Gaol.*

We have included complete essays by Macaulay, Newman, Thackeray, Arnold, Thomas Huxley, Pater, Stevenson, Chesterton, Beerbohm, Aldous Huxley, Strachey,

and Virginia Woolf. There are complete short stories by Conrad, Forster, Lawrence, and Katherine Mansfield.

Excisions from our earlier edition are very few. *Manfred* is now omitted, and we include only the last act of *Prometheus Unbound*. Although we have made a number of other changes in textual selections, these are relatively minor and have not, we feel confident, resulted in the neglect of any work of importance. Our guiding principle has been to add works by English writers which our colleagues have generally found to be desirable in the teaching of the survey course. Indeed, the revised edition includes, author by author, as large a selection of English literature as is to be found in any available anthology.

B. D. G.
S. M.
S. T.
W. W.

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IN THE COURSE of preparing this revised edition, we have turned to a number of specialists for criticisms and suggestions. We record our particular thanks to Mr. Stanley Burnshaw and Mr. David Klein for their creative, imaginative, and thoroughly practical assistance and advice in many matters.

We acknowledge with gratitude the careful criticism and valuable suggestions of Prof. Richard H. Fogle, of Tulane University, on the Forerunners of Romanticism; of Prof. Kenneth Curry, of the University of Tennessee, and Prof. Clarence Thorpe, of the University of Michigan, on the Romantic Period; of Prof. William Templeman, of the University of Southern California, on the Victorian Age; of Prof. A. M. Terhune, of Syracuse University, on the Later Victorians; and of Prof. Arnold Stein, of the University of Washington, on the Twentieth Century material.

The pictorial materials come from many sources—art galleries, libraries, periodicals, books, scholarly institutions, picture services, and the like. We are especially indebted to Dr. Otto Bettmann, of The Bettmann Archive, for a large number of items specified in the final paragraph of this preface. And we are particularly pleased to acknowledge the courtesies of B. T. Batsford, Ltd., of London and New York, who have enabled us to include many illustrations in Volume II of this anthology, from some of their publications, as follows: *Outline of English Architecture,* by A. H. Gardner (1947); *The Streets of London,* by Thomas Burke (3d edition, 1943); *Travel in England,* by Thomas Burke (1946); *The English Garden,* by Ralph Dutton (1938); *English Home-Life,* by Christina Hole (1947); *The English Scene,* by F. A. Walbank (1947). Teachers should find these books particularly useful in the study of English literature.

We wish to thank Mr. Edgard Cirlin, for his drawings of the maps and charts; Mrs. Consuelo U. Ford, for advice in the selection of a number of the illustrations; and Prof. Eva Williamson, of Brooklyn College, for valuable suggestions.

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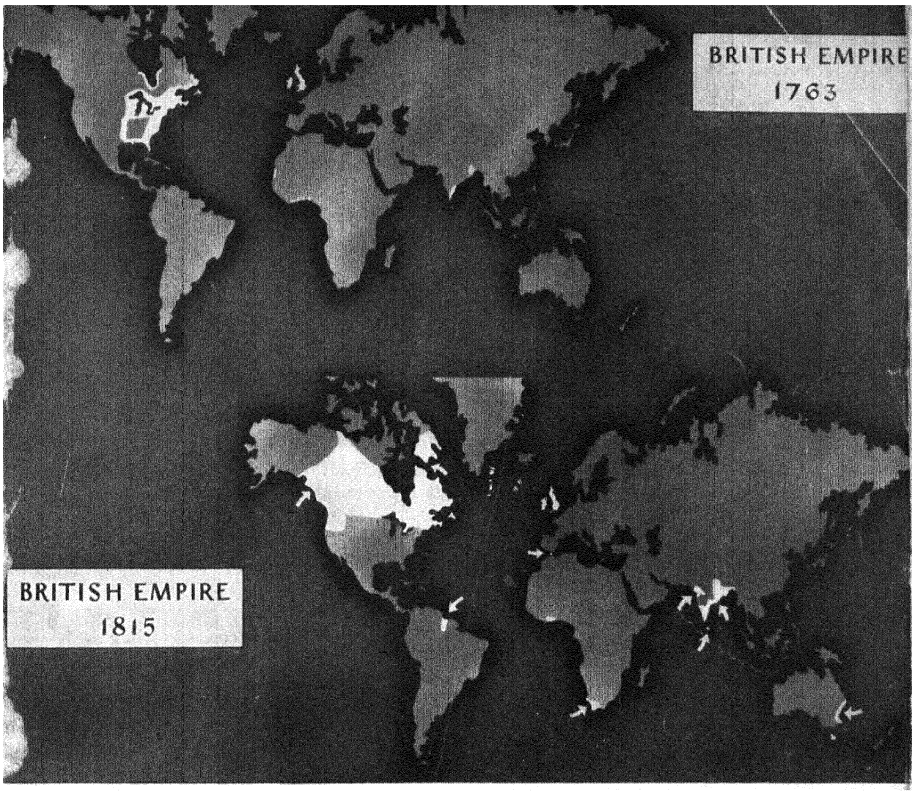
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Europe and America: an air-age projection 945
A literary map of England back endpaper



The British Empire in 1763 and in 1815. During the seventeenth century England annexed the Barbadoes, Bermuda, Nova Scotia, Honduras, Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Northwest Canada. The year in which Lyrical Ballads was published (1798) found Gibraltar, Ontario, Quebec, Pitcairn Island, New South Wales, Ceylon, Trinidad, and Malta added, and most of India was virtually under British domination. By the time Victoria came to the throne (1837), the Empire included British Guiana, the Cape of Good Hope, British Columbia, Queensland, and West and South Australia. When the First World War began, the British Empire occupied one fourth of the earth's surface.

THE FORERUNNERS OF ROMANTICISM

(1760-1798)



"Vauxhall Gardens," a lithograph by Rowlandson. Across the Thames from London, Vauxhall was a fashionable eighteenth-century resort, with its fireworks, balloons, refreshments, and music. In the early nineteenth century it became a favorite of "the fat Adonis," George IV.

Revolt or Return to Tradition?

THE PRECEDING chapter (I, pp. 761-92) sketched the neoclassic triumph in England. In the easy daylight of common sense a score of major writers had chosen to walk in the paths laid out by Dryden. On the whole they were pleasant paths, like those of an eighteenth-century garden: easy to follow, clearly marked, with agreeable vistas ingeniously disposed. Against a background of nature gracefully held in check, they displayed to best advantage the dominant ideal of the century: the reasonable man.

And of the creators of this ideal—Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele, Johnson, Boswell, Goldsmith, Burke, Sheridan, and their associates—we can say that they too were all "reasonable" men. In their several ways they conformed to the literary creed of the Augustans: they acknowledged the primacy of the intellect, venerated the Greek and Roman classics as models for imitation, set a high value on form, and demanded balance and proportion in all the arts. When they wrote poetry, they usually cast it into the mold of the heroic couplet. Their compositions in verse and prose dealt with the manners and institutions of their contemporaries. They relished satire as a corrective of the follies, enthusiasms, and abuses that man permitted himself. Hence nearly all of them were satirists.

Even in religion, a stronghold of mysticism and emotion, such writers were comfortably logical. The free-thinking Bolingbroke and the Deists,

some of whose commonplaces Pope had turned into poetry in *An Essay on Man* (see I, p. 818), subjected Christianity to the test of credibility. Most Anglican divines of the century also based their faith on logical grounds and wrote many books to prove the reasonableness of their religion.

But is man a creature satisfied with limits—even the limits set by the most persuasive, wittiest, or most rational spirit of any given age? To ask the question is to answer it. No balance achieved by any period, no form however graceful, no limits however sane can be imposed upon succeeding periods. There lived in eighteenth-century England many men who were not representative of established opinion. They rebelled against Augustan ways. Individualized, and not at first of significance, their reactions found an echo in other hearts as the century progressed toward the cataclysm of its final years, the French Revolution. To trace this rise of opposition to neoclassicism in a half dozen writers of this age is our present purpose.

One word of warning, however. Any rigid classification of authors as "neoclassic" or "preromantic" has the virtue of convenience but the vice of possible oversimplification. We are describing the rise of a tide in which there are many crosscurrents. Or—as many scholars prefer to think of the matter—we are dealing here not with a *revolt* so much as with a *return* of English literature to the warmth, the sense of mystery, the delight in wonder and luxuriance that its most typical periods have always revealed.

Shifts in Religious Emphasis

In the sphere of religion the return to emotionalism was led by John Wesley (1703-1791), the great leader of Methodism. Starting his career as an orthodox Anglican, Wesley joined a "methodist" society founded by his brother Charles at Oxford around 1729. The society was made up of some

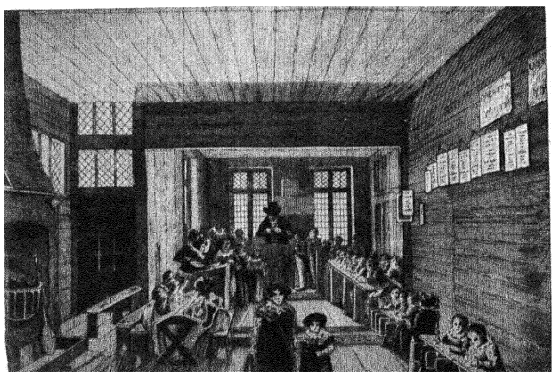


A dame school, from the painting by John Opie. Often taught by a half-educated widow, these small schools provided country children with the only formal education they were ever to receive. Many a farmer's son who took pleasure in literature owed his introduction to books to such schools as these. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

twenty young men eager to improve their souls by strict self-examination and orderly living; and the name "Methodist" was originally a bit of college slang. Sent out by a missionary society to the colony of Georgia, John Wesley was influenced during the trip by German pietists. Back in England once again, he cast off his fearful observance of rigid Anglican practices. With George Whitefield, the other great evangel of Methodism, he took to preaching in prisons, in city streets, and in open fields. Gradually a movement of tremendous scope arose. At its head were "societies" galvanized by preachers of heroic energy who fired the hearts of people hitherto untouched by the colder arguments of Anglicanism. The movement spread to America, especially along the frontiers and back country of the new settlements.

True religion, Wesley taught, comes from the heart. Desiring to awake "the life of God in the souls of men," he revived the old Puritan sense of the personal relation between God and every individual. Under his influence and that of Whitefield, a new style of evangelical preaching swept over England, often to the dismay of conservatives. For, as Professor Preserved Smith has said: "John Wesley recorded in his diary, with satisfaction, the violent effects of his sermons, effects which he esteemed as signs of God's approving intervention. During the years 1739 to 1743 he reported that his preaching had caused 234 cases of hysteria, manifested in convulsive tearings, tremblings, crying, groans, tears and occasionally much more serious symptoms. Eighty-five of his hearers, he reported, had 'dropped as dead'; two had developed psychogenic blindness, fourteen had been made temporarily insane, and nine had been driven into incurable madness."

Such excesses can be understood when viewed against a background of the sodden miseries of the poor, as revealed in the sketches of Hogarth or the pages of Swift. Wesley's preachings had the merit, among more stable followers, of affording emotional relief. Methodism touched the



The classroom of a village school around 1800. For a small sum farmers and tradesmen could educate their children at these schools in reading, spelling, a little arithmetic, and sometimes writing. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)



The Coffee Room at Lloyd's. Londoners dropped in at the coffee houses for social intercourse as well as for refreshment. The modern insurance company Lloyd's of London began as a gathering of merchants at the coffee house of Edward Lloyd.

springs of hope, for, unlike the Puritan Calvinists, Wesley felt that salvation could be found by all who sought it. The implications of Methodism were to that extent democratic, and the charities and "field work" of the movement contributed directly to the growing humanitarianism of the age. Though the Methodists finally separated from the Anglican Church, their evangelicism was taken up by those Anglicans who were dissatisfied with the rationalism of their colleagues. It was members of this group who powerfully impressed the poet William Cowper (see p. 40). In the more strictly literary field Wesley left a *Journal* that is a classic of religious experience; his brother Charles helped to make the eighteenth century the great era of English hymn writing; and the movement itself afforded George Eliot, in the next century, the background of one of her most readable novels, *Adam Bede*.

Interest in Rustic Nature

For most Augustans the town was the focus of interest, or, as Samuel Johnson once gruffly put it: "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life." In the country, by contrast, one merely existed. Yet an early writer of the century, James Thomson (see p. 17), thought otherwise and found many readers to agree with him. A native of Roxburghshire in Scotland, Thomson came to London in 1725 and in the following five years published four poems, collectively called *The Seasons*. His theme was the face of the countryside in winter, summer, autumn, and spring. To support his tastes he invoked the authority of "the best, both ancient and modern, poets. . . . The wild romantic country was their delight." Neither in subject nor in



"An Eighteenth-century Farmer at Home," a painting by Johann Zoffany of Garrick and Mrs. Cibber acting The Farmer's Return. The subject of both play and painting reflect the new interest in rural life in the latter part of the eighteenth century. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

form—blank verse—was *The Seasons* entirely a pioneering work; yet Thomson's contemporaries recognized its importance, as we still do today. With readers' attention turned toward the changing aspects and varied sounds of nature, other poets observed her more insistently. Many admirable examples of this new observation of nature can be found in Gray's *Elegy*, Collins' *Ode to Evening*, Cowper's *The Task*, and most of the poetry of Blake and Burns. In the nineteenth-century poets we look for depictions of nature as a matter of course; and the first chapter of a Scott novel inevitably shows at its height the vogue of nature description.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

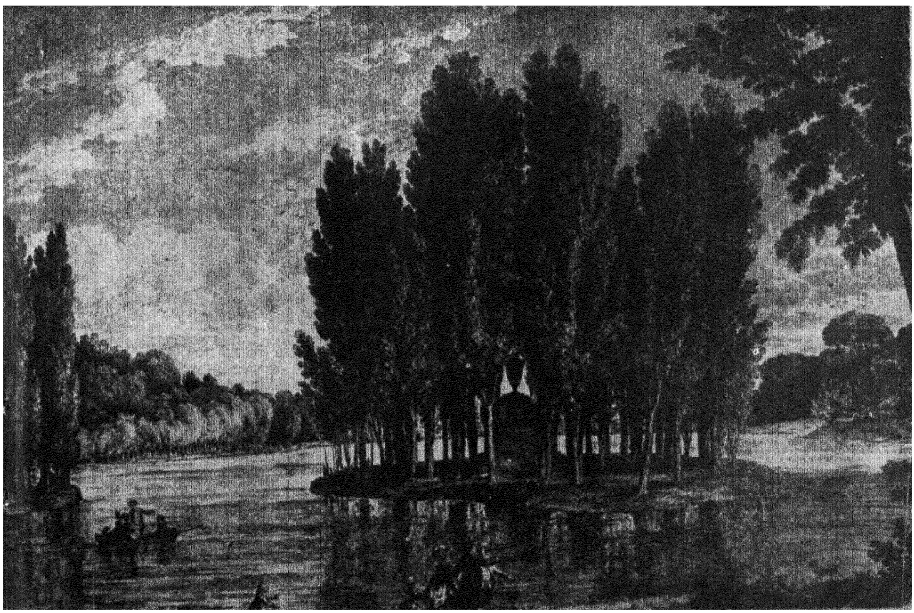
Such appreciation of natural scenery led to one chief avenue of escape from the restrictions of neoclassicism on man himself. Nature is not only to be admired as landscape and background; nature is to be revered as the great mother and teacher of us all. Of this doctrine the chief propounder in Europe was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778, see p. 1136). This passionate, complex, agonized being, "a man born without a skin," exercised an enormous force on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought. Probably no one who read his major works was ever quite the same person as before. He is the greatest prophet of modern Europe or the curse of his own and subsequent ages—depending on which critic one consults.

Rousseau took the extreme position that civilization and society had corrupted man from his original benevolence; he taught that only in a

state of nature would man ever again find happiness. In a series of doctrines which amount to what we loosely call "primitivism," Rousseau deified the "natural" man. He revered the "noble savage" and did much to evoke admiration for the simple peasant. He was equally revolted by the salons of Paris and by the formal gardens (see I, p. 779) that tortured nature into amusing shapes; in all the conventions of neoclassicism he saw only the basest slavery.

From Rousseau also flowed a current of humanitarianism that touched nearly every writer after him. William Cowper expressed an English version of this pity for unfortunates in his major work, *The Task* (see p. 42). Thomas Gray, in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (see p. 29), expressed profound sympathy for the unsung humble, just as George Crabbe (see p. 60) in a number of poems recorded their stark lives and bitter tragedies. Among such folk Wordsworth later chose to live, because there "the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity." Burns was of the "humble and rustic" folk, and he sang of no others, unless to heap scorn upon the proud and lofty.

The tomb of Rousseau. Rousseau died of apoplexy on July 2, 1778, and was buried, according to his wish, on the Isle of Poplars, near the chateau of an admirer. This gloomy, rustic tomb, in a setting dear to the "graveyard school," became a kind of international shrine for sentimentalists (see p. 11). In 1794, however, Rousseau's remains were brought to the Pantheon in Paris, where they lie, ironically enough, next to those of the arch-rationalist Voltaire.



Finally, from Rousseau's *Confessions* sprang that often morbid introspection and endless analysis of self that underlies the Romantic ego and foreshadows the vast psychological literature of our own times.

Interest in a Nonclassical Past

The monopoly of the classics of Greece and Rome as standards of excellence began to decline under the primitivism of Rousseau and other thinkers. Although Thomas Gray was a scholar of the classics—"perhaps the most learned man in Europe," said Dr. Johnson—he turned from them to treat of ancient Celtic lore in *The Bard,* as did Collins in his *Ode on the Popular Superstition in the Highlands of Scotland.* In the swelling enthusiasm for primitive and medieval remains, James Macpherson (see p. 53) achieved a triumph out of what he claimed were translations of an ancient Celtic bard, Ossian. Most readers now find the later history of *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763), the so-called epics of Ossian, to be more interesting than the stories themselves. Their success all over Europe is proverbial; Napoleon and Goethe both delighted in them. They helped



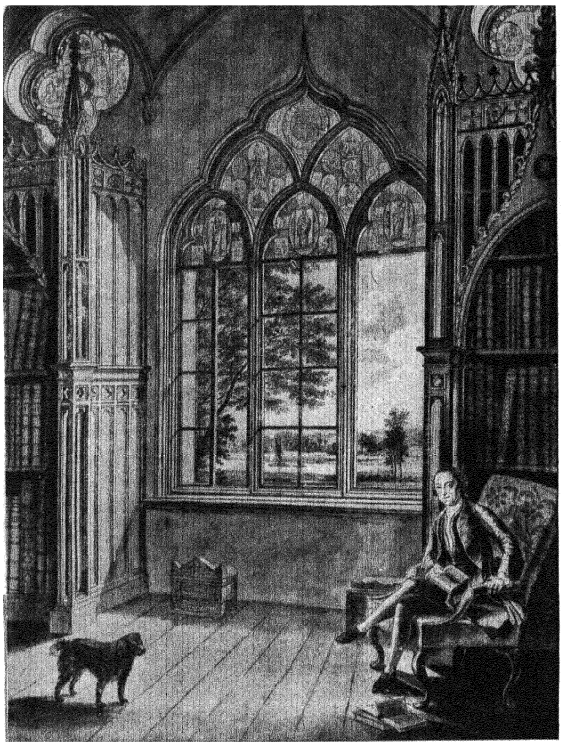
"The Rewarded Shepherd," from the painting by Boucher, is an excellent example of the spurious pastoralism favored by the neoclassicists. The fashionably clothed shepherd and shepherdess seem quite ready to take their places in the best court society.



"The Mall in St. James's Park," from the painting by Gainsborough. Despite his position beside Reynolds as one of the great classic English portrait painters, Gainsborough was something of a romantic in his landscapes. He was fond of depicting cloudy skies and a countryside untamed by man. Although the figures in his paintings never let us forget that we are in the neoclassic century, he often manages to impart a misty, dreamlike quality by his choice of colors and by his sweetly melancholy tone.

to confirm popular notions of the excellence of primitive peoples; they flattered the self-esteem of Scotland and provided for the rising sentimentalism and nature worship of the age a pedigree that stretched back to the third century. Too late to save his reputation, poor Macpherson came to realize how deft an author he had been in matching his inventions to the tastes of his generation. He could not claim the fruits of his own genius; he had to attribute them to a past that had never existed.

Toward the end of the century the term "Gothic" began to lose the flavor of contempt it had acquired in the Renaissance. Men no longer considered unclassical medieval art to be synonymous with barbarism. By 1750 Thomas Gray and Horace Walpole (see I, p. 974) were busy with their researches in the medieval, and the latter had reconstructed his "little



Horace Walpole in his library at Strawberry Hill, from a drawing by J. H. Muntz (1756). Walpole, father of the "Gothic" novel, bought his villa in 1747 and began to convert it into a Gothic castle. He installed everything that might give it a medieval air: armor, stained glass, cloisters, armorial devices. In the library the books were ranged within Gothic arches of pierced work taken from the side door of an old church; the chimney piece was a copy of a tomb in Westminster Abbey; the ceiling was covered with paintings of medieval subjects. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

Gothic castle" near Twickenham, which established a new vogue in architecture. He called the place Strawberry Hill. Here, in 1764, as a result of a dream—"very natural . . . for a head like mine filled with Gothic story"—he wrote *The Castle of Otranto*. This work set a fashion for extravagant romances laid in far-off times, of which Mrs. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) is the best-remembered practitioner. In the field of literary criticism Thomas Warton's *Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser* (1754) and Bishop Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) defended the "Gothic" qualities of earlier writers. It was Joseph, brother of Thomas Warton, who first shrewdly analyzed the neoclassical poetry of Pope and ranked it below that of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, and (unjustly) even Gray.

Of greater importance, Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore and a member of Johnson's circle, published, in 1765, his collection of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. This book restored to the public the almost forgotten treasure house of English balladry and furnished poetic stimulation to Wordsworth and Coleridge for their epochal *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The

increasing excitement over the medieval encouraged the boy wonder Thomas Chatterton (see p. 58)—his head stuffed with romantic visions and Elizabethan lyrics—to perpetrate his hoax of forging fifteenth-century manuscripts. A suicide at 17, Chatterton became in the next generation the very symbol of romantic genius born to wither before flowering.

"Graveyard" Writers

All the works just mentioned can be thought of as so many escapes from conformity with the dominant precepts of the Age of Reason. From the sharp light of Augustan criticism and social strictures, some poets escaped to solitude and pensiveness, under the influence of Milton's minor poems. *Il Penseroso,* in particular, was misread by them as a hymn to Melancholy—an emotion which the American Romantic poet Poe called "the most legitimate of all the poetical tones." A group of poets which spanned the whole neoclassic period—the so-called "graveyard school"—wrote of night, death, solitude, and the grave. Some chief works of this kind were *To a Nightingale* and *A Nocturnal Reverie,* by Anne, Countess of Winchilsea (1661-1720); *A Night Piece on Death,* by Thomas Parnell (1679-1718); *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality,* by Edward Young (1683-1765); *The Grave,* by Robert Blair (1699-1746); Collins' *Ode to Evening; Retirement,* by Thomas Warton the elder (1688-1745); *The Pleasures of Melancholy,* by Thomas Warton the younger (1728-1790); *Ode to Solitude,* by Joseph Warton (1722-1800). Once more to stress the dangers of too rigid a classification, we should note that these writings were admired by neoclassicist



The church and churchyard at Stoke Poges, believed to be the site described in Gray's Elegy. Here Gray lies buried, according to his request, beside his mother in the company of "the rude forefathers of the hamlet" where he once lived.

and romantic alike: thus Parnell was praised by Goldsmith and Johnson, Lady Winchilsea by Wordsworth himself, and the others by less distinguished critics. Gray's *Elegy*, which may strike those unfamiliar with this literature as novel, is merely a more inspired collection of the commonplaces of the whole graveyard school. And some of Macpherson's vast success is due more to the lugubriousness of his Ossianic poems than to real poetic merit.

Changes in Poetic Form

As the century advanced, the heroic couplet lost some of its prestige. Thomson wrote *The Seasons*, as did Cowper *The Task*, in Miltonic blank verse. Both Blair and Young found this form congenial to their mortuary themes, and Young in his *Conjectures on Original Composition* said that blank verse is "verse unfallen, uncursed; verse reclaimed, re-inthroned in the true language of the Gods." In the hands of Collins and Gray the ode took a new lease on life. Chatterton's forgeries recaptured the lovely lightness of the Elizabethan lyric. Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* revived the Spenserian stanza, which was to be employed for great purposes by the romantics. And Gray's *Elegy* marks a reversion to the simple quatrain.

To sum up this manifold drift from classicism, we may list as preparatory for the approaching romantic movement: (1) the reaction against the authority of Reason, (2) a revived appreciation of natural beauty, (3) interest in the country and country folk, (4) interest in the past, primitive, and medieval, (5) interest in other lands, (6) the element of melancholy, and (7) the use of verse forms other than the heroic couplet.



"The Blue Boy" by Gainsborough. It has been said that Gainsborough painted this, his most celebrated portrait, to confute Reynolds' declaration that blue could not be used successfully as the chief color in a painting. If this traditional story is true, Gainsborough was apparently instituting a slight revolt of his own against the neoclassical addiction to rules. His subject, however, seems to be the essence of eighteenth-century taste and breeding—in distinct contrast to the subjects of the painting on the next page.



Sentimental lovers of the eighteenth century. Their elaborate ecstasy over the beauty of sky and landscape might have come directly from one of the sentimental novels of the period.

Forerunners But Not True Romanticists

Despite their importance in preparing the way for the Romantic Era, these men never discovered the authentic language of the imagination. It was their mode of expression which remained closely linked with Neoclassicism.

Most of them never shook off the false elegance of diction which Pope's imitators loved so well. Indeed the sins of the Forerunners of Romanticism against naturalness of expression are far more extreme than Pope's, for the poetry of these men lacks Pope's wit and satirical play. Thomson speaks of "the plumy race" and "the bleating kind" as though it were vulgar to call birds or sheep by their rightful names. Gray's "pealing anthem" swelling "the note of praise" excludes all true religious feeling from his cathedral. It is a far cry from his farmer's wife plying "her evening care" to her actual work in the kitchen.

Even more obvious is these poets' addiction to abstractions. When Thomson speaks of Winter coming "to rule the varied year," what vision is conjured up for us? When Gray asks whether Honor's voice can "provoke the silent dust, or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death," we must answer that they can provoke or soothe nothing—for who can see or hear Honor or Flattery? Gray's *Elegy* is crowded with these pale abstractions: Ambition, Grandeur, Memory, Luxury, Pride—to mention a few. Collins would have Fancy, Friendship, Science, and Health hymn Evening—but we know that these impalpables can hymn nothing, for they have no kind of life.

Burns and Blake

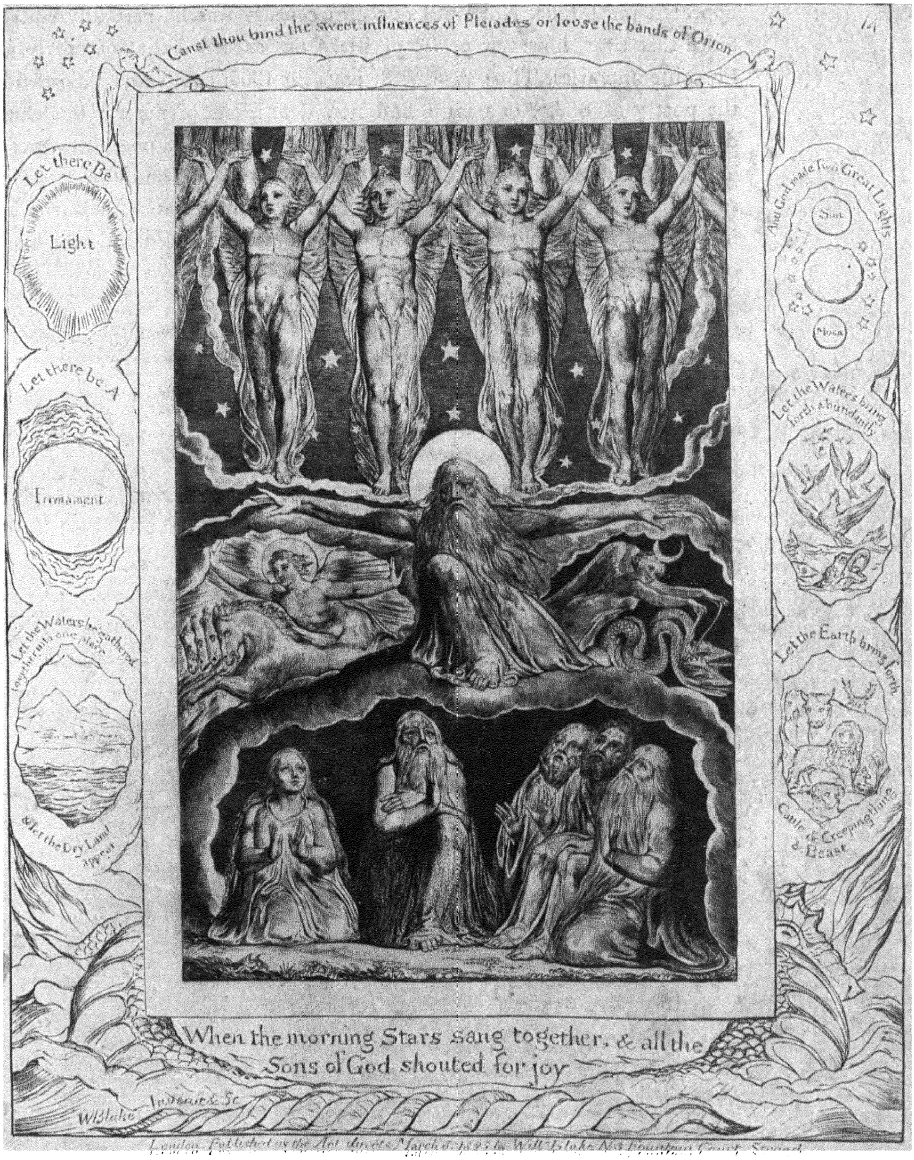
Only with Burns and Blake do we come upon the genuine romantic poet. For in every one of their predecessors some lack, aside from the matter of poetic diction, prevented true romanticism. Probably the missing quality was a strong individualism—some quality that rises above generally accepted attitudes and belongs only to the man himself. The breakdown of neoclassicism became complete when each writer, unmindful of social conformity, made his own rules for social and literary conduct. And toward the end of the century, in Burns and Blake, we find two such men.

Robert Burns (see p. 65) began to compose his songs not for a literary public but for his fellow peasants in the neighborhood. With them he shared a life of bitter poverty, where he learned laughter and love. Sudden fame attended his first book of poems; he became at once, and has remained, the chief lyric poet of Scotland. Never free to devote himself solely to poetry, he struggled, suffered, loved, and sang; and by his mid-thirties he had succumbed in the contest with life. Burns scandalized the respectable by act and word: by his love of the lasses, by his drinking, by his contempt for orthodox Calvinism, and by his enthusiasm for the French Revolution. He felt his art to be spontaneous and free: a "spark o' Nature's fire" as opposed to the rules acquired in colleges. And so it was when he employed the dialect of his native Lowlands.

The pathos of Burns's life overwhelmed John Keats, himself a victim of quick disaster. "One song of Burns's is of more worth to you than all I could think for a whole year in his native country. . . . We can see horribly clear, in the works of such a man his whole life, as if we were God's spies." It was the rarity of Burns's excellence that impressed Carlyle: "The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognized: his *sincerity*, his indisputable air of truth. . . . He does not write from hearsay but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and labored amidst that he describes . . . and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent."

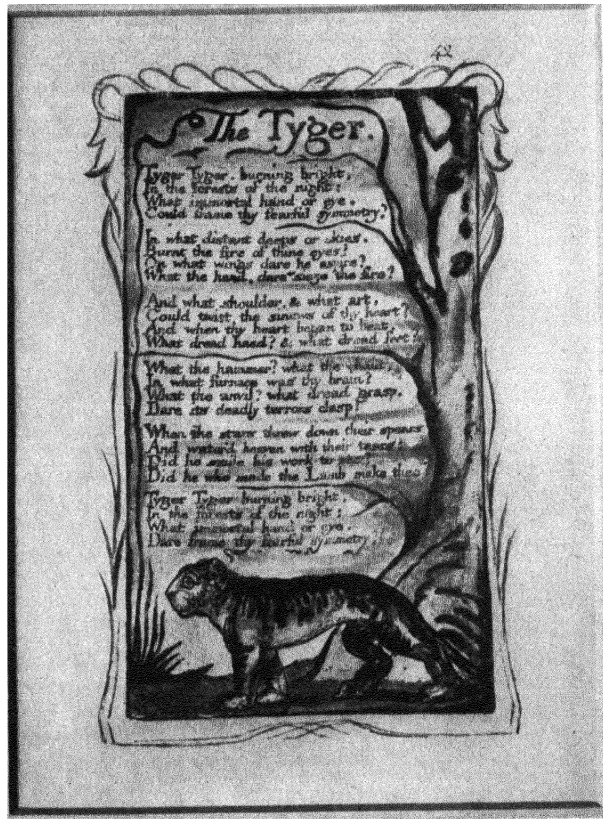
It remained for William Blake (see p. 83) to institute the profoundest of revolts against his century. A foe of compromise, moderation, and every kind of restraint (though his private life was simple and outwardly uneventful), he recommended a life of energy and excess. Nothing represents his distaste for his century more than his naming the principle of evil in his system as "Reason." To communicate a point of view that was volcanic for his times he used in his best-known poems a lyric form almost childlike in its apparent artlessness, but eloquent in its music and concentrated imagery. When one reads him, it is as though the whole line from Dryden through Pope and Johnson had never existed and he were carrying the rare Elizabethan art of song to new heights and the vision of John Donne to greater radiance.

Blake was known to his own age chiefly as an illustrator (*e.g.*, of Blair's *Grave* and Young's *Night Thoughts*, two of the most popular "graveyard" pieces of the eighteenth century, and also of the book of *Job*). Individual contemporaries such as Lamb attested to his genius, but no full-length life



One of William Blake's engravings for Job.

appeared until 1863. Not until our own century was he carefully edited. Since that time, however, praise of Blake has exceeded that of nearly all his contemporaries. Thus, Arthur Symons, in 1909, could say: "To define the poetry of Blake, one must find new definitions of poetry; but these definitions once found, he will seem the only poet who is a poet in essence." The longer mystical works of Blake are admittedly beyond the scope of such a volume as this, but in his shorter lyrics he provides, with Burns, an incomparable introduction to the English Romantic movement, which his own lifetime almost spanned.



"The Tyger," from the original edition of Blake's Songs of Experience.

James Thomson

(1700-1748)

The pages of no English poet are more uneven than those of James Thomson. He was something of a phenomenon in his time—the man who rediscovered a feeling for natural beauty—but he had the eighteenth-century faith in British commerce and politics, the complacent philosophy of the Augustans, and a strong neoclassical love of the didactic. His father was a Presbyterian minister in Roxburghshire, Scotland, at Ednam, where the poet was born. Soon the family moved to another parish of the same county. His ramblings through the untamed border country filled the boy's mind with those impressions he was to record in *The Seasons*. With the intention of entering the Church, he studied at Edinburgh University, but gave up his plans and came to London (1725) to try his fortunes there as an author. The appearance of his *Winter* (1726) established him at once as a prominent poet. "What are we commonly entertained with . . . save forced, unaffecting fancies; little, glittering prettinesses?" he protested in the second edition which was soon called for. "I know no subject more elevating, more amusing, more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm . . . than the works of nature. Where can we meet such variety, such beauty, such magnificence? All that enlarges, and transports, the soul? . . . In every dress nature is greatly charming! whether she puts on the crimson robes of the morning! the strong effulgence of noon! the sober suit of the evening! or the deep sables of blackness and tempest!" Though Lady Winchilsea (1661-1720) and Thomas Parnell (1679-1718) had written stray pieces with subdued pictures of natural scenery, Thomson was the first poet of the century to step boldly forth as an advocate of nature poetry. There was something fresh and yet much that was familiar in the work of this young man, and the Augustans, Pope among them, were charmed.

The success of *Winter* encouraged Thomson to add to it *Summer* (1727) and *Spring* (1728); and when he had concluded *Autumn* he issued the four poems as *The Seasons* (1730). Thomson was an amiable, easy-going man who knew how to avoid quarrels and was assiduous in cultivating the acquaintance of his patrons for the small sinecures they granted him. He was a social being, his ideas were conventional enough, and he was readily accepted into the company of the Augustan wits. His post as a tutor to young Talbot enabled him to travel for a while on the Continent (1730-31). A long, barren, and tedious panegyric in blank verse, *Liberty* (1736), which varies long stretches of platitudinizing with some vivid descriptions, is the fruit of his travels. He wrote a number of undistinguished tragedies much to neoclassical taste, of which the best known, because of Fielding's parody of it, is *Sophonisba* (1730). His *Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (1727), though no longer read, is interesting for his appreciation of the value of science to the poetic imagination. Most Englishmen know Thomson best by his *Rule, Britannia!* (1740). Thomson spent a great deal of his abundant leisure in the company of his aristocratic friends; his last years were devoted to lazy retirement at Richmond, where he lingered over his last work, *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), almost to the time of his death. Of his writings only the first, *The Seasons*, and the last, *The Castle of Indolence*, have importance to us.

From *The Seasons*

The Seasons is the first English poem of any pretensions to make its subject the description of nature. At his best Thomson is excellent as a painter of landscape and the changing aspects of weather; in such passages his command over concrete image is a forecast of the romantic poets of a later time. His preference for the blank verse of Milton as against the heroic couplet of the Augustans is the first notable departure from that form; and he exhibits greater skill in fluency and melody than any early imitator of Milton. *The Seasons,* therefore, forms a significant link with Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (see p. 153).But the influence of Milton upon Thomson was not an unmitigated blessing. Latinisms which suited the temperament of Milton and the subject of *Paradise Lost* are curiously misplaced in the depiction of a landscape. Such phrases as "ruminate in the contiguous shade," "on the passive main descends the ethereal force," "the conscious heifer," "the fond sequacious herd"—seem ludicrous today. Nor are the baleful influences of Pope's *Homer* absent in many a periphrasis: "plumy race," "brown inhabitants," "bleating kind," etc. Moreover, *The Seasons* is interlarded with many digressions (as in Pope's *Windsor Forest*) of a panegyric and pseudo-philosophical character. With all these faults, Thomson achieves a new and stimulating poetry when he is content to describe nature. It is as a painter of varied Nature that he is justly admired as a pioneer. In the feeling of inspiration which he found in woods and pastures, Thomson is Wordsworth's most important forerunner.

From *Winter*

See, Winter comes, to rule the varied year,
Sullen and sad, with all his rising train—
Vapors, and clouds, and storms. Be these my theme,
These, that exalt the soul to solemn thought,
And heavenly musing. Welcome, kindred glooms!
Congenial horrors, hail! with frequent foot,
Pleased have I, in my cheerful morn of life,
When nursed by careless solitude I lived,
And sung of Nature with unceasing joy,
Pleased have I wandered through your rough domain;
Trod the pure virgin-snows, myself as pure;
Heard the winds roar, and the big torrent burst;
Or seen the deep-fermenting tempest brewed,
In the grim evening-sky. Thus passed the time,
Till through the lucid chambers of the south
Looked out the joyous Spring, looked out, and smiled.

To thee, the patron of this first essay,
The Muse, O Wilmington![1] renews her song.
Since has she rounded the revolving year:
Skimmed the gay Spring; on eagle-pinions borne,
Attempted through the Summer-blaze to rise;
Then swept o'er Autumn with the shadowy gale;
And now among the Wintry clouds again,
Rolled in the doubling storm, she tries to soar;
To swell her note with all the rushing winds;
To suit her sounding cadence to the floods;
As is her theme, her numbers wildly great:
Thrice happy, could she fill thy judging ear
With bold description, and with manly thought.
Nor art thou skilled in awful schemes alone,
And how to make a mighty people thrive;
But equal goodness, sound integrity,
A firm, unshaken, uncorrupted soul
Amid a sliding age, and burning strong,
Not vainly blazing, for thy country's weal,
A steady spirit, regularly free—
These, each exalting each, the statesman's light
Into the patriot; these, the public hope
And eye to thee converting, bid the Muse
Record what envy dares not flattery call.

Now when the cheerless empire of the sky
To Capricorn the Centaur-Archer yields,
And fierce Aquarius[2] stains the inverted year—

[1] Sir Spencer Compton (1673?-1743), Speaker, of the House of Commons and created Earl of Wilmington in 1730, to whom the poem is dedicated.

[2] the three signs of the Zodiac mentioned all come in the winter months.

Hung o'er the farthest verge of heaven, the sun
Scarce spreads o'er ether the dejected day.
Faint are his gleams, and ineffectual shoot
His struggling rays in horizontal lines
Through the thick air, as, clothed in cloudy storm,
Weak, wan, and broad, he skirts the southern sky,
And, soon descending, to the long dark night,
Wide-shading all, the prostrate world resigns.
Nor is the night unwished; while vital heat,
Light, life and joy the dubious day forsake.
Meantime, in sable cincture, shadows vast,
Deep tinged and damp, and congregated clouds,
And all the vapory turbulence of heaven,
Involve the face of things. Thus Winter falls,
A heavy gloom oppressive o'er the world,
Through Nature shedding influence malign,
And rouses up the seeds of dark disease.
The soul of man dies in him, loathing life,
And black with more than melancholy views.
The cattle droop; and o'er the furrowed land,
Fresh from the plough, the dun discolored flocks,
Untended spreading, crop the wholesome root.
Along the woods, along the moorish fens,
Sighs the sad genius of the coming storm;
And up among the loose disjointed cliffs,
And fractured mountains wild, the brawling brook,
And cave, presageful, send a hollow moan,
Resounding long in listening fancy's ear.
Then comes the father of the tempest forth,
Wrapt in black glooms. First, joyless rains obscure
Drive through the mingling skies with vapor foul,
Dash on the mountain's brow, and shake the woods,
That grumbling wave below. The unsightly plain
Lies a brown deluge; as the low-bent clouds
Pour flood on flood, yet unexhausted still
Combine, and deepening into night, shut up
The day's fair face. The wanderers of heaven,
Each to his home, retire, save those that love
To take their pastime in the troubled air,
Or skimming flutter round the dimply pool.
The cattle from the untasted fields return
And ask, with meaning low, their wonted stalls,
Or ruminate in the contiguous shade.
Thither the household feathery people crowd—
The crested cock with all his female train,
Pensive and dripping; while the cottage-hind
Hangs o'er the enlivening blaze, and taleful there
Recounts his simple frolic. Much he talks,
And much he laughs, nor recks the storm that blows
Without, and rattles on his humble roof.
Wide o'er the brim, with many a torrent swelled,
And the mixed ruin of its banks o'erspread,
At last the roused-up river pours along:
Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes,
From the rude mountain and the mossy wild,
Tumbling through rocks abrupt, and sounding far;
Then o'er the sanded valley floating spreads,
Calm, sluggish, silent; till again, constrained
Between two meeting hills, it bursts away,
Where rocks and woods o'erhang the turbid stream;
There gathering triple force, rapid and deep,
It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through.
Nature! great parent! whose unceasing hand
Rolls round the seasons of the changeful year,
How mighty, how majestic, are thy works!
With what a pleasing dread they swell the soul,
That sees astonished! and astonished sings!
Ye too, ye winds! that now begin to blow
With boisterous sweep, I raise my voice to you.
Where are your stores, ye powerful beings! say,
Where your aerial magazines reserved,
To swell the brooding terrors of the storm?
In what far-distant region of the sky,
Hushed in deep silence, sleep ye when 'tis calm?
When from the pallid sky the Sun descends,
With many a spot, that o'er his glaring orb
Uncertain wanders, stained; red fiery streaks
Begin to flush around. The reeling clouds
Stagger with dizzy poise, as doubting yet
Which master to obey; while, rising slow,
Blank in the leaden-colored east, the moon
Wears a wan circle round her blunted horns.
Seen through the turbid, fluctuating air,
The stars obtuse emit a shivering ray;
Or frequent seem to shoot athwart the gloom,
And long behind them trail the whitening blaze.
Snatched in short eddies, plays the withered leaf;
And on the flood the dancing feather floats.
With broadened nostrils to the sky upturned,
The conscious heifer snuffs the stormy gale.
E'en as the matron, at her nightly task,
With pensive labor draws the flaxen thread,
The wasted taper and the crackling flame
Foretell the blast. But chief the plumy race,
The tenants of the sky, its changes speak.
Retiring from the downs, where all day long
They picked their scanty fare, a blackening train
Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight,
And seek the closing shelter of the grove;
Assiduous, in his bower, the wailing owl

Plies his sad song. The cormorant on high
Wheels from the deep, and screams along the land.
Loud shrieks the soaring hern; and with wild wing
The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky clouds.
Ocean, unequal pressed, with broken tide
And blind commotion heaves; while from the shore,
Eat into caverns by the restless wave,
And forest-rustling mountains, comes a voice
That, solemn sounding, bids the world prepare.
Then issues forth the storm with sudden burst,
And hurls the whole precipitated air
Down in a torrent. On the passive main
Descends the ethereal force, and with strong gust
Turns from its bottom the discolored deep.
Through the black night that sits immense around,
Lashed into foam, the fierce conflicting brine
Seems o'er a thousand raging waves to burn:
Meantime the mountain-billows, to the clouds
In dreadful tumult swelled, surge above surge,
Burst into chaos with tremendous roar,
And anchored navies from their stations drive,
Wild as the winds, across the howling waste
Of mighty waters: now the inflated wave
Straining they scale, and now impetuous shoot
Into the secret chambers of the deep,
The wintry Baltic thundering o'er their head.
Emerging thence again, before the breath
Of full-exerted heaven they wing their course,
And dart on distant coasts—if some sharp rock,
Or shoal insidious, break not their career,
And in loose fragments fling them floating round.
Nor less at hand the loosened tempest reigns:
The mountain thunders; and its sturdy sons
Stoop to the bottom of the rocks they shade.
Lone on the midnight steep, and all aghast,
The dark wayfaring stranger breathless toils,
And, often falling, climbs against the blast.
Low waves the rooted forest, vexed, and sheds
What of its tarnished honors yet remain—
Dashed down and scattered, by the tearing wind's
Assiduous fury, its gigantic limbs.
Thus, struggling through the dissipated grove,
The whirling tempest raves along the plain,
And, on the cottage thatched or lordly roof
Keen-fastening, shakes them to the solid base.
Sleep, frighted, flies; and round the rocking dome,
For entrance eager, howls the savage blast.
Then too, they say, through all the burdened air
Long groans are heard, shrill sounds, and distant sighs,
That, uttered by the demon of the night,
Warn the devoted wretch of woe and death.
Huge uproar lords it wide. The clouds, commixed
With stars swift-gliding, sweep along the sky.
All nature reels: till nature's King, who oft
Amid tempestuous darkness dwells alone,
And on the wings of the careering wind
Walks dreadfully serene, commands a calm;
Then straight air, sea, and earth are hushed at once.
As yet 'tis midnight deep. The weary clouds,
Slow-meeting, mingle into solid gloom.
Now, while the drowsy world lies lost in sleep,
Let me associate with the serious Night
And Contemplation, her sedate compeer;
Let me shake off the intrusive cares of day,
And lay the meddling senses all aside.
Where now, ye lying vanities of life!
Ye ever-tempting, ever-cheating train!
Where are you now? and what is your amount,
Vexation, disappointment, and remorse.
Sad, sickening thought! and yet deluded man,
A scene of crude disjointed visions past,
And broken slumbers, rises still resolved,
With new-flushed hopes, to run the giddy round
Father of light and life! thou Good Supreme!
O teach me what is good! teach me thyself!
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
From every low pursuit; and feed my soul
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure—
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss!
The keener tempests come: and fuming dun
From all the livid east, or piercing north,
Thick clouds ascend—in whose capacious womb
A vapory deluge lies, to snow congealed.
Heavy they roll their fleecy world along;
And the sky saddens with the gathered storm.
Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin wavering; till at last the flakes
Fall broad, and wide, and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. The cherished fields
Put on their winter-robe of purest white.
'Tis brightness all; save where the new snow melt
Along the mazy current. Low, the woods
Bow their hoar head; and ere the languid sun
Faint from the west emits his evening ray,
Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill,
Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man. Drooping, the laborer-ox
Stands covered o'er with snow, and then demands
The fruit of all his toil. The fowls of heaven,
Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around

The winnowing store,[3] and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them. One alone,
The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,
Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
His annual visit. Half-afraid, he first
Against the window beats; then, brisk, alights
On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor,
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is—
Till, more familiar grown, the table-crumbs
Attract his slender feet. The foodless wilds
Pour forth their brown inhabitants. The hare,
Though timorous of heart, and hard beset
By death in various forms, dark snares, and dogs,
And more unpitying men, the garden seeks,
Urged on by fearless want. The bleating kind
Eye the bleak heaven, and next the glistening earth
With looks of dumb despair; then, sad dispersed,
Dig for the withered herb through heaps of snow.
Now, shepherds, to your helpless charge be kind:
Baffle the raging year, and fill their pens
With food at will; lodge them below the storm,
And watch them strict; for from the bellowing east,
In this dire season, oft the whirlwind's wing
Sweeps up the burden of whole wintry plains
At one wide waft, and o'er the hapless flocks,
Hid in the hollow of two neighboring hills,
The billowy tempest whelms; till, upward urged,
The valley to a shining mountain swells,
Tipped with a wreath high-curling in the sky.
As thus the snows arise, and, foul and fierce,
All Winter drives along the darkened air,
In his own loose-revolving fields, the swain
Disastered stands: sees other hills ascend,
Of unknown joyless brow; and other scenes,
Of horrid prospect, shag the trackless plain:
Nor finds the river nor the forest, hid
Beneath the formless wild: but wanders on
From hill to dale, still more and more astray—
Impatient flouncing through the drifted heaps,
Stung with the thoughts of home; the thoughts of home
Rush on his nerves, and call their vigor forth
In many a vain attempt. How sinks his soul!
What black despair, what horror fills his heart,
When, for the dusky spot which fancy feigned
His tufted cottage rising through the snow,
He meets the roughness of the middle waste,
Far from the track and blest abode of man;
While round him night resistless closes fast,
And every tempest, howling o'er his head,
Renders the savage wilderness more wild.
Then throng the busy shapes into his mind,
Of covered pits, unfathomably deep,
A dire descent! beyond the power of frost;
Of faithless bogs; of precipices huge,
Smoothed up with snow; and, what is land, unknown,
What water, of the still unfrozen spring,
In the loose marsh or solitary lake,
Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils.
These check his fearful steps; and down he sinks
Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,
Thinking o'er all the bitterness of death,
Mixed with the tender anguish nature shoots
Through the wrung bosom of the dying man—
His wife, his children, and his friends unseen.
In vain for him the officious wife prepares
The fire fair-blazing, and the vestment warm;
In vain his little children, peeping out
Into the mingling storm, demand their sire,
With tears of artless innocence. Alas!
Nor wife, nor children, more shall he behold;
Nor friends, nor sacred home. On every nerve
The deadly Winter seizes, shuts up sense,
And, o'er his inmost vitals creeping cold,
Lays him along the snows, a stiffened corse!
Stretched out and bleaching in the northern blast

(1726, 1746)

[3] grain.

From *Summer*

Or rushing thence, in one diffusive band,
They drive the troubled flocks, by many a dog
Compelled, to where the mazy-running brook
Forms a deep pool; this bank abrupt and high,
And that, fair-spreading in a pebbled shore.
Urged to the giddy brink, much is the toil,
The clamor much, of men, and boys, and dogs,
Ere the soft, fearful people to the flood
Commit their woolly sides. And oft the swain,
On some impatient seizing, hurls them in:
Emboldened then, nor hesitating more,
Fast, fast, they plunge amid the flashing wave,
And panting labor to the farther shore.

Repeated this, till deep the well-washed fleece
Has drunk the flood, and from his lively haunt
The trout is banished by the sordid stream,
Heavy and dripping, to the breezy brow
Slow move the harmless race; where, as they spread
Their swelling treasures to the sunny ray,
Inly disturbed, and wondering what this wild
Outrageous tumult means, their loud complaints
The country fill—and, tossed from rock to rock,
Incessant bleatings run around the hills.
At last, of snowy white, the gathered flocks
Are in the wattled pen innumerous pressed,
Head above head; and ranged in lusty rows
The shepherds sit, and whet the sounding shears.
The housewife waits to roll her fleecy stores,
With all her gay-drest maids attending round.
One, chief, in gracious dignity enthroned,
Shines o'er the rest, the pastoral queen, and rays
Her smiles, sweet-beaming, on her shepherd-king;
While the glad circle round them yield their souls
To festive mirth, and wit that knows no gall.
Meantime, their joyous task goes on apace:
Some mingling stir the melted tar, and some,
Deep on the new-shorn vagrant's heaving side,
To stamp his master's cypher ready stand;
Others the unwilling wether drag along;
And, glorying in his might, the sturdy boy
Holds by the twisted horns the indignant ram.
Behold where bound, and of its robe bereft,
By needy man, that all-depending lord,
How meek, how patient, the mild creature lies!
What softness in its melancholy face,
What dumb complaining innocence appears!
Fear not, ye gentle tribes, 'tis not the knife
Of horrid slaughter that is o'er you waved;
No, 'tis the tender swain's well-guided shears,
Who having now, to pay his annual care,
Borrowed your fleece, to you a cumbrous load,
Will send you bounding to your hills again

(1730, 1746)

Rule, Britannia!

This patriotic song, generally regarded as the British National Anthem, appeared in the masque *Alfred* (1740), which Thomson wrote at the request of the Prince of Wales and in collaboration with the Scottish poet David Mallet (1705?-65). Although the authorship has been disputed, it is now generally supposed that the patriotic poet of *The Seasons* and *Liberty* deserves the honor.

When Britain first, at Heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter of the land,
And guardian angels sung this strain—
"Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves."

The nations, not so blessed as thee,
Must in their turns to tyrants fall;
While thou shalt flourish great and free,
The dread and envy of them all.
"Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves."

Still more majestic shalt thou rise,
More dreadful from each foreign stroke;
As the loud blast that tears the skies
Serves but to root thy native oak.
"Rule," *etc.*

Thee haughty tyrants ne'er shall tame;
All their attempts to bend thee down
Will but arouse thy generous flame,
But work their woe and thy renown.
"Rule," *etc.*

To thee belongs the rural reign;
Thy cities shall with commerce shine;
All thine shall be the subject main,
And every shore it circles thine.
"Rule," *etc.*

The Muses, still with freedom found,
Shall to thy happy coast repair;
Blessed isle! with matchless beauty crowned,
And manly hearts to guard the fair.
"Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves."

(1740)

From *The Castle of Indolence*

Of the eighteenth-century poets who had the courage to abandon classical models and the well-worn track of the heroic couplet, more than one turned back to Spenser and the intricate stanza of *The Faerie Queene*. In the "advertisement" to *The Castle of Indolence*, Thomson frankly admitted his indebtedness:

> This poem being writ in the manner of Spenser, the obsolete words and a simplicity of diction in some of the lines, which borders on the ludicrous, were necessary to make the imitation more perfect. And the style of that admirable poet, as well as the measure in which he wrote, are, as it were, appropriated by custom to all allegorical poems writ in our language. . . .

The poem is an allegory in two cantos and 158 Spenserian stanzas. In Canto I, the poet describes the castle of the Wizard Indolence, a cross section of its torpid inmates—including "a bard [named Thomson] more fat than bard beseems"—and their degeneration and consignment to the dungeon. In the heavier moralizing of the second canto he depicts the overthrow of the wizard by the Knight of Arts and Industry.

On its appearance in 1748 Gray wrote to a friend: "There is a poem by Thomson, 'The Castle of Indolence,' with some good stanzas." Subsequent critics have agreed in isolating the purple passages, arguing that, taken as a whole, the poem is a rather confusing mixture of elfish humor and political and moral philosophy, of fresh images and the stale clichés of eighteenth-century poetic diction. By general agreement the opening description strikes a high note which Thomson could not sustain. Johnson praised it highly as "a scene of lazy luxury that fills the imagination." The passage suggests inevitable comparison with Spenser's sensual Bower of Bliss (*Faerie Queene*, II, 12).

The castle hight[1] *of Indolence,*
And its false luxury;
Where for a little time, alas!
We lived right jollily.

1

O mortal man! who livest here by toil,
Do not complain of this thy hard estate;
That like an emmet[2] thou must ever moil,
Is a sad sentence of an ancient date;
And, certes, there is for it reason great;
For, though sometimes it makes thee weep and wail,
And curse thy star, and early drudge and late,
Withouten that would come an heavier bale,
Loose life, unruly passions, and diseases pale.

2

In lowly dale, fast by a river's side,
With woody hill o'er hill encompassed round,
A most enchanting wizard did abide,
Than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found
It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground;
And there a season atween June and May,
Half prankt[3] with spring, with summer half embrowned,
A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,
No living wight could work, ne[4] caréd even for play.

3

Was nought around but images of rest:
Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between;
And flowery beds that slumbrous influence kest
From poppies breathed; and beds of pleasant green,
Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime unnumbered glittering streamlets played,
And hurléd everywhere their waters sheen;
That, as they bickered through the sunny glade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

[1] called.
[2] ant.
[3] dressed.
[4] not.

4

Joined to the prattle of the purling rills,
Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,
And flocks loud-bleating from the distant hills,
And vacant shepherds piping in the dale:
And now and then sweet Philomel[5] would wail,
Or stock-doves plain amid the forest deep,
That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale;
And still a coil[6] the grasshopper did keep;
Yet all these sounds yblent inclinéd all to sleep.

5

Full in the passage of the vale, above,
A sable, silent, solemn forest stood;
Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move,
As Idless fancied in her dreaming mood;
And up the hills, on either side, a wood
Of blackening pines, ay waving to and fro,
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood;
And where this valley winded out, below,
The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

6

A pleasing land of drowsyhed it was:
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
Forever flushing round a summer sky;
There eke[7] the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures, always hovered nigh;
But whate'er smacked of noyance, or unrest,
Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest.

7

The landskip such, inspiring perfect ease,
Where Indolence (for so the wizard hight)
Close hid his castle mid embowering trees,
That half shut out the beams of Phoebus bright,
And made a kind of checkered day and night;
Meanwhile, unceasing at the massy gate,
Beneath a spacious palm, the wicked wight
Was placed; and to his lute, of cruel fate,
And labor harsh, complained, lamenting man's estate.

[5] the nightingale.
[6] to-do.
[7] too

8

Thither continual pilgrims crowded still,
From all the roads of earth that pass there by;
For, as they chaunced to breathe on neighboring hill,
The freshness of this valley smote their eye,
And drew them ever and anon more nigh;
'Til clustering round th'enchanter false they hung
Ymolten with his syren melody;
While o'er th'enfeebling lute his hand he flung,
And to the trembling chords these tempting verses sung:

9

"Behold! ye pilgrims of this earth, behold!
See all but man with unearned pleasure g
See her bright robes the butterfly unfold,
Broke from her wintry tomb in prime of Ma
What youthful bride can equal her array?
Who can with her for easy pleasure vie?
From mead to mead with gentle wing to stray
From flower to flower on balmy gales to fly,
Is all she has to do beneath the radiant sky.

10

"Behold the merry minstrels of the morn,
The swarming songsters of the careless grove,
Ten thousand throats! that, from the flowering thorn,
Hymn their good God, and carol sweet of love,
Such grateful kindly raptures them emove;
They neither plow, nor sow; ne, fit for flail,
E'er to the barn the nodding sheaves they drove
Yet theirs each harvest dancing in the gale,
Whatever crowns the hill, or smiles along the vale.

11

"Outcast of Nature, man! the wretched thrall
Of bitter-dropping sweat, of sweltry pain,
Of cares that eat away thy heart with gall,
And of the vices, an inhuman train,
That all proceed from savage thirst of gain:
For when hard-hearted interest first began
To poison earth, Astraea[8] left the plain;
Guile, violence, and murder seized on man,
And, for soft milky streams, with blood the river ran.

[8] goddess of Justice

III. 1

Far from the sun and summer-gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's darling laid,
What time, where lucid Avon[20] strayed,
To him the mighty Mother did unveil
Her awful face. The dauntless child
Stretched forth his little arms, and smiled.
This pencil take (she said) whose colors clear
Richly paint the vernal year;
Thine too these golden keys, immortal boy!
This can unlock the gates of Joy,
Of Horror that, and thrilling Fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears.

III. 2

Nor second he,[21] that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of Ecstasy,
The secrets of the Abyss to spy.
He passed the flaming bounds of Place and Time;
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble, while they gaze,
He saw; but, blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.[22]

Behold, where Dryden's less presumptuous car
Wide o'er the fields of Glory bear
Two coursers of ethereal race,
With necks in thunder clothed, and long-resounding pace.

III. 3

Hark, how the hands the lyre explore!
Bright-eyed Fancy hovering o'er
Scattered from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.
But, ah! 'tis heard no more—
Oh! Lyre divine, what daring spirit
Wakes thee now? Though he inherit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
That the Theban Eagle[23] bear
Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air;
Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,
With orient hues unborrowed of the sun;
Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
Beneath the good how far—but far above the great.

(1757)

The Bard

The Bard is founded on the tradition that Edward I, after completing the conquest of Wales in 1282, ordered that all the bards captured be put to death

I. 1

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Tho' fann'd by Conquest's crimson wing
They mock the air with idle state.
Helm, nor Hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor even thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's[1] curse, from Cambria's tears!"
Such were the sounds, that o'er the crested pride
Of the first Edward[2] scatter'd wild dismay,
As down the steep of Snowdon's[3] shaggy side
He wound with toilsome march his long array.
Stout Glo'ster stood aghast in speechless trance:
To arms! cried Mortimer,[4] and couch'd his quiv'ring lance.

[20] here, the river in Stratford, Shakespeare's birthplace.
[21] Milton.
[22] Milton's blindness.
[23] Pindar
[1] the old name for Wales.
[2] Edward I of England, conqueror of Wales.
[3] the highest mountain in Wales.
[4] Gloucester and Mortimer were leaders in Edward's army.

I. 2

On a rock, whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's[5] foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the Poet stood;
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air)
And with a Master's hand, and Prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre:
"Hark, how each giant-oak, and desert cave,
Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!
O'er thee, O King! their hundred arms they wave,
Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;
Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
To high-born Hoel's harp,[6] or soft Llewellyn's lay.

I. 3

"Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,
That hush'd the stormy main;
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred, whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon[7] bow his cloud-topp'd head.
On dreary Arvon's shore[8] they lie,
Smear'd with gore, and ghastly pale:
Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
The famish'd Eagle screams, and passes by.
Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries—
No more I weep. They do not sleep.
On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,
I see them sit, they linger yet,
Avengers of their native land:
With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line:—

[5] a river in northern Wales.
[6] There follows here a list of real or imagined Welsh bards.
[7] a mountain in Wales
[8] the Welsh shore opposite the island of Anglesey.

II. 1

"'Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
The winding sheet of Edward's race.
Give ample room, and verge enough
The characters of hell to trace.
Mark the year, and mark the night,
When Severn shall re-echo with affright
The shrieks of death, thro' Berkeley's roofs that ring,
Shrieks of an agonising King![9]
She-Wolf of France,[10] with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled Mate,
From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs
The scourge of Heav'n. What Terrors round him wait!
Amazement in his van, with Flight combined,
And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

II. 2

"'Mighty Victor, mighty Lord,[11]
Low on his funeral couch he lies!
No pitying heart, no eye, afford
A tear to grace his obsequies.
Is the sable Warrior fled?[12]
Thy son is gone. He rests among the Dead.
The Swarm, that in thy noon-tide beam were born?
Gone to salute the rising Morn.
Fair laughs the Morn, and soft the Zephyr blows,[13]
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
In gallant trim the gilded Vessel goes;
Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping Whirlwind's sway,
That, hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

II. 3

"'Fill high the sparkling bowl,
The rich repast prepare;

[9] Edward II, who reigned from 1307 to 1327, was murdered in Berkeley Castle
[10] Isabella, wife of Edward II, who was suspected of complicity in his death
[11] Edward III, who reigned from 1327 to 1377.
[12] the Black Prince, son of Edward III and hero of the early years of the Hundred Years' War. He died before his father
[13] a description of the reign of Richard II, from 1377 to 1399

Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast.
Close by the regal chair
Fell Thirst and Famine scowl
A baleful smile upon their baffled Guest.
Heard ye the din of battle bray,
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?
Long Years of havoc[14] urge their destined course,
And thro' the kindred squadrons mow their way.
Ye Towers of Julius,[15] London's lasting shame,
With many a foul and midnight murther fed,
Revere his Consort's faith, his Father's fame,
And spare the meek Usurper's holy head.[16]
Above, below, the rose of snow,
Twined with her blushing foe,[17] we spread:
The bristled Boar[18] in infant-gore
Wallows beneath the thorny shade.
Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

III. 1

"'Edward, lo! to sudden fate
(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun)
Half of thy heart we consecrate.
(The web is wove. The work is done.)'—
Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn
Leave me unbless'd, unpitied, here to mourn!
In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
Descending slow their glitt'ring skirts unroll?
Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,
Ye unborn Ages, crowd not on my soul!
No more our long-lost Arthur[19] we bewail.
All-hail, ye genuine Kings, Britannia's Issue,[20] hail!

[14] the Wars of the Roses, which occupied much of the fifteenth century.
[15] the Tower of London, part of which is popularly said to have been built by Julius Caesar.
[16] Henry VI.
[17] the white and the red roses of York and Lancaster.
[18] the insignia of Richard III
[19] The Welsh believed that Arthur would return and again rule over Britain.
[20] the House of Tudor, beginning with the reign of Henry VII in 1485. This family was descended from Owen Tudor, a Welshman

III. 2

"Girt with many a baron bold
Sublime their starry fronts they rear;
And gorgeous Dames, and Statesmen old
In bearded majesty, appear.
In the midst a Form divine![21]
Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-Line;
Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
Attemper'd sweet to virgin-grace.
What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
What strains of vocal transport round her play!
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin,[22] hear;
They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,
Waves in the eye of Heav'n her many-color'd wings.

III. 3

"The verse adorn again
Fierce War and faithful Love,
And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest.[23]
In buskin'd[24] measures move
Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,
With Horror, Tyrant of the throbbing breast.
A Voice, as of the Cherub-Choir,
Gales from blooming Eden bear;[25]
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
That lost in long futurity expire.
Fond impious Man, think'st thou, yon sanguine cloud,
Rais'd by thy breath, has quench'd the Orb of day?
To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
Enough for me: With joy I see
The different doom our Fates assign.
Be thine Despair, and scept'red Care,
To triumph, and to die, are mine."—
He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plung'd to endless night.

(1757)

[21] Queen Elizabeth.
[22] a famous Welsh bard of the sixth century.
[23] Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; see I, p. 291.
[24] the buskin was the shoe worn by tragic actors in the Greek theater; hence it refers here to the great Elizabethan tragedies.
[25] Milton, with his *Paradise Lost*, see I, p. 614

William Collins

(1721-1759)

The volume of Collins's poetry is, like that of Gray, very slender. But whereas the stately form and sculptured lines of Gray won admiration from the public, Collins, a subtler and more delicate singer, had no success in his brief lifetime. Though his faults are glaringly those of his age—abstractions and generalized diction—his merits were not those to be appreciated by the Augustans. He loved the Greeks, but he also worshiped Shakespeare and Milton; he is the first eighteenth-century poet to recapture the shadowy delicacy and airy imaginativeness of the Elizabethans. He was born in Sussex at Chichester, famous for its cathedral, and was educated at Winchester School and at Oxford, where he took his B.A. degree in 1743. A year earlier he had already published a volume of *Persian Eclogues* (see p. 1123) which was subsequently retitled *Oriental Eclogues* (1757). In 1744 he came to London with many plans of a scholarly or literary nature, but was unable to carry them through because of ill-health and impatience.

Under the influence of Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Collins and his friend Joseph Warton elaborated a new kind of ode of description and allegory; taking a personified abstraction as a subject, they dealt with it in a series of pictures. Warton's *Odes on Various Subjects* appeared almost at the same time as Collins' *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* (1746). Collins failed to achieve any notice; in a fit of wrath at his failure he burned the unsold copies of the edition. The year 1749 saw the publication of his *Ode Occasioned by the Death of Mr. Thomson*. In the same year he wrote his beautiful *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, which remained unprinted till long after his death. *The Passions* (1750) was the last poem published during his lifetime. Before many more months had passed, poor Collins felt the ravages of a disease which, beginning in extreme melancholia, ended in violent insanity. For a time he was confined in a madhouse. His last years were spent in neglected retirement in which he alternated short periods of intellectual clarity with others of mental blankness. His poetic career had ended before his twenty-ninth birthday.

The qualities which make Collins one of the most original poets of his age are difficult to point out. Mixed with some very bad instances of abstraction and artificial diction are, of course, various non-classical interests: his feeling for landscape, his affection for gloom, his depiction of nature in its duskier robes. But, more than anything else, it is imaginativeness and sensitivity that distinguish Collins from his contemporaries. *The Passions* is heavy with abstractions and the *Ode to Simplicity* is partly marred by the very artificiality which the poet deplores. But the delicacy of the *Dirge in Cymbeline*, the sweet thoughtful music of *How Sleep the Brave* and the Keats-like emotional intoxication of the *Ode to Evening* are prophetic of romantic poetry in a sense quite beyond the reach of Thomson, Gray, or any other man of his generation. He is sometimes careless; the exact meaning of the thirty-second line of the *Ode to Evening*, for example (*Reflect its last cool gleam*), defies grammatical analysis. But the delicately modulated music of his unrhymed lines delivers the message even when logic cannot follow his sentence structure.

Dirge in *Cymbeline*

This song, inspired by Act IV, Scene 2 of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, is conceived as sung by Guiderius and Arviragus over the body of their sister, Imogen (disguised as Fidele), whom they mistakenly believe to be dead. Collins challenges comparison with the song in his source, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun" (see I, p. 338).

To fair Fidele's grassy tomb
  Soft maids and village hinds[1] shall bring
Each opening sweet, of earliest bloom,
  And rifle all the breathing spring.

No wailing ghost shall dare appear,
  To vex with shrieks this quiet grove;
But shepherd lads assemble here,
  And melting virgins own their love.

No withered witch shall here be seen,
  No goblins lead their nightly crew;
The female fays shall haunt the green,
  And dress thy grave with pearly dew.

The red-breast oft at evening hours
  Shall kindly lend his little aid,
With hoary moss, and gathered flowers,
  To deck the ground where thou art laid.

When howling winds, and beating rain,
  In tempests shake the sylvan cell,
Or 'midst the chase on every plain,
  The tender thought on thee shall dwell.

Each lonely scene shall thee restore,
  For thee the tear be duly shed;
Beloved till life can charm no more,
  And mourned, till pity's self be dead.

(1744)

Ode to Simplicity

O thou, by Nature taught
  To breathe her genuine thought,
In numbers warmly pure, and sweetly strong;
  Who first, on mountains wild,
  In Fancy, loveliest child,
Thy babe, or Pleasure's, nursed the powers of song!
  Thou, who, with hermit heart,

[1] peasants.

  Disdain'st the wealth of art,
And gauds,[1] and pageant weeds, and trailing pall;
  But com'st a decent maid,
  In Attic[2] robe arrayed,
O chaste, unboastful nymph, to thee I call;

  By all the honeyed store
  On Hybla's[3] thymy shore;
By all her blooms, and mingled murmurs dear;
  By her whose lovelorn woe
  In evening musings slow
Soothed sweetly sad Electra's poet's[4] ear:

  By old Cephisus deep,
  Who spread his wavy sweep,
In warbled wanderings, round thy green retreat;
  On whose enameled side,
  When holy Freedom died,
No equal haunt allured thy future feet.

  O sister meek of Truth,
  To my admiring youth,
Thy sober aid and native charms infuse!
  The flowers that sweetest breathe,
  Though Beauty culled the wreath,
Still ask thy hand to range their ordered hues.

  While Rome could none esteem
  But virtue's patriot theme,
You loved her hills, and led her laureat band:
  But stayed to sing alone
  To one distinguished throne;[5]
And turned thy face, and fled her altered land.

  No more, in hall or bower,
  The passions own thy power;
Love, only love, her forceless numbers mean;
  For thou hast left her shrine;
  Nor olive more, nor vine,
Shall gain thy feet to bless the servile scene.

  Though taste, though genius, bless
  To some divine excess,
Faints the cold work till thou inspire the whole;
  What each, what all supply,
  May court, may charm, our eye;
Thou, only thou, canst raise the meeting soul!

[1] ornaments.
[2] (with the simplicity of ancient Athenian manners).
[3] mountain in Sicily celebrated for its honey among ancient poets.
[4] Sophocles, Greek tragic playwright, fifth century B.C.
[5] Augustus Caesar, first Roman emperor (27 B.C.-14 A.D.)

Of these let others ask,
To aid some mighty task;
I only seek to find thy temperate vale,
Where oft my reed might sound
To maids and shepherds round,
And all thy sons, O Nature, learn my tale.

(1746)

The Passions:[1] *An Ode for Music*

When Music, heavenly maid, was young,
While yet in early Greece she sung,
The Passions oft, to hear her shell,[2]
Thronged around her magic cell,
Exulting, trembling, raging, fainting,
Possessed beyond the Muse's painting;
By turns they felt the glowing mind
Disturbed, delighted, raised, refined.
Till once, 'tis said, when all were fired,
Filled with fury, rapt, inspired,
From the supporting myrtles round
They snatched her instruments of sound;
And, as they oft had heard apart
Sweet lessons of her forceful art,
Each (for madness ruled the hour)
Would prove his own expressive power.

First Fear his hand, its skill to try,
Amid the chords bewildered laid,
And back recoiled, he knew not why,
Even at the sound himself had made.

Next Anger rushed; his eyes on fire,
In lightnings owned his secret stings;
In one rude clash he struck the lyre,
And swept with hurried hand the strings.

With woeful measures wan Despair
Low, sullen sounds his grief beguiled;
A solemn, strange, and mingled air;
'Twas sad by fits, by starts 'twas wild.

But thou, O Hope, with eyes so fair,
What was thy delightful measure?
Still it whispered promised pleasure,
And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail!
Still would her touch the strain prolong;
And from the rocks, the woods, the vale,
She called on Echo still, through all the song;
And, where her sweetest theme[3] she chose,
A soft responsive voice was heard at every close,
And Hope enchanted smiled, and waved her golden hair.

And longer had she sung;—but, with a frown,
Revenge impatient rose:
He threw his blood-stained sword, in thunder, down;
And with a withering look,
The war-denouncing[4] trumpet took,
And blew a blast so loud and dread,
Were ne'er prophetic sounds so full of woe!
And, ever and anon, he beat
The doubling drum, with furious heat;
And though sometimes, each dreary pause between,
Dejected Pity, at his side,

Her soul-subduing voice applied,
Yet still he kept his wild unaltered mien,
While each strained ball of sight seemed bursting from his head.
Thy numbers, Jealousy, to naught were fixed;
Sad proof of thy distressful state;
Of differing themes the veering song was mixed;
And now it courted love, now raving called on hate.

With eyes upraised, as one inspired,
Pale Melancholy sat retired;
And, from her wild sequestered seat,
In notes by distance made more sweet,
Poured through the mellow horn her pensive soul:
And, dashing soft from rocks around,
Bubbling runnels[5] joined the sound;
Through glades and glooms the mingled measure stole,
Or, o'er some haunted stream, with fond delay,
Round an holy calm diffusing,
Love of peace, and lonely musing,
In hollow murmurs died away.

But O! how altered was its sprightlier tone,
When Cheerfulness, a nymph of healthiest hue,
Her bow across her shoulder flung,
Her buskins gemmed with morning dew,
Blew an inspiring air, that dale and thicket rung,
The hunter's call, to faun and dryad known!

[1] the emotions. [2] lyre [3] that of love, [4] announcing [5] rivulets.

The oak-crowned sisters,[6] and their chaste-eyed queen,
Satyrs and sylvan boys, were seen,
Peeping from forth their alleys green:
Brown Exercise rejoiced to hear;
And Sport leaped up, and seized his beechen spear.

Last came Joy's ecstatic trial:
He, with viny crown advancing,
First to the lively pipe his hand addressed;
But soon he saw the brisk awakening viol,
Whose sweet entrancing voice he loved the best;
They would have thought who heard the strain
They saw, in Tempe's vale,[7] her native maids,
Amidst the festal sounding shades,
To some unwearied minstrel dancing,
While, as his flying fingers kissed the strings,
Love framed with Mirth a gay fantastic round;
Loose were her tresses seen, her zone unbound;
And he, amidst his frolic play,
As if he would the charming air repay,
Shook thousand odors from his dewy wings.

O Music! sphere-descended maid!
Friend of Pleasure, Wisdom's aid!
Why, goddess! why, to us denied,
Lay'st thou thy ancient lyre aside?
As, in that loved Athenian bower,
You learned an all-commanding power,
Thy mimic soul, O nymph endeared,
Can well recall what then it heard;
Where is thy native simple heart,
Devote to virtue, fancy, art?
Arise, as in that elder time,
Warm, energetic, chaste, sublime!
Thy wonders, in that godlike age,
Fill thy recording sister's[8] page—
'Tis said, and I believe the tale,
Thy humblest reed could more prevail,
Had more of strength, diviner rage,
Than all which charms this laggard age;
E'en all at once together found,
Cecilia's mingled world of sound[9]—
O bid our vain endeavors cease;
Revive the just designs of Greece:
Return in all thy simple state!
Confirm the tales her sons relate!

(1746)

[6] nymphs [7] in Thessaly [8] poetry's. [9] the organ

Ode to Evening

If aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs and dying gales;

O nymph reserved—while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede[1] ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed;

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises, 'midst the twilight path
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum—
Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some softened strain,

Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As, musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return!

For when thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours, and elves
Who slept in buds the day,

And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge,
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
The pensive Pleasures sweet,
Prepare thy shadowy car.

Then lead, calm votaress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile,
Or upland fallows gray
Reflect its last cool gleam.

But when chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds and swelling floods,

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all

[1] embroidery.

Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

While Spring shall pour his show'rs, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve!
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy lingering light;

While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves,
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train,
And rudely rends thy robes;

So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipped Health,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy favorite name!

(1746)

Ode Written in the Beginning of the Year 1746

How sleep the brave who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mold,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung;
By forms unseen their dirge is sung.
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there!

(1746)

William Cowper

(1731-1800)

Cowper's considerable gifts as a poet have been dimmed by the brightness of his successors'. But of all pre-romantic poets his influence was the greatest in helping to change the taste of the public in the directions that the nineteenth century was to take. Moreover, if his poetry cannot rival the productions of men for whom he paved the way, his letters (see pp. 110-12) are still accounted by many to be the finest in our literature.

He was the son of the rector of Great Berkhamstead, a man who wrote verses but whose lack of understanding drove the boy to be utterly dependent on his mother. When the lad was but six his mother died; later in life he said of her: "Not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day), in which I do not think of her." Near the close of his life he wrote the touching poem *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture* (1798), wherein the reader can estimate how great her loss had been to him. At Westminster School, to which he was sent, his boyhood, never happy or healthy, was further blighted by the brutality of a bully among his schoolmates. He studied law and was called to the bar in 1754. Various minor government positions enabled him to live comfortably, write pleasant light verses, and enjoy the friendship of his two cousins, Theodora and Harriet, the latter of whom became the Lady Hesketh of his letters. His mid-twenties were comparatively cheerful years, the only cheerful ones he was to know.

When he was about thirty he was preparing himself for an examination before the House of Lords for a government post. As the time approached his fear of not being able to pass became an obsession that drove him from a severe melancholia, during which he tried to commit suicide, into insanity. He was confined for a year to an asylum where his physician, Dr. Cotton, by his intellectual as well as physical concern for his patient, gradually brought him back to sanity.

Upon his release from the hospital, he retired to a small village in order to escape the temptations of London. "From thirty-three to sixty," he later wrote, "I have spent my time in the country, where my reading has been only an apology for idleness, and where, when I had not either a magazine or a book in my hand, I was sometimes a carpenter, at

others a bird-cage maker, or a gardener, or a drawer of landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an author. It is a whim that has served me longest and best, and which will probably be my last."

In 1765 he found sanctuary in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Unwin. Mrs. Unwin, whose husband died in 1767, became his "second mother," and devoted the rest of her life to encouraging him to write and to nursing him through his many relapses. He acknowledges his debt to her in the moving lines of *To Mary*

In 1782 Cowper published the results of Mrs. Unwin's literary encouragement, *Table Talk, Conversation, and Retirement.* His own tastes led him to detest the "inflated and strutting phraseology" of Pope's *Homer* and its many imitators, he argued that Pope "made poetry a mere mechanic art," and Samuel Johnson, because of his deafness to Milton, he disliked as a "literary cossack." Cowper, utterly unsympathetic to the poetic practice of the elegant Augustans, had one great love: Milton. In the texture of Cowper's most original blank verse the cadences and language are often Miltonic. Of this volume, the poem *Retirement* is the most significant; in it Cowper explained his escape from the city as a desire for "divine communion," and thus prepared the way for Wordsworth's treatment of the theme in *The Excursion.*

Cowper's association with John Newton, curate of the parish of Olney, where the poet boarded with Mrs Unwin, had resulted in their collaboration in the *Olney Hymns* (1779). The clergyman's narrow and dark theology was instrumental, too, in intensifying the morbidity in Cowper's nature and in increasing his periods of hopeless depression. A sunnier influence on Cowper's poetry was the high-spirited Lady Austen. It was she who told him the story on which he based his gay, rollicking ballad, *The Diverting History of John Gilpin* (1782) and it was her suggestion that launched him on his most ambitious work, *The Task* (1785).

The last years of Cowper's life were devoted to a translation of Homer in which he tried to recover something of the original after Pope's transformation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.* He left unfinished at his death one of his finest pieces, *Yardley Oak* (1804), in which he passes from his objective observation of nature very close to the romantic aim of self-identification with her. Despite his frank dislike for the school of Pope, Cowper did not succeed entirely in freeing his verse from artificial poetic diction. But the direct personal note, the warm humanitarianism, and the unaffected first-hand observation of nature mark him clearly as a forerunner of the Romantics

Walking with God

"Walking with God" is one of the best of Cowper's *Olney Hymns* (1779). Other well-known hymns are "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord," "God moves in a mysterious way," and "There is a fountain filled with blood."

Genesis, 5:24

Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn
And drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
What'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

(1779)

From *The Task*, Book IV

Once while Lady Austen was urging him to write in blank verse, Cowper asked her for a subject. "Write upon this sofa," she commanded. And he began. As he wrote, associations crowded in on him until he had produced a whole volume which he playfully entitled *The Task* (1785). Its purpose, as he explained, was "to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue." Cowper was, thus, the first pre-romantic to relish the country for its own sake. His moral intent does nothing to obscure the vivid detail, the appreciative eye, and the whimsical humor of his lines. The poem is highly autobiographical in tone, for as the poet takes us on a round of country life and country scenery we are always conscious of his presence. Many passages of his blank verse give a foretaste of Wordsworth, and he is far more interested in vivid description than the later poet. If Cowper is never ecstatic his famous poem is none the less congenial with warmth, sweetness, humor, and kindliness. The greatest appeal of *The Task* is in a quality strictly unclassical: the easy intimacy and self-revelation of the author. See Cowper's comments on the poem, pp. 111-12.

THE WINTER EVENING

Hark! 't is the twanging horn! O'er yonder bridge
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful; messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains,
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
But oh the important budget! ushered in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings? have our troops awakèd?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave?[1]
Is India free? and does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace?
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;
I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance once again.
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups[2]
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not such his evening, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeezed
And bored with elbow-points through both his sides,
Outscolds the ranting actor on the stage:
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen[3] all tranquillity and smiles.
This folio of four pages, happy work!
Which not even critics criticise; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break;
What is it, but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the summit see

[1] This refers to the British soldiers in the American Revolution.

[2] of tea.

[3] politicians in search of a position.

The seals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them! At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dexterous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take;
The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved
T' engross a moment's notice, and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness! it claims at least this praise,
The dearth of information and good sense
That it foretells us always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here;
There forests of no meaning spread the page,
In which all comprehension wanders, lost;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion; roses for the cheeks,
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean, plundered of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons, and city feasts, and favorite airs,
Æthereal journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katterfelto,[4] with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.
'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat
To peep at such a world; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on th' uninjured ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations; I behold
The tumult, and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me;
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man;
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return—a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.
Oh Winter, ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art! Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by day-light and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening, know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates;
No powdered pert proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake:
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page, by one

[4] a sleight-of-hand performer who advertised with the words "Wonders! Wonders! Wonders!"

Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out;
And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
And in the charming strife triumphant still,
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry: the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and, unfelt, the task proceeds.
The volume closed, the customary rites
Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal;
Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoyed—spare feast!—a radish and an egg!
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth:
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,
That calls the past to our exact review,
The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliverance found
Unlooked for, life preserved and peace restored—
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
Oh evenings worthy of the gods! exclaimed
The Sabine bard.[5] Oh evenings, I reply,
More to be prized and coveted than yours,
As more illumined, and with nobler truths,
That I, and mine, and those we love, enjoy.
Is winter hideous in a garb like this?
Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
The pent-up breath of an unsavory throng,
To thaw him into feeling; or the smart
And snappish dialogue, that flippant wits
Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?
The self-complacent actor, when he views
(Stealing a side-long glance at a full house)
The slope of faces, from the floor to th' roof,
(As if one master-spring controlled them all)
Relaxed into an universal grin,
Sees not a countenance there that speaks a joy
Half so refined or so sincere as ours.
Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks
That idleness has ever yet contrived
To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
To palliate dulness and give time a shove.
Time, as he passes us, has a dove's wing,
Unsoiled and swift and of a silken sound.
But the world's time is time in masquerade.
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledged
With motley plumes, and, where the peacock shows
His azure eyes, is tinctured black and red
With spots quadrangular of diamond form,
Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hour-glass once,
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard mast
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus decked he charms a world whom fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleased when idle most,
Whose only happy are their wasted hours.
Even misses, at whose age their mothers wore
The back-string and the bib, assume the dress
Of womanhood, sit pupils in the school
Of card-devoted time, and night by night,
Placed at some vacant corner of the board,
Learn every trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far, oft turns aside
To view some rugged rock, or moldering tower,
Which seen delights him not; then coming home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth;
So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread
With colors mixed for a far different use,
Paint cards and dolls, and every idle thing
That fancy finds in her excursive flights.
Come, Evening, once again, season of peace,
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron-step slow moving, while the night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employed
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day;
Not sumptuously adorned, nor needing aid,
Like homely-featured night, of clustering gems,
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.

[5] In reference to Horace's phrase, "O noctes cenaeque deum" (O nights and banquets of the gods).

Come, then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift;
And whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil;
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
When they command whom man was born to please;
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.
Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
Goliath,[6] might have seen his giant bulk
Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,
My pleasures too begin. But me, perhaps,
The glowing hearth may satisfy a while
With faint illumination, that unlifts
The shadow to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame.
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlor twilight; such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one; I am conscious and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages expressed
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amused have I quiescent watched
The sooty films that play upon the bars,
Pendulous, and foreboding, in the view
Of superstition, prophesying still
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.
'T is thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps and is refreshed. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were tasked to his full strength, absorbed and lost.
Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers, and snapping short
The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
Her brittle toys, restores me to myself.

How calm is my recess, and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The silence and the warmth enjoyed within!
I saw the woods and fields at close of day
A variegated show; the meadows green
Though faded; and the lands where lately waved
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturned so lately by the forceful share.
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks, fast feeding and selecting each
His favorite herb; while all the leafless groves
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue,
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change!
Which even now, though silently performed
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy shower; the downy flakes
Descending, and with never-ceasing lapse
Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thickening mantle, and the green
And tender blade, that feared the chilling blast,
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.
In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted, or if found,
Without some thistly sorrow at its side,
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguished than ourselves, that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathize with others, suffering more.
Ill fares the traveler now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team;
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregating loads adhering close
To the clogged wheels, and, in its sluggish pace,
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, formed to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes, and puckered cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on;
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
Oh, happy, and, in my account, denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou!

[6] the Philistine giant whom David defeated; cf. *I Samuel* 17:4-54.

Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpaired;
The learned finger never need explore
Thy vigorous pulse, and the unhealthful East,
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.
Thy days roll on exempt from household care,
Thy wagon is thy wife; and the poor beasts,
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah, treat them kindly! rude as thou appearest,
Yet show that thou hast mercy, which the great,
With needless hurry whirled from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.

Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warmed, while it lasts, by labor, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill-clad and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well;
And while her infant race, with outspread hands
And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warmed.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil;
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.
The taper soon extinguished, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined, and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten, without sauce
Of savory cheese, or butter costlier still,
Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chained,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
Ingenious parsimony takes but just
Saves the small inventory, bed, and stool,
Skillet, and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands; but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg,
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earned,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution; liberal of their aid
To clamorous importunity in rags,
But oft-time deaf to supplants, who would blush
To wear a tattered garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth:
These ask with painful shyness, and, refused
Because deserving, silently retire!
But be ye of good courage! Time itself
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase;
And all your numerous progeny, well-trained,
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labor too. Meanwhile ye shall not want
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.
I mean the man, who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty, with most who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted woe;
Th' effect of laziness or sottish waste.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gardener's pale, the farmer's hedge,
Plashed neatly, and secured with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil—
An ass's burden—and, when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot, steals fast away.
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard
The well-stacked pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrenched the door, however well secured,
Where Chanticleer amidst his harem sleeps
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitched from the perch.
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,
To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,
And loudly wondering at the sudden change.—
Nor this to feed his own! 'Twere some excuse
Did pity of their sufferings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute.—But they
Neglected pine at home; themselves, as more
Exposed than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robbed of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety[7] that prompts
His every action, and imbrutes the man.
Oh for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own; who persecutes the blood
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates

[7] drunkenness.

And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love!
Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village, or hamlet, of this merry land,
Though lean and beggared, every twentieth pace
Conducts th' unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch, forth-issuing from the styes
That law has licensed, as makes temperance reel.
There sit, involved and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume,[8] and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom: the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean[9] leave of all his toil;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,
All learned, and all drunk! The fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wailed
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard:
Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme; while she,
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,
Perched on the sign-post, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance; in that, of pride;
And smiles, delighted with th' eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound
The cheek-distending oath, not to be praised
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ,
Whose oath is rhetoric, and who swear for fame!
Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,
Once simple, are initiated in arts
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill!—'tis here they learn
The road that leads, from competence and peace,
To indigence and rapine; till at last
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her encumbered lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little: vain th' attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
Th' excise[10] is fattened with the rich result
Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touched by the Midas finger of the state,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink, and be mad, then; 'tis your country bids!
Gloriously drunk, obey th' important call!
Her cause demands th' assistance of your throats;—
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.
Would I had fallen upon those happier days
That poets celebrate; those golden times,
And those Arcadian[11] scenes, that Maro[12] sings,
And Sidney,[13] warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts
That felt their virtues: innocence, it seems,
From courts dismissed, found shelter in the groves;
The footsteps of simplicity, impressed
Upon the yielding herbage, (so they sing)
Then were not all effaced: then speech profane,
And manners profligate, were rarely found;
Observed as prodigies, and soon reclaimed.
Vain wish! those days were never: airy dreams
Sat for the picture; and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Imposed a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it:—I still must envy them an age
That favored such a dream; in days like these
Impossible, when virtue is so scarce,
That to suppose a scene where she presides,
Is tramontane,[14] and stumbles all belief.
No: we are polished now! the rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost!
Her head, adorned with lappets pinned aloft,
And ribbands streaming gay, superbly raised,
And magnified beyond all human size,
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand
For more than half the tresses it sustains;
Her elbows ruffled, and her tottering form
Ill propped upon French heels, she might be deemed
(But that the basket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy work, or sale of eggs.
Expect her soon with foot-boy at her heels,
No longer blushing for her awkward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care!
The town has tinged the country; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural; but, alas,
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now!
Time was when, in the pastoral retreat,
Th' unguarded door was safe; men did not watch
T' invade another's right, or guard their own.
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscared

[8] tobacco smoke.
[9] referring to Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.
[10] the tax on alcoholic drinks
[11] Arcadia, in Greece, where many pastoral poems have had their setting
[12] Virgil; see I, p. 1072.
[13] See I, p. 320 ff.
[14] foreign; literally, living beyond the mountains

By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspicious nights,
And slumbers unalarmed! Now, ere you sleep,
See that your polished arms be primed with care,
And drop the night-bolt;—ruffians are abroad;
And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
Even daylight has its dangers; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change! to which full many a cause
Inveterate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
Increase of power begets increase of wealth;
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess;
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downward all the graduated scale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check
The licence of the lowest in degree,
Desert their office; and themselves intent
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus
To all the violence of lawless hands
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
The plump convivial parson often bears
The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
His reverence and his worship both to rest
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm;
When he should strike he trembles, and sets free,
Himself enslaved by terror of the band,
The audacious convict, whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,
He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milkwhite hand; the palm is hardly clean—
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh! 't was a bribe that left it: he has touched
Corruption! Whoso seeks an audit[15] here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wild-fowl or ven'son,—and his errand speeds.

[15] hearing.

But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none who bears a spark
Of public virtue ever wish'd remov'd,
Works the deplor'd and mischievous effect.
'Tis universal soldiership has stabb'd
The heart of merit in the meaner class.
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
Seem most at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with serious thought.
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own simple pleasures—now and then
A wrestling-match, a foot-race, or a fair—
Is balloted, and trembles at the news;
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and, mumbling swears
A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
To do he knows not what! The task perform'd,
That instant he becomes the sergeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
Unapt to learn, and form'd of stubborn stuff,
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well:
He stands erect; his slouch becomes a walk;
He steps right onward, martial in his air,
His form and movement; is as smart above
As meal and larded locks can make him; wears
His hat, or his plum'd helmet, with a grace;
And, his three years of heroship expir'd,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field in which no fife or drum
Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
'T were well if his exterior change were all,
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink; to show at home
By lewdness, idleness, and sabbath-breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad;
To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends;
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart;
To be a pest where he was useful once;
Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.

Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed; 't is there alone
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out; there only reach their proper use.
But man associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or self-joined by bond
For interest sake, or swarming into clans

Beneath one head for purposes of war,
Like flowers selected from the rest, and bound
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
Fades rapidly, and by compression marred,
Contracts defilement not to be endured.
Hence chartered boroughs are such public plagues;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature, and, disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial justice red.
Hence, too, the field of glory, as the world
Misdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,
Enchanting music, and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for every vice.

But, slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandoned, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me still.
I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But there I laid the scene. There early strayed
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural; rural, too,
The first-born efforts of my youthful muse,
Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus,[16] assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his favorite beech.
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms:
New to my taste, his Paradise surpassed
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence. I danced for joy.
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engaged my wonder; and, admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret supposed
The joy half lost because not sooner found.

[16] the shepherd in Virgil's *Eclogues*; see I, p. 1072.

Thee too, enamored of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determined, and possessing it at last
With transports such as favored lovers feel,
I studied, prized, and wished that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley![17] and, though now reclaimed
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools
I still revere thee, courtly though retired;
Though stretched at ease in Chertsey's[18] silent bowers,
Not unemployed; and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse.
'Tis born with all: the love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound man,
Infused at the creation of the kind.
And, though th' Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of his hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them: minds that have been formed
And tutored, with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmoved.
It is a flame that dies not even there,
Where nothing feeds it: neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city-life;
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms; quench it, or abate.
The villas with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!
Even in the stifling bosom of the town,
A garden, in which nothing thrives, has charms
That soothe the rich possessor; much consoled,
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That Nature lives; that sight-refreshing green
Is still the livery she delights to wear,
Though sickly samples of the exuberant whole.
What are the casements lined with creeping herbs,
The prouder sashes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,
The Frenchman's darling? are they not all proofs
That man immured in cities, still retains

[17] See I, p. 558.

[18] the town in Surrey where Cowley died in 1667

His inborn inextinguishable thirst
Of rural scenes, compensating his loss
By supplemental shifts, the best he may?
The most unfurnished with the means of life,
And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds
To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning instinct: over-head
Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,
And watered duly. There the pitcher stands
A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there;
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardor he contrives
A peep at Nature, when he can no more.
Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys
And harmless pleasures, in the thronged abode
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!
Address himself who will to the pursuit
Of honors, or emolument, or fame,
I shall not add myself to such a chase,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.
Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.
To the deliverer of an injured land
He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs;
To monarchs dignity, to judges sense;
To artists ingenuity and skill;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wished.

(1785)

On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture

Cowper wrote to a friend on March 12, 1790: "I have lately received from a female cousin of mine in Norfolk, whom I have not seen these thirty years, a picture of my own mother. She died when I wanted two days of being six years old; yet I remember her perfectly, find the picture a strong likeness of her, because her memory has been ever precious to me, have written a poem on the receipt of it: a poem which, one excepted, I had more pleasure in writing than any that I ever wrote."

Oh that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
"Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!"
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blest be the art that can immortalise,
The art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.
Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
O welcome guest, though unexpected here!
Who bidst me honor with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long,
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own:
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream that thou art she.
My mother! when I learned that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfelt, a kiss:
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile! It answers—Yes.
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wished I long believed,
And, disappointed still, was still deceived.
By expectation every day beguiled,
Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
I learned at last submission to my lot;
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.
Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nursery floor;
And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapped
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped,
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we called the pastoral house our own.
Short-lived possession! but the record fair
That memory keeps, of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm that has effaced

A thousand other themes less deeply traced.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed;
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and brakes
That humor interposed too often makes;
All this still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honors to thee as my numbers may;
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.
Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours,
When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers,
The violet, the pink, the jassamine,
I pricked them into paper with a pin
(And thou wast happier than myself the while,
Would softly speak, and stroke my head and smile),
Could those few pleasant days again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
I would not trust my heart—the dear delight
Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.—
But no—what here we call our life is such,
So little to be loved, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.
Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
(The storms all weathered and the ocean crossed)
Shoots into port at some well-havened isle,
Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,
There sits quiescent on the floods that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below.
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;
So thou, with sails how swift! hast reached the shore,
"Where tempests never beat nor billows roar."
And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide
Of life long since has anchored by thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
Always from port withheld, always distressed—
Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest tossed,
Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost,
And day by day some current's thwarting force
Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.
Yet, oh, the thought that thou art safe, and he!
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
My boast is not, that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;[1]
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents passed into the skies!
And now, farewell—Time unrevoked has run
His wonted course, yet what I wished is done.
By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again;
To have renewed the joys that once were mine,
Without the sin of violating thine:
And, while the wings of Fancy still are free,
And I can view this mimic show of thee,
Time has but half succeeded in his theft—
Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.

(written 1790)

To Mary

These lines were written in the midst of the five years of pathetic invalidism that preceded Mary Unwin's death in 1796. See the biographical note, page 41.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past,[1]
Since first our sky was overcast;
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow;
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

[1] Cowper was descended from Henry III

[1] Cowper is referring to 1773, when he had an attack of insanity

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For, could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign,
Yet, gently pressed, press gently mine,
My Mary!

And then I feel that still I hold
A richer store ten thousandfold
Than misers fancy in their gold,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,
That now at every step thou movest
Upheld by two, yet still thou lovest,
My Mary!

And still to love, though pressed with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

(written 1793)

The Castaway

This agonized swan song was written only a year before Cowper's death. The analogy between his own state and that of a drowning seaman affords a powerful insight into the terrors of a mind obsessed by the fear of eternal damnation. The poem was based upon an incident described by Admiral George Anson in *A Voyage Round the World* (1748).

Obscurest night involved the sky,
Th' Atlantic billows roared,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Washed headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion[1] boast
Than he with whom he went.
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
With warmer wishes sent.
He loved them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had failed
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevailed,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succor yet they could afford;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delayed not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent power,
His destiny repelled;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—Adieu!

[1] England

At length, his transient respite past,
  His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
  Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
  Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
  Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
  Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
  A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
  No light propitious shone;
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
  We perished, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

(written 1799)

James Macpherson

(1736-1796)

Only the student of literary history will be spared amazement at the fame and notoriety which James Macpherson achieved in the late eighteenth century. The spurious elements in his work are as patent today as the pathetic attempts of Chatterton (see p. 58) to invent a medieval vocabulary. Yet for nearly a century a fierce controversy raged over the authenticity of what he presented as translations. Now that the problem of authorship of *The Poems of Ossian* has been fairly settled, we are free to shake our heads over the fact that works of such mediocre merits could create an international sensation. We can also, if we are wise, learn an important lesson in historical perspective from the extravagant prestige of these poems. For there is no better example of the difficulty of seeing the worth of a contemporary clearly.

It was Macpherson's good fortune and cleverness to crystallize for his times those interests of the literary public which were veering from neoclassicism toward romanticism. The imaginative stimulus for which the age was groping after the meridian of common sense had been passed in the pages of Pope, Swift, and Addison, was supplied by Macpherson, and supplied in a manner not too original to be unappreciated. Few writers have timed their work more perfectly than he. There had already been made some tentative efforts to escape from the domination of the classics. Gray's later odes (see pp. 31-35) exhibit a search for inspiration in Icelandic mythology. His ode, *The Bard*, and Collins's *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* turn to Celtic lore for their materials. The quest for non-classical antiquities was on. In Edinburgh, soon to be called the "Modern Athens," scholars were particularly anxious to explore the Scottish past. The Rev. John Home, author of the popular tragedy, *Douglas,* was one of the chief of these; he was elated when, in 1759, he met a young Highland schoolmaster, James Macpherson, who showed him some transcripts he had made of Gaelic poems he had taken down from the recital of old natives of the north. Impressed with their beauty, Home sent copies to Dr. Hugh Blair, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh University, who became equally enthusiastic. They both pressed Macpherson to make translations of the pieces he had collected, and in 1760 Blair published the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* The volume immediately created a furor. The semblance to a heroic, wild, and strange primitive time which the poems possessed, and

their heavily cadenced movement, appealed at once to the needs of the literary world. "I am gone mad about them," wrote Gray to a friend, little realizing how much *The Bard* may have had to do with the young schoolmaster's "translations." In Scotland they evoked such interest that professors and patrons of literature were determined to subsidize Macpherson so that he might institute a thorough search for other remains. Blair was convinced that the fragments pointed to the existence of a lost epic, and was rewarded, after Macpherson had made a tour of the Highlands, with *Fingal, an Ancient Epic,* which Macpherson published in 1762, and with *Temora, an Epic Poem,* two years later. Although he might well have been suspicious of his discovery, Blair pointed out with pleasure that *Fingal* entirely conformed to the Aristotelian canons for an epic poem. According to Macpherson, the epics were the creation of an ancient bard, Ossian, and in 1773 he issued them again in a definitive edition as *The Poems of Ossian.*

But by this time the battle over their authorship was being waged furiously. There were many difficulties in the way of accepting Macpherson as a translator. The hero Finn, who in the poems is a Scot, was actually Irish; he lived, moreover, in the third century, but he is made to come in contact with Cuchullin, who lived in the first. There are, in addition, astonishing resemblances between the language of Ossian and that of the Bible and of Milton. To these criticisms, later critics have been able to append the observation that whereas the authentic ballads on Ossian and Finn current in Ireland and Scotland were brilliant and vivid in their pictures of ancient manners and people, Macpherson's versions are all vague and his characters are all alike. Finally, the recurrence of stormy winds and waves, hoary rocks, and heavy mists is not in the taste of primitive peoples, but of an eighteenth century tired with the severe outlines and tamed nature of neoclassicism.

From the beginning, apparently, Samuel Johnson was convinced that the translations were forgeries; inevitably, too, he could see in them no literary quality. "Many men, many women, and many children" could write like that, he declared, and with his wonderful good sense accounted for the poems in a statement that has been confirmed by modern scholarship: "He has found names, and stories, and phrases, and with them has blended his own compositions, and so made what he gives to the world as a translation of an ancient poem." Ossian held no interest for him and he thought *Fingal* "a mere unconnected rhapsody, a tiresome repetition of the same images." Macpherson, angry with Johnson and worried because of his authority, threatened him, but Johnson, undaunted, replied (see I, p. 972): "What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still." Others, too, felt that Macpherson was deceiving the public. Hume, at first interested in the poems, soon became skeptical. And Gibbon always doubted their historicity. Gray remained puzzled: "The whole external evidence would make one believe these fragments counterfeit; but the internal is so strong on the other side, that I am resolved to believe them genuine, spite of the devil and the kirk. . . . This man is the very daemon of poetry, or he has lighted on a treasure hid for ages."

Johnson doggedly demanded to have the original manuscripts open to public inspection. "If the poems were really translated, they were certainly first written down. Let Mr. Macpherson deposit the manuscript in one of the colleges at Aberdeen." Macpherson countered with all kinds of evasions, even after his defenders had raised the money to print the originals. At his death he left a number of Gaelic manuscripts which do not belong to the vocabulary of any period, and are apparently only translations of his own English.

The truth, as we now see it, would seem to be that Macpherson, taking as his foundation a few fragments of authentic Gaelic remains, built upon them a superstructure of his own making. Well acquainted with the ancient names and some legends, and with an eye firmly fixed on Homer's epics, and the Bible's and Milton's style, he put together, just as Johnson guessed, the poems according to his own notions of what the Gaelic epics must have been like—and his notions were those of the eighteenth century. After a while, when

he considered the success of his work, he began to take a certain pleasure in hinting that he might have been more than a translator. "Those who have doubted my veracity," he says in the preface to the 1773 edition, "have paid a compliment to my genius; and were even the allegation true, my self-denial might have atoned for my fault."

But interesting as it is to follow the disputes over his role in the Ossianic poems, the question of authorship is far overshadowed by their importance to world literature. Later, Macpherson went to Florida, wrote histories, translated the *Iliad*, was granted a pension, made much money, sat in Parliament, and was buried in Westminster Abbey; but no one is concerned with what he did after his *Ossian*. It is safe to say, however, that no single author did more to hasten the Romantic Movement in Western Europe than he, and that no one more greatly stirred the imagination of a whole generation. Blake never outgrew the influence of *The Poems of Ossian*; it was the favorite book of Napoleon, Chateaubriand, and Lamartine. And from Goethe's early novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (see p. 1149), we can understand its liberating power on young minds athirst for freedom from the shackles of neoclassical correctness: "Ossian has superseded Homer in my heart. To what a world does the illustrious bard carry me! To wander over pathless wilds, surrounded by impetuous whirlwinds . . . mid the roar of torrents . . . etc." (see p. 1153). The monotony of the mood of melancholy, the false nobility, the endless exclamations, and the cadences imitative of Biblical prose may now seem very thin and shallow to us, but they were to impress themselves on later writings for a long time. Read Johnson or Sheridan and you will agree with Matthew Arnold that "you can see at this day what an apparition of newness and of power" *The Poems of Ossian* must have been to the late eighteenth century.

From *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem*

"OSSIAN"

Cuthullin sat by Tura's wall: by the tree of the rustling sound His spear leaned against a rock. His shield lay on grass by his side. Amid his thoughts of mighty Carbar, a hero slain by the chief in war; the scout of ocean comes, Moran the son of Fithil!

"Arise," says the youth, "Cuthullin, arise. I see the ships of the north! Many, chief of men, are the foe. Many the heroes of the sea-borne Swaran!" "Moran!" replied the blue-eyed chief, "thou ever tremblest, son of Fithil! Thy fears have increased the foe. It is Fingal, king of deserts, with aid to green Erin of streams." "I beheld their chief," says Moran, "tall as a glittering rock. His spear is a blasted pine. His shield the rising moon! He sat on the shore! like a cloud of mist on the silent hill! Many, chief of heroes! I said, many are our hands of war. Well art thou named, the Mighty Man; but many mighty men are seen from Tura's windy walls."

"He spoke, like a wave on a rock, who in this land appears like me? Heroes stand not in my presence: they fall to earth from my hand. Who can meet Swaran in fight? Who but Fingal, king of Selma of storms? Once we wrestled on Malmor; our heels overturned the woods. Rocks fell from their place; rivulets, changing their course, fled murmuring from our side. Three days we renewed the strife; heroes stood at a distance and trembled. On the fourth, Fingal says, that the king of the ocean fell! but Swaran says, he stood! Let dark Cuthullin yield to him, that is strong as the storms of his land!"

"No," replied the blue-eyed chief, "I never yield to mortal man! Dark Cuthullin shall be great or dead! Go, son of Fithil, take my spear. Strike the sounding shield of Semo. It hangs at Tura's rustling gate. The sound of peace is not its voice! My heroes shall hear and obey." He went. He struck the bossy shield. The hills, the rocks reply. The sound spreads along the wood: deer start by the lake of roes. Curach leaps from the sounding

rock; and Connal of the bloody spear! Crugal's breast of snow beats high. The son of Favi leaves the dark-brown hind. It is the shield of war, said Ronnar! the spear of Cuthullin, said Lugar! son of the sea put on thy arms! Calmar lift thy sounding steel! Puno! dreadful hero, arise! Cairbar from thy red tree of Cromla! Bend thy knee, O Eth! descend from the streams of Lenna. Ca-olt stretch thy side as thou movest along the whistling heath of Mora: thy side that is white as the foam of the troubled sea, when the dark winds pour it on rocky Cuthon.'

Now I behold the chiefs, in the pride of their former deeds! Their souls are kindled at the battles of old; at the actions of other times. Their eyes are flames of fire. They roll in search of the foes of the land. Their mighty hands are on their swords. Lightning pours from their sides of steel. They come like streams from the mountains; each rushes roaring from his hill. Bright are the chiefs of battle, in the armor of their fathers. Gloomy and dark their heroes follow, like the gathering of the rainy clouds behind the red meteors of heaven. The sounds of crashing arms ascend. The grey dogs howl between. Unequal bursts the song of battle. Rocking Cromla echoes round. On Lena's dusky heath they stand, like mist that shades the hills of autumn: when broken and dark it settles high, and lifts its head to heaven!

"Hail," said Cuthullin, "sons of the narrow vales! hail, hunters of the deer! Another sport is drawing near: It is like the dark rolling of that wave on the coast! Or shall we fight, ye sons of war! or yield green Erin to Lochlin! O Connal, speak, thou first of men! thou breaker of the shields! thou hast often fought with Lochlin: wilt thou lift thy father's spear?"

"Cuthullin!" calm the chief replied, "the spear of Connal is keen. It delights to shine in battle; to mix with the blood of thousands. But though my hand is bent on fight, my heart is for the peace of Erin. Behold, thou first in Cormac's war, the sable fleet of Swaran. His masts are many on our coast, like reeds in the lake of Lego. His ships are forests clothed with mist, when the trees yield by turns to the squally wind. Many are his chiefs in battle. Connal is for peace! Fingal would shun his arm the first of mortal men! Fingal, who scatters the mighty, as stormy winds the heath; when streams roar through echoing Cona: and night settles with all her clouds on the hill!

"Fly, thou man of peace," said Calmar, "fly," said the son of Matha; "go, Connal, to thy silent hills, where the spear never brightens in war! Pursue the dark-brown deer of Cromla: stop with thine arrows the bounding roes of Lena. But, blue-eyed son of Semo, Cuthullin, ruler of the field, scatter thou the sons of Lochlin! roar through the ranks of their pride. Let no vessel of the kingdom of Snow bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore. Rise, ye dark winds of Erin, rise! roar whirlwinds of Lara of hinds! Amid the tempest let me die, torn, in a cloud, by angry ghosts of men; amid the tempest let Calmar die, if ever chase was sport to him, so much as the battle of shields!"

"Calmar!" Connal slow replied, "I never fled, young son of Matha! I was swift with my friends in fight; but small is the fame of Connal! The battle was won in my presence; the valiant overcame! But, son of Semo, hear my voice, regard the ancient throne of Cormac. Give wealth and half the land for peace, till Fingal shall arrive on our coast. Or, if war be thy choice, I lift the sword and spear. My joy shall be in the midst of thousands; my soul shall lighten through the gloom of the fight!"

"To me," Cuthullin replies, "pleasant is the noise of arms! pleasant as the thunder of heaven, before the shower of spring! But gather all the shining tribes, that I may view the sons of war! Let them pass along the heath, bright as the sunshine before a storm; when the west wind collects the clouds, and Morven echoes over all her oaks! But where are my friends in battle? The supporters of my arm in danger? Where art thou, white-bosomed Cathba? Where is that cloud in war, Duchomar? Hast thou left me, O Fergus! in the day of the storm? Fergus, first in our joy at the feast! son of Rossa! arm of death! comest thou like a roe from Malmor? Like a hart from thy echoing hills! Hail, thou son of Rossa! what shades the soul of war?"

"Four stones," replied the chief, "rise on the grave of Cathba. These hands have laid in earth Duchomar, that cloud in war! Cathba, son of Torman! thou wert a sunbeam in Erin. And thou, O valiant Duchomar! a mist of the marshy Lano; when it moves on the plains of autumn, bearing the death of thousands along. Morna! fairest of maids! calm is thy sleep in the cave of the rock! Thou hast fallen in darkness, like a star, that shoots across the desert; when the traveller is alone, and mourns the transient beam!"

"Say," said Semo's blue-eyed son, "say how fell

the chiefs of Erin? Fell they by the sons of Lochlin, striving in the battle of heroes? Or what confines the strong in arms to the dark and narrow house?"

"Cathba," replied the hero, "fell by the sword of Duchomar at the oak of the noisy streams. Duchomar came to Tura's cave; he spoke to the lovely Morna. Morna, fairest among women, lovely daughter of strong-armed Cormac! Why in the circle of stones? in the cave of the rock alone? The stream murmurs along. The old tree groans in the wind. The lake is troubled before thee; dark are the clouds of the sky! But thou art snow on the heath; thy hair is the mist of Cromla; when it curls on the hill; when it shines to the beam of the west! Thy breasts are two smooth rocks seen from Branno of streams. Thy arms, like two white pillars, in the halls of the great Fingal."

"From whence," the fair-haired maid replied, "from whence, Duchomar, most gloomy of men? Dark are thy brows and terrible! Red are thy rolling eyes! Does Swaran appear on the sea? What of the foe, Duchomar?" "From the hill I return, O Morna, from the hill of the dark-brown hinds. Three have I slain with my bended yew. Three with my long-bounding dogs of the chase. Lovely daughter of Cormac, I love thee as my soul! I have slain one stately deer for thee. High was his branchy head; and fleet his feet of wind." "Duchomar!" calm the maid replied, "I love thee not, thou gloomy man! hard is thy heart of rock; dark is thy terrible brow. But Cathba, young son of Torman, thou art the love of Morna. Thou art a sunbeam, in the day of the gloomy storm. Sawest thou the son of Torman, lovely on the hill of his hinds? Here the daughter of Cormac waits the coming of Cathba!"

"Long shall Morna wait," Duchomar said, "long shall Morna wait for Cathba! Behold this sword unsheathed! Here wanders the blood of Cathba. Long shall Morna wait. He fell by the stream of Branno! On Croma I will raise his tomb, daughter of blue-shielded Cormac! Turn on Duchomar thine eyes; his arm is strong as a storm." "Is the son of Torman fallen?" said the wildly-bursting voice of the maid. "Is he fallen on his echoing hills, the youth with the breast of snow? The first in the chase of hinds? The foe of the strangers of ocean? Thou art dark to me, Duchomar, cruel is thine arm to Morna! Give me that sword, my foe! I love the wandering blood of Cathba!"

He gave the sword to her tears. She pierced his manly breast! He fell, like the bank of a mountain-stream, and stretching forth his hand, he spoke: "Daughter of blue-shielding Cormac! Thou hast slain me in youth! The sword is cold in my breast: Morna, I feel it cold. Give me to Moina the maid. Duchomar was the dream of her night! She will raise my tomb; the hunter shall raise my fame. But draw the sword from my breast. Morna, the steel is cold!" She came, in all her tears, she came; she drew the sword from his breast. He pierced her white side! He spread her fair locks on the ground! Her bursting blood sounds from her side: her white arm is stained with red. Rolling in death she lay. The cave re-echoed to her sighs.

(1762)

Thomas Chatterton

(1752-1770)

Considerable historical importance attaches to the poetry of Chatterton, "the marvelous boy," as Wordsworth called him. His *Rowley Poems* are a signal instance of the recrudescence of interest in the Middle Ages and are the first completely successful attempts in his century to recapture the free melody of the Elizabethans. Moreover, they exercised formative influence on the poetry of romantics like Blake and Coleridge. But, for all that, what Chatterton wrote has hardly been of greater significance than the story of his brief, ill-starred life. Though he died by his own hand in his eighteenth year the victim of neglect and callous undervaluation, he was to stand as a symbol for the poets of the nineteenth century. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Rossetti, and Swinburne were to pay him tribute, and Shelley was to place him high among the "inheritors of unfulfilled renown." His death has been an indictment of the unimaginativeness of his age and has damaged the reputation of the witty Horace Walpole beyond repair. For the romantic poets it was emblematic of the tragic destiny of a great-souled poet in a middle-class world.

Chatterton was born in the shadow of the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, built in Bristol in the fifteenth century, and derived most of his intellectual nourishment within its walls. His father, who had died four months before the birth of Thomas, had left a poverty-stricken family from whose squalor the boy escaped to find beauty within the old edifice. For seven years he attended the uninspiring charity school, where the only studies were reading, writing, and arithmetic; but at night, when other lads were in bed, he was secretly busy in his garret poring over *The Faerie Queene*, Drayton, the Elizabethan song-writers, Chaucer, Lydgate, and dictionaries of early English. He had first been inspired to read by the sight of the beautifully illuminated letters of some old manuscripts that had been discovered when several ancient chests had been broken open in the loft of St. Mary Redcliffe. When he was eleven he had written an amazing poem, *Elinoure and Juga,* on a piece of yellowed parchment, and he presented it to a schoolmate as a medieval literary relic. The success of his hoax led him to try it on his teacher, who was also impressed. From then on Chatterton's fertile fancy was inflamed by the possibilities of the game, and he began to "discover" astonishing numbers of literary antiquities, feverishly manufactured through the long hours of the night in his little garret room. Around the historical figure of William Canynge, Lord Mayor of Bristol who had rebuilt the church, and with the help of the inscriptions on the tombs and of dictionaries, Chatterton began to create an imaginary fifteenth-century world in which the leading person was one "Thomas Rowley," poet-monk and confessor to Canynge. The good citizens of Bristol, flattered to find their ancient lineage traced in the "unearthed" Rowley poems, only encouraged the boy by their credulity. He produced for their edification various historical documents glorifying Bristol and their families, and submitted to them what purported to be the original manuscripts. When, in 1767, Chatterton entered an attorney's office, he had more time for his literary labors, and began to send copies of the Rowley poems to Horace Walpole and to the publisher Dodsley. Walpole, who professed to be something of an amateur medievalist, was at first genuinely interested in what he believed to be the recovery of a forgotten poet. But when the sounder scholarship of his friend Gray pointed out the impossibility of the poems' being what Chatterton claimed them to be, he was furious at having been taken in. His letter to Chatterton (see I, p. 974) in answer to the boy's request for the return of the poems will strike the reader as brutally cold and insensitive to the poet's precocious gifts. But Walpole was no more unkind than his contemporaries. It was the limitation of an Age of Reason that it should have seen only

that the boy was an impostor and have missed entirely the fact that he was a remarkable genius.

Ambitious to try wider fields in London, Chatterton deliberately strove to convince his employer that he was insane, won his release, and set out in great optimism. As a writer he had a double personality: Thomas Chatterton, who could write heroic couplets, pastorals, fables, and odes in the true Augustan manner; and Thomas Rowley, who was a strange mixture of medievalist and Elizabethan. In London he hoped to capitalize on the eighteenth-century side of his talents, and he wrote rapidly in every kind of popular literary form. But editors and publishers were in no hurry to pay him for his work, often broke their promises to him, and had no interest in printing the works of Thomas Rowley. After starving for a few months, he decided that death was better than defeat or charity, and he took a dose of arsenic. Shortly before the end, he wrote his *Will*, in which truthfully enough he said:

For had I never known the antique lore,
I ne'er had ventured from my peaceful shore.

The Rowley Poems remained unpublished until Tyrwhitt's edition of 1777, followed a year later by an appendix exposing the imposture. It takes no profound scholar today to recognize at once that the language and manner of the *Rowley Poems* are not those of the fifteenth century. Although the boy's fancy was smitten with medieval pageantry, he was far more familiar with Spenser than with Chaucer. The diction which he manufactured under the illusion that it looked Chaucerian is a strange medley of words that were never spelled as he spelled them, at any time in our literature. And the music of his verse is the fresh melodiousness of the Elizabethans. The discerning ear will also catch echoes of Collins, Gray, and even of Dryden and Pope, in the creations of Thomas Rowley. But such was the unfamiliarity of the eighteenth century with our literary past that these poems could actually create a long controversy as to their authenticity. In his *History of English Poetry* Thomas Warton actually included, with reservations, an account of them in his discussion of the fifteenth century. The tragedy is that if the eighteenth century had been better informed, Chatterton might have been moved to exercise boldly and under his own name his wonderful gifts. In the free assurance of his technique and the clarity of his music, Chatterton had, in effect, helped to restore the art of singing to English poetry. Had he lived our literature might have been vastly the richer.

From *Ælla: A Tragycal Enterlude*

Mynstrelles Songe

O! synge untoe mie roundelaie,
O! droppe the brynie teare wythe mee,
Daunce ne moe atte hallie daie,[1]
Lycke a reynynge[2] ryver bee;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Blacke hys cryne[3] as the wyntere nyghte,
Whyte hys rode[4] as the sommer snowe,
Rodde hys face as the mornynge lygthe,
Cale[5] he lyes ynne the grave belowe;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Swote[6] hys tyngue as the throstles note,
Quycke ynn daunce as thoughte canne bee,
Defte hys taboure, codgelle stote,[7]
O! hee lyes bie the wyllowe tree:
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys death-bedde,
Alle under the wyllowe tree.

Harke! the ravenne flappes hys wynge,
In the briered delle belowe;
Harke! the dethe-owle loude dothe syngg,

[1] holiday. [2] running [3] locks [4] complexion [5] cold. [6] sweet. [7] stout

To the nyghte-mares as heie[8] goe;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

See! the whyte moone sheenes onne hie;
Whyterre ys mie true loves shroude;
Whyterre yanne[9] the mornynge skie,
Whyterre yanne the evenynge cloude;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Heere, uponne mie true loves grave,
Schalle the baren fleurs be layde,
Nee one hallie[10] Seyncte to save
Al the celness[11] of a mayde.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys death-bedde,
Alle under the wyllowe tree.

Wythe mie hondes I'lle dente the brieres
Rounde his hallie corse to gre,[12]
Ouphante[13] fairie lyghte youre fyres,
Heere mie boddie stylle schalle bee.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Comme, wythe acorne-coppe & thorne,
Drayne mie hartys blodde awaie;
Lyfe & all yttes goode I scorne,
Daunce die ncte,[14] or teaste by daie.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Waterre wytches, crownede wythe reytes,[15]
Bere mee to yer[16] leathalle[17] tyde.
I die; I comme; mie true love waytes.
Thos[18] the damselle spake, and dyed.
(1777)

The Accounte of W. Canynge's Feast

Thorowe the halle the belle han[1] sounde;[2]
Byelecoyle[3] doe the grave beseeme:[4]
The ealdermenne[5] doe sytte arounde,
Ande snoffelle[6] oppe the cheorte[7] steeme.[8]
Lyche[9] asses wylde ynne desarte waste
Swotelye the morneynge ayre doe taste.

Syche keene thie ate; the minstrels plaie,
The dynne of angelles doe theie keepe;
Heie stylle; the guestes ha ne to saie,[10]
Butte nodde yer[11] thankes ande falle aslape.
Thos echone[12] daie bee I to deene,[13]
Gyf[14] Rowley, Iscamm, or Tyb Gorges[15] be ne seene.
(1777)

George Crabbe

(1754-1832)

Much read and admired in his own time, somewhat forgotten in the blaze created by the geniuses who came after him, but more recently restored to his just place as an admirable poet, George Crabbe was really a transitional figure. He was at once the last of Pope's imitators and a forerunner of Wordsworth. With the pre-romantic poets with whom we have dealt he has little in common. Indeed, he set himself the task of confuting their imaginative excursions, and preferred, throughout his career, to write in the old heroic couplet. On the other hand, he was fairly free from the false elegance and abstractness of diction of the later neoclassicists, and had a strictly non-Augustan interest in the portraiture of simple human beings. His poetry, if never on the wing, is solid in its honesty and closeness to the facts of life. In this, his particular gift, he resembles Wordsworth, who praised him for the "truth" of what he wrote

He was born in the sordid little seacoast town of Aldeburgh, in Suffolk, the son of a petty revenue officer who could not afford to give his children much of an education.

[8] they [9] than. [10] holy [11] coldness [12] grow [13] elfin [14] night. [15] reeds. [16] their. [17] deadly. [18] thus.
[1] has. [2] sounded [3] French *bel accueil*, "fair welcoming." [4] appear [5] nobles [6] snuff [7] pleasant. [8] odors.
[9] like [10] have nothing to say. [11] their. [12] every. [13] worthy. [14] if.
[15] These were three friends of Mr. Canynge.—Tyrwhitt's edition

Aldeburgh, so intimately connected with Crabbe's poetry, has been described by the poet's son, his first biographer, as consisting of "two parallel and unpaved streets, running between mean and scrambling houses, the abodes of sea-faring men, pilots, and fishers." Crabbe's earliest attempts to escape from the poverty and brutality of his environment were doomed to failure. He tried his hand at various occupations—as apprentice to an apothecary, a laborer on the quay, and a surgeon. Disheartened, he left Aldeburgh with a scant purse, and journeyed to London to try his luck as a writer. After a time there, when he was at the end of his resources, he wrote to Burke for assistance. The latter generously took him into his home, introduced him to his friends, and procured a publisher for Crabbe's *The Library* (1781), after the poet had failed of success with *Inebriety* (1775) and *The Candidate* (1780). Through Burke's influence Crabbe, having taken orders, was appointed chaplain to the Duke of Rutland.

He uncovered his true literary bent as a result of his displeasure with Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*. Only too familiar with the squalor and misery of his own birthplace, Crabbe was angered at the rural felicity of "sweet Auburn." To blast Goldsmith's picture of peace and beauty, Crabbe wrote a long poem, *The Village*, in which he showed the country as he knew it. With bitter heart he spoke of the "thin harvest," the "rank weeds," the "sullen woe displayed in every face," the ignorance of country folk and their arduous labors. All that can be said of this difference of approach is that both Goldsmith and Crabbe were right, and that each chose to select such aspects of the country as suited his temperament. Crabbe was closed to the imaginative sympathy of Goldsmith, just as the latter was somewhat blind to the grimness that Crabbe presents.

That old foe of the rosy pastoral, Samuel Johnson, was delighted with *The Village*, and called it "original, vigorous, and elegant." Before its publication in 1783, he revised it for Crabbe but said: "The alterations which I have made, I do not require him to adopt; for my lines are, perhaps, not often better [than] his own." The volume established Crabbe's reputation, and he followed it in 1785 with *The Newspaper*. It is surprising to learn that for the next twenty-two years Crabbe published nothing. He wrote much during this period, but was chiefly occupied with raising his family, and it is said that he consigned most of his efforts to the fire, to the great delight of his small sons. Among his works thus lost were three novels that did not please his wife. At last, in 1807, he appeared in print again with *The Parish Register*. This, *The Borough* (1810), and *Tales in Verse* (1812) were widely read. His last book was *Tales of the Hall* (1819). A number of posthumous *Tales* were published by his son in 1834

Among Crabbe's great admirers have been men so dissimilar as Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, Fox, Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, and Lamb. He made at least four distinct contributions to literature: his was the first attempt to see the country realistically; he was among our earliest penetrators into the psychology of human conduct; he was one of the first writers to recognize the shaping power of environment on the human character; and, because of all these and of his interest in narrative, he did much to further the development of the novel and the short story.

From *The Village*

BOOK I

The village life, and every care that reigns
O'er youthful peasants and declining swains;
What labor yields, and what, that labor past,
Age, in its hour of languor, finds at last;
What form the real picture of the poor,
Demand a song—the Muse can give no more.

Fled are those times when, in harmonious strains,
The rustic poet praised his native plains.[1]
No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,
Their country's beauty or their nymphs' rehearse;
Yet still for these we frame the tender strain,
Still in our lays fond Corydons complain,
And shepherds' boys their amorous pains reveal,

[1] Cf Virgil's *Eclogues*, I, p. 1072.

The only pains, alas! they never feel.
On Mincio's[2] banks, in Cæsar's bounteous reign,
If Tityrus found the Golden Age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way?
Yes, thus the Muses sing of happy swains
Because the Muses never knew their pains.
They boast their peasants' pipes; but peasants now
Resign their pipes and plod behind the plough;
And few amid the rural tribe have time
To number syllables and play with rhyme.
Save honest Duck,[3] what son of verse could share
The poet's rapture and the peasant's care?
Or the great labors of the field degrade
With the new peril of a poorer trade?
From this chief cause these idle praises spring,
That themes so easy few forbear to sing,
For no deep thought the trifling subjects ask;
To sing of shepherds is an easy task.
The happy youth assumes the common strain,
A nymph his mistress and himself a swain;
With no sad scenes he clouds his tuneful prayer,
But all, to look like her, is painted fair.
I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the midday sun, with fervid ray,
On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
While some, with feebler heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortune yet sustain their parts,
Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?
No; cast by fortune on a frowning coast
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast,
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,
And other shepherds dwell with other mates:
By such examples taught, I paint the cot
As Truth will paint it, and as bards will not;
Nor you, ye poor, of letter'd scorn complain;
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain.
O'ercome by labor and bow'd down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?
Can poets soothe you when you pine for bread
By winding myrtles round your ruin'd shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighboring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;
Rank weeds that every art and care defy
Reign o'er the land and rob the blighted rye:
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar
And to the ragged infant threaten war;
There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil;
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high above the slender sheaf
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;
With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
And a sad splendor vainly shines around.
So looks the nymph whom wretched arts adorn,
Betray'd by man, then left for man to scorn,
Whose cheek in vain assumes the mimic rose
While her sad eyes the troubled breast disclose;
Whose outward splendor is but folly's dress,
Exposing most when most it gilds distress.
Here joyless roam a wild amphibious race,
With sullen woe displayed in every face,
Who far from civil arts and social fly
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.
Here too the lawless merchant of the main[4]
Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain;
Want only claim'd the labor of the day,
But vice now steals his nightly rest away.
Where are the swains who, daily labor done,
With rural games play'd down the setting sun,
Who struck with matchless force the bounding ball
Or made the ponderous quoit obliquely fall;
While some huge Ajax,[5] terrible and strong,
Engaged some artful stripling of the throng
And fell beneath him, foil'd, while far around
Hoarse triumph rose and rocks return'd the sound?
Where now are these? Beneath yon cliff they stand
To show the freighted pinnace where to land,
To load the ready steed with guilty haste,
To fly in terror o'er the pathless waste,
Or, when detected in their straggling course,
To foil their foes by cunning or by force,
Or, yielding part (which equal knaves demand),
To gain a lawless passport through the land.
Here, wandering long amid these frowning fields,
I sought the simple life that Nature yields.

[2] Virgil's home was at Mantua on an island in the river Mincio.
[3] Stephen Duck, the thresher poet, patronized by Queen Caroline, wife of George II.
[4] smuggler. [5] a Homeric hero noted for his strength.

Rapine and Wrong and Fear usurp'd her place,
And a bold, artful, surly, savage race
Who, only skill'd to take the finny tribe,
The yearly dinner or septennial bribe,
Wait on the shore and, as the waves run high,
On the tossed vessel bend their eager eye
Which to their coast directs its venturous way—
Theirs, or the ocean's, miserable prey.
As on their neighboring beach yon swallows stand
And wait for favoring winds to leave the land,
While still for flight the ready wing is spread,
So waited I the favoring hour, and fled,
Fled from these shores where guilt and famine reign,
And cried "Ah! hapless they who still remain,
Who still remain to hear the ocean roar,
Whose greedy waves devour the lessening shore
Till some fierce tide, with more imperious sway,
Sweeps the low hut and all it holds away,
When the sad tenant weeps from door to door
And begs a poor protection from the poor."
But these are scenes where Nature's niggard hand
Gave a spare portion to the famish'd land;
Hers is the fault if here mankind complain
Of fruitless toil and labor spent in vain.
But yet in other scenes more fair in view,
Where Plenty smiles—alas! she smiles for few,
And those who taste not yet behold her store
Are as the slaves that dig the golden ore,
The wealth around them makes them doubly poor.
Or will you deem them amply paid in health,
Labor's fair child, that languishes with wealth?
Go then, and see them rising with the sun,
Through a long course of daily toil to run;
See them beneath the dog-star's raging heat,
When the knees tremble and the temples beat;
Behold them, leaning on their scythes, look o'er
The labor past, and toils to come explore;
See them alternate suns and showers engage,
And hoard up aches and anguish for their age;
Through fens and marshy moors their steps pursue
When their warm pores imbibe the evening dew;
Then own that labor may as fatal be
To these thy slaves as thine excess to thee.
Amid this tribe too oft a manly pride
Strives in strong toil the fainting heart to hide;
There may you see the youth of slender frame
Contend with weakness, weariness, and shame;
Yet, urged along, and proudly loath to yield,
He strives to join his fellows of the field,
Till long-contending nature droops at last,
Declining health rejects his poor repast,
His cheerless spouse the coming danger sees,
And mutual murmurs urge the slow disease.
Yet grant them health, 'tis not for us to tell,
Though the head droops not, that the heart is well;
Or will you praise that homely, healthy fare,
Plenteous and plain, that happy peasants share?
Oh! trifle not with wants you cannot feel,
Nor mock the misery of a stinted meal—
Homely, not wholesome, plain, not plenteous, such
As you who praise would never deign to touch.
Ye gentle souls who dream of rural ease,
Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please,
Go, if the peaceful cot your praises share,
Go look within, and ask if peace be there:
If peace be his—that drooping weary sire,
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire,
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand
Turns on the wretched hearth the expiring brand!
Nor yet can time itself obtain for these
Life's latest comforts, due respect and ease;
For yonder see that hoary swain whose age
Can with no cares except his own engage,
Who, propp'd on that rude staff, looks up to see
The bare arms broken from the withering tree
On which, a boy, he climb'd the loftiest bough,
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.
He once was chief in all the rustic trade;
His steady hand the straightest furrow made;
Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
To find the triumphs of his youth allowed.
A transient pleasure sparkles in his eyes,
He hears and smiles, then thinks again and sighs,
For now he journeys to his grave in pain;
The rich disdain him—nay, the poor disdain;
Alternate masters now their slave command,
Urge the weak efforts of his feeble hand,
And when his age attempts its task in vain,
With ruthless taunts of lazy poor, complain.
Oft may you see him when he tends the sheep,
His winter-charge, beneath the hillock weep;
Oft hear him murmur to the winds that blow
O'er his white locks and bury them in snow,
When, roused by rage and muttering in the morn,
He mends the broken hedge with icy thorn:
"Why do I live, when I desire to be
At once from life and life's long labor free?
Like leaves in spring the young are blown away
Without the sorrows of a slow decay;
I, like yon wither'd leaf, remain behind
Nipp'd by the frost and shivering in the wind;

There it abides till younger buds come on,
As I, now all my fellow-swains are gone;
Then, from the rising generation thrust,
It falls, like me, unnoticed to the dust.
"These fruitful fields, these numerous flocks I see,
Are others' gain, but killing cares to me;
To me the children of my youth are lords,
Cool in their looks but hasty in their words;
Wants of their own demand their care: and who
Feels his own want and succors others too?
A lonely wretched man, in pain I go;
None need my help and none relieve my woe;
Then let my bones beneath the turf be laid,
And men forget the wretch they would not aid."
Thus groan the old till, by disease oppress'd,
They taste a final woe, and then they rest.
Theirs is yon house that holds the parish poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
There where the putrid vapors, flagging, play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day—
There children dwell who know no parents' care,
Parents who know no children's love, dwell there!
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives and mothers never wed,
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears,
The lame, the blind, and—far the happiest they!—
The moping idiot and the madman gay.
Here too the sick their final doom receive,
Here brought, amid the scenes of grief, to grieve,
Where the loud groans from some sad chamber flow,
Mix'd with the clamors of the crowd below;
Here, sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,
And the cold charities of man to man,
Whose laws indeed for ruined age provide,
And strong compulsion plucks the scrap from pride;
But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh,
And pride embitters what it can't deny.
Say ye, oppress'd by some fantastic woes,
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose,
Who press the downy couch while slaves advance
With timid eye to read the distant glance,
Who with sad prayers the weary doctor tease
To name the nameless ever-new disease,
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure
Which real pain, and that alone, can cure;
How would ye bear in real pain to lie
Despised, neglected, left alone to die?
How would ye bear to draw your latest breath
Where all that's wretched paves the way for death?
Such is that room which one rude beam divides,
And naked rafters from the sloping sides;
Where the vile bands that bind the thatch are seen,
And lath and mud are all that lie between,
Save one dull pane that, coarsely patch'd, gives way
To the rude tempest, yet excludes the day.
Here on a matted flock, with dust o'erspread,
The drooping wretch reclines his languid head;
For him no hand the cordial cup applies,
Or wipes the tear that stagnates in his eyes;
No friends with soft discourse his pain beguile,
Or promise hope till sickness wears a smile.
But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,
Shakes the thin roof and echoes round the walls;
Anon a figure enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit,
With looks unalter'd by these scenes of woe,
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go,
He bids the gazing throng around him fly
And carries fate and physic in his eye:
A potent quack, long versed in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills,
Whose murderous hand a drowsy bench protect,
And whose most tender mercy is neglect.
Paid by the parish for attendance here,
He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer;
In haste he seeks the bed where Misery lies,
Impatience mark'd in his averted eyes;
And, some habitual queries hurried o'er,
Without reply, he rushes on the door.
His drooping patient, long inured to pain,
And long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain;
He ceases now the feeble help to crave
Of man, and silent sinks into the grave.
But ere his death some pious doubts arise,
Some simple fears which "bold bad" men despise;
Fain would he ask the parish priest to prove
His title certain to the joys above;
For this he sends the murmuring nurse, who calls
The holy stranger to these dismal walls.
And doth not he, the pious man, appear,
He, "passing rich with forty pounds a year"?[6]
Ah! no. A shepherd of a different stock,
And far unlike him, feeds this little flock:
A jovial youth who thinks his Sunday's task
As much as God or man can fairly ask;
The rest he gives to loves and labors light,
To fields the morning, and to feasts the night;
None better skill'd the noisy pack to guide,
To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide;
A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,
And, skill'd at whist, devotes the night to play.

[6] a reference to the village preacher in Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, see I, p 981, line 142.

Then, while such honors bloom around his head,
Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed
To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal
To combat fears that e'en the pious feel?
Now once again the gloomy scene explore,
Less gloomy now: the bitter hour is o'er;
The man of many sorrows sighs no more.
Up yonder hill, behold how sadly slow
The bier moves winding from the vale below;
There lie the happy dead, from trouble free,
And the glad parish pays the frugal fee.
No more, O Death, thy victim starts to hear
Churchwarden stern or kingly overseer;
No more the farmer claims his humble bow;
Thou art his lord, the best of tyrants thou!
Now to the church behold the mourners come,
Sedately torpid and devoutly dumb.
The village children now their games suspend
To see the bier that bears their ancient friend,
For he was one in all their idle sport
And like a monarch ruled their little court:
The pliant bow he form'd; the flying ball,
The bat, the wicket were his labors all;
Him now they follow to his grave, and stand
Silent and sad and gazing, hand in hand,
While, bending low, their eager eyes explore
The mingled relics of the parish poor.
The bell tolls late, the moping owl flies round,
Fear marks the flight and magnifies the sound;
The busy priest, detain'd by weightier care,
Defers his duty till the day of prayer,
And, waiting long, the crowd retire distressed
To think a poor man's bones should lie unblessed.

(1783)

Robert Burns

(1759-1796)

Because of his closeness to the soil and his warm common humanity with simple folk, Burns shares with William Blake (see p. 83) the title of being the earliest of full-fledged romantic poets in the eighteenth century. But whereas Blake had little influence on the course of the Romantic Movement and was hardly known, the fame of Burns's verses did much to usher in the era of Wordsworth.

Misrepresentation rather than fact has been the basis for the familiar gossip about Burns's life. He has been falsely painted as a profligate, a drunkard, and a faithless lover—for reasons that are not far to seek. His staunch republicanism was best explained away by libeling him as a man. He was also a taunting enemy of religious formalism, cant, and hypocrisy; and those who felt the sting of his mockery could retort only by attributing dissoluteness to him. That he drank much on some occasions is no doubt true, but it was a vice of the time which he seems to have contracted from his acquaintance in high society. That he was often falling in love with a new lass is equally true; he was very susceptible to female charms, but there was nothing mean or insincere in his passionate attachments, and the facts indicate that, once married, he was a devoted husband.

From childhood Burns was familiar with the poverty of the Scottish peasant. He was born January 25, 1759, in a clay cottage of two rooms at Alloway, near Ayr, not distant from the southwestern coast of Scotland. 'My father," he tells us, "was advanced in life when he married. I was the eldest of seven children; and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labor. . . . We lived very poorly: I was a dexterous Ploughman for my years." Misfortune dogged the steps of his family, which moved from farm to farm to cultivate an ungrateful soil that refused to yield them a living for all their arduous labors. "This kind of life," Burns said, "the cheerless gloom of a hermit with the unceasing moil of a galley slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of Rhyme." But there were some recompenses in this hard existence. The poet's father, despite his failure as a farmer, was an intelligent man of

admirable character, and the affections of their home have been lovingly painted in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* (see p. 69).

Although he had but three years of schooling, Burns was an avid reader in English literature and mastered French well enough to read it fluently. More important, he was an enthusiastic collector of the rich stores of Scottish songs, made by forgotten singers and known to the simple folk of the countryside. Most of his enduring work, indeed, is but superb adaptation and imitation of crude old songs; he gave to the efforts of unknown bards the gift of immortality in exchange for the inspiration they offered him. Beginning his career, then, as a rhymer of local oral literature, he became gradually more widely known, though he was in his late twenties before he ventured to travel more than ten miles from his home. At last disgusted with the unfruitful toil that was his daily lot, he published in 1786 at the nearby town of Kilmarnock the first edition of his poems, with the intention of raising money for a trip to Jamaica. The volume created something of a sensation, and he decided to reach a larger public by printing another edition at Edinburgh.

To Edinburgh he went, therefore, and made prolonged visits for most of the ensuing year. For he found himself lionized at once. With the excitement over the primitive and the Rousseauistic worship of nature in the literary atmosphere, Burns seemed like a living proof to the new cult of the validity of its ideas. He was hailed by the literati as a wonderful example of untaught genius, a man schooled by nature alone. Though this was far from the case, Burns was pleased to fall in with their notions, and described himself as "but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail."

It did not take Burns long, however, to realize that there was no future for him in Edinburgh. In 1786 her father's refusal had prevented his marriage to Jean Armour, who was then with child by Burns, in the interim he had fallen in love with Mary Campbell (his "Highland Mary") and been engaged to marry her, but she had died soon after of a fever. All obstacles to his marriage with Jean Armour were at last removed by 1788, and he took his wife to a little farm that before long proved no more tractable than his earlier ventures. His friends procured him the post of exciseman, and he made his headquarters at Dumfries. From there it was his duty to travel several hundred miles a week. His bold advocacy of the French Revolution and his love of the bottle made him few friends among his neighbors, and he took to lower company. Sunk in poverty again, he declined rapidly in health, his earlier physical overexertion now taking its toll. His untimely death was the occasion for his many enemies to cloud his memory with exaggerations and distortions of his weaknesses.

And it is not hard to see why he offended his provincial fellow citizens. Like Rousseau, Burns believed strongly in the guidance of the heart to religion, and despised narrow orthodoxy and smug respectability. His poems, *The Holy Fair, Address to the Deil* (i.e. Devil), *Holy Willie's Prayer,* and *Address to the Unco Guid* must have struck the strict Calvinists as so much devil's work. Their fury only spurred him on to further affronts. His objections to them are fairly well summed up in the opening lines of the *Address to the Unco Guid*:

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebour's fauts and folly!

Today, with the possible exception of his masterpiece, *Tam O'Shanter,* Burns is best known for his many and beautiful songs. These vary from the lighthearted sweetness of *My Nanie, O* (see p. 67) and *Green Grow the Rashes* (see p. 68), to the boisterous jollity of *Willie Brewed a Peck o' Maut* (see p. 77); from the sadness of *Ae Fond Kiss* (see p. 80) and *Highland Mary* (see p. 80) to the patriotic fervor of *Scots, Wha Hae* (see p. 81); from the touching dignity of *John Anderson, My Jo, John* (see p. 76) to the pathos of *The Banks o' Doon* (see p. 77) and the passionate exuberance of *A Red, Red*

Rose (see p. 82). In all these Burns sings out of a full heart. This emotional directness is his peculiar quality, for in no romantic poet is the interest so entirely one of the feelings. In no other poet of the school is there less intellectual appeal. Yet, despite the note of spontaneity in these songs, their great merit is their swift conciseness—a characteristic rightness which makes them somehow akin to the best lyrics of the ancients, to whom Burns owed nothing

The good earth on which dwell man and his fellow creatures, the mouse, the louse, the mule, and the daisy, is rarely absent from Burns's consciousness. He finds no lessons in her such as Wordsworth will find; he feels no rapturous inspiration from her such as Shelley will experience; she is to him the loved reality that she is to the peasant. In *To a Mouse* (see p. 71) and *To a Mountain Daisy* (see p. 74) one feels Burns's profound kinship with these "earth-born companions and fellow mortals."

These poems show Burns at his best. But there is another side to him. He might mock at Pope or Steele in his vivaciously autobiographical *Epistle to J. Lapraik* (see p. 72), but on occasion he could not resist the unfortunate temptation to emulate the elegance of the neoclassicists. When he tried it, he failed lamentably, for he spoke in an affected, pompous manner that is worthy of only the most wretched of Pope's imitators. In general the division between Burns at his best and at his worst is marked by his use of the Scottish dialect of his native Lowlands and his use of the King's English. His heights and depths can thus be studied in various passages of *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. To know what is imperishable in Burns requires, therefore, a slight effort at mastering the Lowland vocabulary. But the true flavor of his beautiful songs can be relished only when they are recited or sung by one of Burns's own compatriots.

Mary Morison

O Mary, at thy window be,
  It is the wished, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
  That make the miser's treasure poor.
How blithely wad I bide the stoure,[1]
  A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure,
  The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
  The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
  I sat, but neither heard nor saw.
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
  And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sighed, and said amang them a':
  "Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
  Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
  Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
  At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
  The thought o' Mary Morison.

(written 1781)

[1] endure the conflict

My Nanie, O

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
  'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
  An' I'll awa to Nanie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill:
  The night's baith mirk an' rainy, O;
But I'll get my plaid an' out I'll steal,
  An' owre the hill to Nanie, O.

My Nanie's charming, sweet, an' young;
  Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
  That wad beguile my Nanie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
  As spotless as she's bonie, O:
The op'ning gowan,[1] wat wi' dew,
  Nae purer is than Nanie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
  An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be?
  I'm welcome aye to Nanie, O.

[1] daisy.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
An' I maun[2] guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear[3] ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a' my Nanie, O.

Our auld guidman[4] delights to view
His sheep an' kye[5] thrive bonie, O;
But, I'm as blythe that hauds[6] his pleugh,
And has nae care but Nanie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O;
Nae ither care in life hae I,
But live, an love my Nanie, O.

(written 1782)

Green Grow the Rashes

Chorus.—Green grow the rashes, O!
Green grow the rashes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend
Are spent among the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In every hour that passes, O·
What signifies the life o' man,
An 't were na for the lasses, O?

The war'ly[1] race may riches chase,
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.

But gie me a cannie[2] hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O;
An' war'ly cares, an' war'ly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie,[3] O.

For you sae douce,[4] ye sneer at this;
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her prentice han' she try'd on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.

(written 1783)

From *The Jolly Beggars*
Jolly Mortals, Fill Your Glasses

See the smoking bowl before us!
Mark our jovial, ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing:

Chorus

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest!

What is title? what is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!

With the ready trick and gable
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies[1] on the hay.

Does the train-attended carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum
Who have characters to lose.

Here's to budgets, bags,[2] and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged brats and callets![3]
One and all, cry out, Amen!

(written 1785)

[2] must [3] goods [4] land-owner. [5] cows [6] holds.

[1] worldly [2] quiet [3] topsy-turvy. [4] serious.

[1] wenches
[2] bags for tools
[3] wenches.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

Though of no great length, this poem is nevertheless one of Burns's longest, and is notable for its use of the Spenserian stanza. It has been very popular, but shows Burns at his best only in some passages. Indeed, it affords a curious demonstration of how the poet is rarely successful when he forsakes his native language for conventional English, his lapses from true poetry will be found only in the portions where the latter is employed. Thus the first stanza is weak and pretentious, while the second is powerful and vivid; all continues well until the seventy-third line opens a formal, uninspired stanza; and the next stanza is downright silly in its sentimentality, inasmuch as there seems to be no one interested in betraying "sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth," and all the virtuous indignation is just so much rhetoric But the simple dignity of the depiction of the farmer's home-life and the tender portrait of the poet's father entitle this poem to the favor always accorded it, despite its flaws

INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.—GRAY.

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end:
My dearest meed a friend's esteem and praise.
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween!

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh,[1]
The short'ning winter day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae[2] the pleugh,
The black'ning trains o' craws[3] to their repose;
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes,—
This night his weekly moil is at an end,—
Collects his spades, his mattocks and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

[1] moan. [2] from. [3] crows.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an agèd tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher[4] through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin[5] noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle,[6] blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh[7] and care beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labor an' his toil.

Belyve,[8] the elder bairns come drappin in,
At service out amang the farmers roun';
Some ca'[9] the pleugh, some herd, some tentie[10] rin
A cannie errand to a neibor toun:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her ee,
Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw[11] new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won[12] penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:[13]
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos[14] that he sees or hears.
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view;
The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers,
Gars[15] auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command
The younkers a' are warnèd to obey;
An' mind their labors wi' an eydent[16] hand,
An' ne'er tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
"An' O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
An' mind your duty, duly, morn an' night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang[17] astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!"

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door.
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,

[4] stagger. [5] fluttering. [6] fire. [7] anxiety. [8] soon.
[9] drive. [10] watchful. [11] fine. [12] hard-won.
[13] inquires [14] unusual things.
[15] Makes old clothes look almost as well as the new.
[16] diligent. [17] go.

Tells how a neibor lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's ee, and flush her cheek;
Wi' heart-struck, anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins[18] is afraid to speak;
Weel pleas'd the mother hears it's nae wild worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome Jenny brings him ben,[19]
A strappin youth; he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill taen;
The father cracks[20] of horses, pleughs, and kye.[21]
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But, blate[22] and laithfu',[23] scarce can weel behave;
The mother wi' a woman's wiles can spy
What maks the youth sae bashful' an' sae grave
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.[24]

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare—
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can with studied, sly, ensnaring art
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child,
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch[25] chief of Scotia's food;
The sowpe[26] their only hawkie[27] does afford,
That yont[28] the hallan[29] snugly chows her cud.
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck fell,[30]
An' aft[31] he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wife, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond[32] auld, sin' lint[33] was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er with patriarchal grace
The big ha'-bible,[34] ance his father's pride;
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets[35] wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales[36] a portion with judicious care;
And, "Let us worship God," he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name,
Or noble *Elgin* beets[37] the heaven-ward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays.
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,—
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,—
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in heav'n the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land;
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,[38]

[18] halfway. [19] inside. [20] talks. [21] cows [22] shy
[23] bashful [24] rest [25] porridge. [26] milk. [27] cow
[28] beyond [29] partition. [30] well-saved, strong cheese.
[31] oft [32] twelve-month [33] flax. [34] hall-Bible.
[35] grey temples [36] chooses [37] kindles
[38] the Apostle John

Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heav'n's command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"[39]
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear,
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace except the heart!
The Pow'r, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply in some cottage far apart
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of God";[40]
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile;
Then, how'e'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide
That streamed thro' Wallace's[41] undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die—the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

(written 1785)

[39] from Pope's *Windsor Forest*
[40] from Pope's *Essay on Man*

To a Mouse

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785

Wee, sleekit,[1] cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
Oh, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou needna start awa' sae hasty,
Wi' bickerin' brattle![2]
I wad be laith[3] to rin and chase thee
Wi' murd'ring pattle![4]

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earthborn companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubtna, whiles,[5] but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun[6] live!
A daimen icker in a thrave[7]
'S a sma' request:

[41] See p 81
[1] sleek [2] hurrying clatter [3] loath.
[4] hand-stuck for cleaning the plough
[5] sometimes [6] must
[7] occasional ear in twenty-four sheaves

I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,[8]
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!
And naething now to big[9] a new ane
O' foggage[10] green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell[11] an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin' fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till, crash! the cruel coulter passed
Out through thy cell.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Hast cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turned out for a' thy trouble,
But[12] house or hald,
To thole[13] the winter's sleety dribble,
And cranreuch[14] cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,[15]
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, though I canna see,
I guess an' fear.

(written 1785)

[8] rest. [9] build [10] grass [11] sharp.
[12] without. [13] endure [14] cold frost [15] astray.
[1] partridges. [2] the hare. [3] scurrying away.

Epistle to John Lapraik, an Old Scottish Bard

1

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks[1] scraichin' loud at e'en,
An' morning poussie[2] whiddin[3] seen,
Inspire my Muse,
This freedom, in an unknown frien',
I pray excuse.

2

On Fasten-een[4] we had a rockin',[5]
To ca' the crack[6] and weave our stockin';
And there was muckle[7] fun and jokin',
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin'[8]
At "sang about."

3

There was ae[9] sang, amang the rest,
Aboon[10] them a' it pleased me best,
That some kind husband had addressed
To some sweet wife:
It thirled[11] the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life.

4

I've scarce heard ought described sae weel,
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I "Can this be Pope, or Steele;
Or Beattie's[12] wark?"
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel[13]
About Muirkirk.

5

It pat me fidgin' fain[14] to hear't,
And sae about him there I spiered;[15]
Then a' that kenned[16] him round declared
He had ingine,[17]
That nane excelled it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

6

That, set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce[18] or merry tale,
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel,
Or witty catches,[19]
'Tween Inverness and Teviotdale,
He had few matches.

[4] Ash-Wednesday evening. [5] gathering [6] to talk.
[7] much. [8] turn. [9] one. [10] above. [11] thrilled.
[12] Scottish poet (1735-1803). [13] fellow.
[14] made me very glad. [15] enquired. [16] knew.
[17] talent. [18] serious. [19] rhymes.

7

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh an' graith,[20]
Or die a cadger pownie's death,
At some dyke-back,[21]
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith,
To hear your crack.[22]

8

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle[23] fell;
Tho' rude an' rough—
Yet crooning to a body's sel,
Does weel eneugh.

9

I am nae poet, in a sense;
But just a rhymer like by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence;
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

10

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?"
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

11

What's a' your jargon o' your Schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools?
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs[24] your grammers?
Ye'd better taen up spades and shools,[25]
Or knappin-hammers.

12

A set o' dull, conceited hashes[26]
Confuse their brains in college-classes,
They gang in stirks[27] and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne[28] they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

13

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then, tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My Muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

14

O for a spunk o' Allan's[29] glee,
Or Fergusson's,[30] the bauld an' slee,
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear[31] eneugh for me,
If I could get it.

15

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends I b'lieve are few;
Yet, if your catalogue be fow,[32]
I'se no insist:
But, gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

16

I winna blaw about mysel,
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends, an' folks that wish me well,
They sometimes roose[33] me;
Tho', I maun own, as monie still
As far abuse me.

17

There's ae wee faut they whyles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For monie a plack[34] they wheedle frae me
At dance or fair;
Maybe some ither thing they gie me,
They weel can spare.

[20] gear. [21] behind some wall. [22] talk. [23] rhyming.
[24] of what use are? [25] shovels. [26] fools. [27] bullocks
[28] afterwards.
[29] Allan Ramsay (1686-1758), Scottish poet.
[30] Robert Fergusson (1750-1774), Scottish poet.
[31] learning. [32] full [33] praise. [34] penny.

18

But Mauchline Race or Mauchline Fair,
I should be proud to meet you there:
We 'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather;
And hae a swap o' rhymin-ware
Wi ane anither.

19

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen him wi' reekin water;[35]
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter,[36]
To cheer our heart;
An' faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

20

Awa ye selfish, warly race,
Wha think that havins,[37] sense, an' grace,
Ev'n love an' friendship should give place
To Catch-the-Plack![38]
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.[39]

21

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
"Each aid the others,"
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!

22

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle,
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,[40]
Who am most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
Your friend and servant.

(written 1785)

[35] We will make the four-gill cup rattle and christen it with boiling water.
[36] drink.
[37] manners.
[38] money-making.
[39] talk.
[40] thrill with joy.

To a Mountain Daisy

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH, IN APRIL, 1786

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure[1]
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens wield
High shelt'ring woods an' wa's[2] maun shield:
But thou, beneath the random bield[3]
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie[4] stibble-field
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd
And guileless trust;
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,

[1] dust. [2] walls. [3] protection. [4] dry.

Till billows rage and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering Worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink;
Till, wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He ruin'd sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight
Shall be thy doom.

(written 1786)

Auld Lang Syne

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?[1]

Chorus.—For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans[2] fine;
But we've wandered monie a weary fit
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,[3]
Frae mornin' sun til dine;[4]
But seas between us braid[5] hae roared
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,[6]
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught
For auld lang syne!

For auld, etc.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine;
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

(written 1788)

Of A' the Airts[1] the Wind Can Blaw

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best:
There's wild woods grow, an' rivers row,
An' mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flow'rs,
I see her sweet an' fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air.
There's not a bonie flow'r that springs
By fountain, shaw or green;
There's not a bonie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

(written 1788)

Sweet Afton

1

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes![1]
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!

2

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear—
I charge you, disturb not my slumbering fair!

[1] old long ago [2] daisies. [3] brook.
[4] dinner time. [5] broad. [6] companion.

[1] directions.
[1] hillsides.

3

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighboring hills,
Far marked with the courses of clear, winding rills!
There daily I wander, as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

4

How pleasant thy banks and green vallies below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow!
There oft, as mild Ev'ning weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk[2] shades my Mary and me.

5

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides!
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As, gathering sweet flowerets, she stems thy clear wave!

6

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes!
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!

(written 1789)

John Anderson, My Jo, John

John Anderson, my jo,[1] John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;[2]
But now your brow is beld,[3] John,
Your locks are like the snow;
But blessings on your frosty pow,[4]
John Anderson, my jo!

John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And monie a canty[5] day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither.
Now we maun totter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo!

(written 1789)

[1] sweetheart. [2] smooth [3] bald. [4] head. [5] happy.

Tam Glen

1

My heart is a-breaking, dear tittie,[1]
Some counsel unto me come len'.
To anger them a' is a pity,
But what will I do wi' Tam Glen?

2

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw[2] fellow
In poortith[3] I might mak a fen'.[4]
What care I in riches to wallow,
If I mauna marry Tam Glen?

3

There's Lowrie the laird o' Dumeller:
"Guid day to you," brute! he comes ben.[5]
He brags and he blaws o' his siller,[6]
But when will he dance like Tam Glen?

4

My minnie[7] does constantly deave[8] me,
And bids me beware o' young men.
They flatter, she says, to deceive me—
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen?

5

My daddie says, gin I'll forsake him,
He'd gie me guid hunder marks ten.
But if it's ordained I maun take him,
O, wha will I get but Tam Glen?

6

Yestreen at the valentines' dealing,
My heart to my mou[9] gied a sten,[10]
For thrice I drew ane without failing,
And thrice it was written "Tam Glen!"

7

The last Holloween I was waukin[11]
My droukit sark-sleeve,[12] as ye ken—

[1] sister. [2] such a fine. [3] poverty. [4] shift. [5] inside. [6] blows about his money. [7] mother. [8] deafen. [9] mouth. [10] spring. [11] watching. [12] wetted shirt-sleeve.

His likeness came up the house staukin,[13]
And the very grey breeks[14] o' Tam Glen!

8

Come, counsel, dear tittie, don't tarry!
I'll gie ye my bonie black hen,
Gif ye will advise me to marry
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

(written 1789)

Willie Brewed a Peck o' Maut

O Willie brewed a peck o' maut,[1]
And Rob and Allan cam to see;
Three blither hearts, that lee-lang[2] night,
Ye wad na found in Christendie.

Chorus

We are na fou,[3] we're no that fou,
But just a drappie[4] in our e'e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,[5]
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.[6]

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae[7] we hope to be!

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That's blinkin' in the lift[8] sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle[9] us hame,
But, by my sooth! she'll wait a wee.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward loun is he!
Wha first beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king among us three!

(written 1789)

The Banks o' Doon

The precision of Burns's art in the song is nowhere better exhibited than here. For all its lyric lightness, it is as neat as a classic in its economy. And the poignancy of the last line is perfect.

[13] stalking. [14] breeches.
[1] malt. [2] live-long. [3] full. [4] little drop.
[5] dawn. [6] brew. [7] more. [8] sky. [9] entice.

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care?
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons through the flowering thorn;
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its love,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause lover staw my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

(written 1791)

Tam O'Shanter

"I look on *Tam O'Shanter* to be my standard performance in the Poetical line," wrote Burns. He admitted that it exhibited "a spice of roguish waggery that might perhaps be as well spared," but added that in his opinion it showed "a force of genius and a finishing polish that I despair of ever excelling." This judgment time has proved to be just. The poem is a wonderful mixture of laughter and terror, and moves with that celerity of which Burns was a complete master. Tradition has it that it was composed in one day during a walk by the river Nith.

The ruined kirk of Alloway, on the river Doon, was less than a mile from the poet's birthplace, and the hero whom he celebrates was familiar to him in popular legend from his childhood. The poem, therefore, is entirely local in subject and setting, and may be conceived as addressed to his neighbors as a fireside tale.

When chapman billies[1] leave the street,
And drouthy[2] neebors neebors meet;
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;[3]
While we sit bousing at the nappy,[4]
An' getting fou[5] and unco[6] happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,

[1] peddlers. [2] thirsty. [3] take the road for home.
[4] strong ale. [5] full. [6] very.

The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam O'Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonie lasses).

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;[7]
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka melder wi' the miller,[8]
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,[9]
The smith an' thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesied that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drowned in Doon,
Or catched wi' warlocks in the mirk,[10]
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.[11]

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,[12]
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthened, sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae[13] market night,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Fast by an ingle,[14] bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats[15] that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter[16] Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony—
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
And aye the ale was growing better;
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi' favors secret, sweet, and precious;
The souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus.
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drowned himself amang the nappy.
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure;
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread—
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts forever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm.—
Nae man can tether time nor tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the keystane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed;
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellowed;
That night, a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare Meg—
A better never lifted leg—
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whyles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,
Whyles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet,
Whyles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares—
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets[17] nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoored;[18]
And past the birks[19] and meikle[20] stane,[21]
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neckbane;
And through the whins,[22] and by the cairn,[23]
Whare hunters fand the murdered bairn;[24]
And near the thorn, aboon[25] the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hanged hersel.
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars through the woods;

[7] blabber. [8] each trip to the miller. [9] every time the horse was shod. [10] dark. [11] church. [12] it makes me weep [13] one [14] fireplace. [15] creamy ale [16] Cobbler [17] ghosts and owls [18] smothered [19] birches. [20] great. [21] stone. [22] furze [23] pile of stone [24] child [25] above.

The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When, glimmering through the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seemed in a bleeze;
Through ilka bore[26] the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny,[27] we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae,[28] we'll face the Devil!
The swats sae reamed[29] in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he cared na deils a boddle.
But Maggie stood, right sair astonished,
Till, by the heel and hand admonished,
She ventured forward on the light;
And, wow! Tam saw an unco[30] sight!

Warlocks and witches in a dance!
Nae cotillion, brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys,[31] and reels
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker[32] in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast,
A towzie tyke,[33] black, grim, and large;
To gie them music was his charge.
He screwed the pipes[34] and gart them skirl,[35]
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.[36]
Coffins stood round, like open presses,
That shawed the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantrip sleight,[37]
Each in its cauld hand held a light,
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristened bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae the rape,[38]
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair of horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowered, amazed and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious.
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reeled, they set, they crossed, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,[39]
And coost her duddies[40] to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark![41]

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!
Thir breeks[42] o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,[43]
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies![44]
But withered beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie[45] hags wad spean a foal,
Louping[46] an' flinging on a crummock,[47]
I wonder did na turn thy stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie;
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,[48]
That night enlisted in the core,
Lang after kend on Carrick shore
(For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perished mony a bonie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear).
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude though sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft[49] for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots[50] ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever graced a dance of witches!
But here my Muse her wing maun cour;
Sic flights are far beyond her power;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang
(A souple jade she was and strang),
And how Tam stood, like ane bewitched,
And thought his very een enriched;
Even Satan glowered, and fidged fu' fain,
And hotched and blew wi' might and main
Till first ae caper, syne anither,[51]
Tam tint[52] his reason a' thegither,

[26] opening [27] twopenny. [28] whiskey.
[29] ale so foamed. [30] awful. [31] a Scotch dance.
[32] window-seat [33] shaggy cur. [34] bagpipes.
[35] made them scream [36] vibrate.
[37] magical contrivance. [38] rope.
[39] every old woman sweated and steamed.
[40] cast off her clothes. [41] shirt. [42] breeches.
[43] hips. [44] girls [45] withered. [46] leaping. [47] cane.
[48] large. [49] bought.
[50] two Scotch pounds, about one dollar.
[51] first one caper, then another. [52] lost.

And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty sark!"
And in an instant all was dark;
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,[53]
When plundering herds assail their byke;[54]
As open pussie's[55] mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud,
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch[56] skriech and hollow.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin'![57]
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig;[58]
There, at them thou thy tail may toss—
A running stream they dare na cross;
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient[59] a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie pressed,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;[60]
But little wist she Maggie's mettle!
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain gray tail.
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk[61] man and mother's son take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclined,
Or cutty sarks run in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear;
Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare.

(written 1790)

Ae Fond Kiss

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, alas, forever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee;
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy:
Naething could resist my Nancy;
But to see her was to love her,
Love but her, and love forever.
Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka[1] joy and treasure,
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae fareweel, alas, forever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee;
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

(written 1791)

Highland Mary

Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie![2]
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasped her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' monie a vow and locked embrace
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore ourselves asunder;
But oh! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipped my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
What wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips
I aft hae kissed sae fondly!

[53] fury. [54] hive. [55] the hare's. [56] unearthly. [57] reward. [58] bridge. [59] devil. [60] intent. [61] every

[1] every. [2] muddy.

And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mold'ring now in silent dust,
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

(written 1792)

Scots, Wha Hae

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace[1] bled,
Scots, wham Bruce[2] has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victory!
Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's[3] power—
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!
Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or Freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!
Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
Let us do or die!

(written 1793)

A Man's a Man for A' That

Although Burns himself felt that this song was "not really poetry" it has been hailed as the world's most democratic poem. Burns's strong sympathies with the French Revolution are undoubtedly responsible for this, the first clear statement in English poetry of man's equality with all other men and of a hope for a society in which men shall at last be brothers.

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hings[1] his head, an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man's the gowd[2] for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hodden-gray, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie,[3] ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof[4] for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
His riband, star, an' a' that,
The man o' independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's aboon[5] his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that![6]
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their dignities, an' a' that,
The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree,[7] an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

(written 1794)

[1] Sir William Wallace (1274?-1305), who led the Scots to victory over the British in 1297.

[2] Robert Bruce (1274-1329), a Scottish national hero. He defeated the British at Bannockburn in 1314, and eventually became King Robert I.

[3] Both Edward I and Edward II of England are referred to in this line.

[1] hangs. [2] gold [3] fellow. [4] fool. [5] above. [6] cannot lay claim to that. [7] prize.

O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast

O wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,[1]
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee;
Or did misfortunes bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield[2] should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a paradise
If thou wert there, if thou wert there;
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

(written 1796)

A Red, Red Rose

The extent to which Burns used old materials and lifted them from crudity to high art may be surmised by a comparison of this beautiful song with stanzas from two different older songs (in versions which he may or may not have known):

I

Her cheeks are like the roses
That blossom fresh in June;
O, she's like a new-strung instrument
That's newly put in tune.

II

The seas they shall run dry,
And rocks melt into sands;
Then I'll love you still, my dear,
When all these things are done.

To transform these sentiments as Burns transformed them is to be an original genius in every sense of the word.

O my Luve's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune!

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry—

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve,
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Though it were ten thousand mile!

(written 1794)

[1] direction of the wind; here means simply "wind."
[2] shelter

Last May a Braw Wooer

1

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave[1] me.
I said there was naething I hated like men:
The deuce gae wi'm[2] to believe me, believe me—
The deuce gae wi'm to believe me!

2

He spak o' the darts in my bonie black een,
And vowed for my love he was diein.
I said, he might die when he liket for Jean:
The Lord forgie me for liein, for liein—
The Lord forgie me for liein!

3

A weel-stocket mailen,[3] himself for the laird,
And marriage aff-hand were his proffers:
I never loot on that I kenned it, or cared,
But thought I might hae waur offers, waur offers—
But thought I might hae waur offers.

4

But what wad ye think? In a fortnight or less
(The Deil tak his taste to gae near her!)
He up the Gate-Slack to my black[4] cousin, Bess!
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her, could bear her—
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her.

[1] deafen [2] with him. [3] farm. [4] dark complexioned.

5

But a' the niest[5] week, as I petted[6] wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste[7] o' Dalgarnock,
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there?
I glowered as I'd seen a warlock,[8] a warlock—
I glowered as I'd seen a warlock.

9

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Lest neebors might say I was saucy.
My wooer he capered as he'd been in drink,
And vowed I was his dear lassie, dear lassie—
And vowed I was his dear lassie!

7

I spiered[9] for my cousin fu' couthy[10] and sweet:
Gin she had recovered her hearin?
And how her new shoon fit her auld, shachled[11] feet?
But heavens! how he fell a swearin, a swearin—
But heavens! how he fell a swearin!

8

He beggèd for gude sake, I wad be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow;
So e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, tomorrow—
I think I maun wed him to-morrow!
(written 1794)

William Blake

(1757-1827)

The poetical career of William Blake is the nearest thing to an anomaly in the eighteenth century. Until the appearance of the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 there can be found no other poet who so completely broke with Augustan traditions. And, indeed, Blake is actually much more of a revolutionary against the Age of Reason than Wordsworth or Coleridge. Had he had anything of a public his verses might have caused a far greater stir than those of Burns, for he was advocating principles that would have rocked the foundations of the established order. But his quiet, uneventful life and his mystical mode of utterance left him generally unknown. Though he achieved a simplicity of diction that even Wordsworth could not rival, he cannot be shown to have had any important influence on the romantic poets. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that he was rediscovered. Many important histories of English literature of fifty years ago made no mention of him. Within our own time, however, he has been the object of much study and appreciation, and few poets have exercised a greater sway over twentieth-century poetry. If he was long ignored, he is now regarded by many as a major poet. Even some who cannot follow him through all the mazes of his mystical mythology would grant him this high place, and there have been no symptoms of an attempt to detract from such well-deserved admiration.

This man, who wrote with a "rural pen," spent all but three years of his life in the crowded city of London. His sunlit songs were written in cramped quarters in an unbeautiful part of the city. Though any human being with such a mind as his must have led a dynamic existence, there are no dramatic events to record in his biography. He was born on November 28, 1757, the third son of a dissenting hosier. The visions which he experienced throughout his life and which were as real to him as were the members of his own family, began early. When he was four he saw God "put his head to the window," and was

[5] next. [6] sulked. [7] fair. [8] wizard. [9] inquired. [10] kind. [11] shapeless.

set "a-screaming" in fright. A few years later, on his return home from a ramble through the open fields near London, he saw the prophet Ezekiel under a tree. Though he was beaten for reporting his visions, he continued to have them. A year later he saw a tree filled with angels, and soon after perceived the figures of angels walking among the haymakers at their work. His parents learned to respect the boy's sincerity and also to fear his terrible anger after physical punishment. For the latter reason, he was not sent to school. Reading, writing, and nothing more, he therefore learned at home. He was quick to learn, and the green field had much to teach him. Moreover, he was an auditor to much talk in his household over the mystical writings of Swedenborg, who had described with concrete detail the ordering of things in Heaven.

He was still a child when his bent for drawing was quite clear. It is recorded of him that he "became an artist at the age of ten, and a poet at the age of twelve." The remark is significant, for Blake never gave pre-eminence to his poetry over his engravings and paintings. And as he grew older he definitely chose to express his artistic side through the fine arts, reserving literature more for the delivery of his ideas. As an artist, he ranks high in the world, and is certainly one of England's greatest.

In 1796 he received a commission to make the illustrations for Young's *Night Thoughts*. The mediocrity of the poems, which had been enjoying great popularity, was a vexation to his splendid imagination, and he toiled over them only to have the edition a failure. For a decade his reputation as an artist suffered an eclipse until he again won notice for his beautiful work on Blair's *The Grave*. But his disgust with the academies undid his favor with the public, and he sought its patronage no more. Alone, neglected, impoverished, but quite content with his life, Blake earned his living by executing all kinds of uninspiring orders until the painter John Linnell discovered him and engaged him to engrave the drawings Blake had already made for *The Book of Job*. After that series of masterpieces, Blake commenced a series on the *Divine Comedy*, but died before they were completed.

As a boy Blake's favorite reading was in the Elizabethans—Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis, Lucrece,* and *Sonnets,* and Ben Jonson's lyrics. In 1783 his friends published for him the *Poetical Sketches* (see p. 85), which had been composed, as the advertisement states, by an "untutored youth, commencing in his twelfth and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year." In their perfection these songs show a precocity even greater than Chatterton's. They stand unique among Blake's poetry for their clarity, for in them no mysticism is yet to be heard. This volume might well be taken as marking the year in which romanticism in English poetry had come into its own, were it not for the fact that the book had so limited a circulation. For here we find no neoclassic ingredients. Unlike Burns, Blake had no classic precepts or practices to throw off. He was completely unaffected by them. His voice is the fresh lyrical voice of the Elizabethan song-writers, celebrating with ease the unaffected feelings of joy and well-being.

From these Blake turned to incorporate his beliefs in the poems he now began to write. One might sum up those beliefs by saying that they stood in complete opposition to all that was axiomatically the truth for Dryden, Pope, Johnson, and their associates. Where they taught common sense, reason, moderation, conformity, urbanity, and standards, Blake advocated divine frenzy, inspiration, and excess. He detested restraint of every kind, and so spoke scathingly, as befitted a member of Godwin's circle, of orthodoxy in law and religion. The prophet Isaiah, he tells us, informed him "that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God." As for following ancient precept, he declared: "We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just and true to our own imaginations." For him the highest virtue is the exercise of energy. "Energy is the only life," he said, and "is eternal delight." So far from urging a rational life, he bade men live in extremes. The evil principle which constrains and limits he called Reason. His was, thus, the completest revolt from the intellectual faith of his century.

Like Rousseau (see p. 1136), Blake looked upon man's primitive state as the condition in which he was most at peace with himself before social institutions corrupted him. The *Songs of Innocence* (see p. 87), published in 1789, is a series of poems which show the soul complete and fulfilling itself, uncontaminated by the world of experience. For this purpose Blake employed the setting and simplicity of childhood. These, perhaps his most perfect poems, flow like clear water in the sunlight.

In *The Book of Thel*, of the same year, Blake shows the soul "standing on the threshold of experience," shrinking in fear from the lot which it knows to be the destiny of mortal existence. The *Songs of Experience* (see p. 89), published in 1794, find the soul already exposed to evil and the knowledge of cruelty and death. In them Blake compressed some of the most startlingly vivid and powerful images in our literature. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (see p. 92), issued probably in 1793, shows innocence and experience, Good and Evil, Body and Soul united in their contradictions, as is essential to human life. "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul," Blake avers in the opening pages.

So far any reader with imagination can follow Blake. Even without his mystical point of view, we nevertheless can understand his meaning because of the vividness and beauty of his lines. Thereafter, in his later "prophetic books," it is difficult to penetrate with him the labyrinth of his inspirations. In *America* (1793), *Europe* (1794), *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Book of Los* (1795), *Milton* (1804-09), *Jerusalem* (1804-20), and others, there are many wonderful flashes of powerful images and lightninglike truths. But the elaborate mythology which he evolved for himself and his indifference to clarity make it neither possible nor inviting to decipher his meaning. Osbert Burdett has well analyzed his failure: "To endeavor, as Blake was to endeavor, to make the sublime the foundation instead of the crown of poetry is to sacrifice the means to the end, to rebuild the Tower of Babel, and to incur the penalty of confusion. In place of the epic temple that he promised we have sublime ruins." The artistic discipline which during the same years enabled him to create masterpieces of engraving was not applied to these poetic works. It is true that scholarship has done much to illuminate the "prophetic books" of Blake, but it is unlikely that they will supersede *Poetical Sketches, Songs of Innocence,* and *Songs of Experience* in the affection of the public. For in these poems, although the mystic speaks as ever with symbols, the images are sharply defined and their meaning discoverable. The process of evaluating Blake still continues, however, and it may be that at a later time works now obscure will seem clear. If so, it would not be the first occasion in which the intuitive methods of a mystic have attained a goal that logic has had painfully to struggle to overtake.

From *Poetical Sketches (1783)*

The wonderful first fruits of Blake's poetic genius in the *Poetical Sketches* exhibit him as purely the artist at a time when he was still content to make exquisite song untouched by burning mysticism. Most of the lyrics in this collection might have come from some rich Elizabethan miscellany. The simple directness of the language, the lightness of the music, and the clarity and vividness of the pictures had not been known to English poetry since the days of Shakespeare.

Before he was fourteen he had already written the poignant song, *How sweet I roamed*; it is interesting to note in the third stanza of this poem a hint of the intensity that was to characterize his later lyrics. But what is more important to mark is how completely in all the *Poetical Sketches* the youthful Blake had freed himself from every neoclassical shackle. The volume was the first to reawaken the English muse to her heritage of limpid song.

Song

How sweet I roamed from field to field
And tasted all the summer's pride,
Till I the Prince of Love beheld
Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He showed me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his gardens fair
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
And Phœbus[1] fired my vocal rage;
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

Song

My silks and fine array,
My smiles and languished air,
By love are driv'n away;
And mournful lean Despair
Brings me yew to deck my grave:
Such end true lovers have.

His face is fair as heaven,
When springing buds unfold;
O why to him was't given
Whose heart is wintry cold?
His breast is love's all-worshiped tomb,
Where all love's pilgrims come.

Bring me an axe and spade,
Bring me a winding-sheet;
When I my grave have made
Let winds and tempest beat:
Then down I'll lie as cold as clay.
True love doth pass away!

[1] the sun.

Mad Song

The wild winds weep,
And the night is a-cold;
Come hither, Sleep,
And my griefs unfold:
But lo! the morning peeps
Over the eastern steeps,
And the rustling beds of dawn
The earth do scorn.

Lo! to the vault
Of pavèd heaven,
With sorrow fraught,
My notes are driven:
They strike the ear of night,
Make weep the eyes of day;
They make mad the roaring winds,
And with tempests play.

Like a fiend in a cloud,
With howling woe
After night I do crowd,
And with night will go;
I turn my back to the east
From whence comforts have increased;
For light doth seize my brain
With frantic pain.

To the Muses

Whether on Ida's[1] shady brow
Or in the chambers of the East,
The chambers of the sun, that now
From ancient melody have ceased;

Whether in heaven ye wander fair,
Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air
Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,
Beneath the bosom of the sea,
Wandering in many a coral grove,
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry—

How have you left the ancient love
That bards of old enjoyed in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move;
The sound is forced, the notes are few.

[1] Mount Ida, near Troy, beloved of the Muses.

From *Songs of Innocence (1789)*

The *Songs of Innocence* are Blake's most perfect poetic achievement. In them he was able to find complete expression for what he had to say, and there is none of the confusion of his later works where his poetic means were inadequate to convey his message. Beautiful as these songs are, some measure of delight is denied to us who cannot read them in the edition Blake illustrated and colored with his own hand. Now worth a small fortune, it was little prized by his contemporaries when it sold for five shillings a volume. Each of these, made with the assistance of his loving wife, was a harmonious entity, as lovely as some old illuminated manuscript. Frances Winwar's description is fitting: "Designs of flowers and child faces and innocent figures flowing with the grace of growing plants filled the margins, all in delicate wild-flower tints. If the angels read in Heaven, it must be such books they read."

As with the poems themselves, these books have had no imitators. For no other English poet, except Rossetti, has been gifted with genius also in the fine arts. "He sang his songs to his own music," Arthur Symons notes, "and thus, while he lived, he was the complete realization of the poet in all his faculties, and the only complete realization that has ever been known."

The *Songs of Innocence* are, of course, not "children's poems." They are a picture of the soul's perfect condition of existence, when it is at one with itself—the condition which Blake mirrors as a state of childhood. No experience of Evil has yet come to draw the soul out of its Eden.

Introduction

Piping down the valleys wild,
  Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
  And he laughing said to me:

"Pipe a song about a Lamb!"
  So I piped with merry cheer.
"Piper, pipe that song again";
  So I piped. He wept to hear.

"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
  Sing thy songs of happy cheer!"
So I sung the same again,
  While he wept with joy to hear.

"Piper, sit thee down and write
  In a book that all may read."
So he vanished from my sight;
  And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
  And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
  Every child may joy to hear.

The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?
  Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
  Little Lamb, who made thee?
  Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee;
  Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is callèd by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by his name.
  Little Lamb, God bless thee!
  Little Lamb, God bless thee!

Infant Joy

"I have no name;
I am but two days old."
—What shall I call thee?
"I happy am;
Joy is my name."
—Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy, but two days old;
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile:
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

A Cradle Song

Sweet dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head!
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams!

Sweet sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep, Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child!

Sweet smiles, in the night
Hover over my delight;
Sweet smiles, mother's smile,
All the livelong night beguile.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes.
Sweet moans, sweeter smile,
All the dovelike moans beguile.

Sleep, sleep, happy child,
All creation slept and smiled;
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe, once like thee,
Thy Maker lay and wept for me:

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee!

Smiles on thee, on me, on all;
Who became an infant small.
Infant smiles are His own smiles;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene;
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha ha he!"

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread,
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha ha he!"

The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And, pointing to the east, began to say:

"Look on the rising sun;—there God does live,
And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon-day.

"And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

"For when our souls have learned the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear his voice,

Saying: 'Come out from the grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.' "

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me;
And thus I say to little English boy,
When I from black, and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

From *Songs of Experience (1794)*

In the *Songs of Experience*, the soul "has eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and left its Eden for ever." It has lost its unity and is at war with itself between Good and Evil. Just as the *Songs of Innocence* were sung in a happy Paradise, the *Songs of Experience* are sung in a disillusioned Hell. In the former, the lamb was the symbol of innocence or goodness, in this the tiger is the symbol of experience or evil; to the meekness of one is opposed the fearfulness of the other, though each is depicted as beautiful in its own province. So, too, may be contrasted the cradle songs in each series: the first celebrates the "Holy image" and the heavenly smiles of the infant, the second tells of the "cunning wiles" and "dreadful lightnings" sleeping in the infant's heart.

It would be a pity to miss the power in some of these lines because of the simplicity of the diction and the verse-form. *The Tiger*, if read attentively, will reveal images terrible in their concentrated heat. *The Clod and the Pebble* speaks a truth that is tragic to those who must accept love from the proud. And it is the very disarming quality of the cadences of the *Cradle Song* which makes the terror of the fourth stanza more startling. The greatness of the art in these poems is that their outward sunniness conceals their stormy intent.

The Clod and the Pebble

'Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'

So sung a little clod of clay,
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a pebble of the brook
Warbled out these meters meet:

'Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.'

The Tiger

Tiger! tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burned the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Ah, Sunflower

Ah, Sunflower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveler's journey is done—

Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin, shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my sunflower wishes to go!

A Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears
Night and morning with my tears,
And I sunnèd it with smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,—

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

A Little Boy Lost

'Nought loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know.

'And, father, how can I love you
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.'

The priest sat by and heard the child;
In trembling zeal he seized his hair,
He led him by his little coat,
And all admired the priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
'Lo, what a fiend is here!' said he:
'One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy mystery.'

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They stripped him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain,

And burned him in a holy place
Where many had been burned before;
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's[1] shore?

Cradle Song

Sleep! sleep! beauty bright,
Dreaming o'er the joys of night;
Sleep! sleep! in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet Babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel,
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart does rest.

O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break

From thy cheek and from thy eye,
O'er the youthful harvests nigh.
Infant wiles and infant smiles
Heaven and Earth of peace beguiles.

[1] England's.

Holy Thursday

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land—
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak and bare,
And their ways are filled with thorns:
It is eternal winter there.

For where'er the sun does shine,
And where'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind apall.

The Garden of Love

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this chapel were shut,
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;
So I turned to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore:

And I saw it was filléd with graves,
And tombstones where flowers should be;
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

London

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church apalls,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

The Chimney-Sweeper

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying "weep! weep!" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father and mother? Say!"—
"They are both gone up to church to pray.

"Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smiled among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

"And because I am happy, and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and His priest and king,
Who make up a heaven of our misery."

Nurse's Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And whisperings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind;
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.

From *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793?)

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* the opposing conditions of existence, sung respectively in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, are wedded as they are in life. Body and soul are united, as in the marvelous drawing Blake later made for Blair's *The Grave*. The soul thus recaptures its lost happiness and completeness. *A Song of Liberty* is an exalted pæan of its final triumph.

Proverbs of Hell

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.

Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead.

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.

Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.

He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.

The cut worm forgives the plow.

Dip him in the river who loves water.

A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.

He whose face gives no light shall never become a star.

Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

The busy bee has no time for sorrow.

The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock; but of wisdom, no clock can measure.

All wholesome food is caught without a net or a trap.

Bring out number, weight, and measure in a year of dearth.

No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.

A dead body revenges not injuries.

The most sublime act is to set another before you.

If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.

Folly is the cloak of knavery.

Shame is Pride's cloak.

Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.

The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.

The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.

The nakedness of woman is the work of God.

Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.

The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man.

The fox condemns the trap, not himself.

Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth.

Let man wear the fell of the lion, woman the fleece of the sheep.

The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.

The selfish, smiling fool, and the sullen, frowning fool shall be both thought wise, that they may be a rod.

What is now proved was once only imagin'd.

The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit watch the roots; the lion, the tiger, the horse, the elephant watch the fruits.

The cistern contains: the fountain overflows.

One thought fills immensity.

Always be ready to speak your mind, and a base man will avoid you.

Everything possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.

The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow.

The fox provides for himself, but God provides for the lion.

Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night.

He who has suffer'd you to impose on him, knows you.

As the plow follows words, so God rewards prayers.

The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.

Expect poison from the standing water.

You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.

Listen to the fool's reproach! it is a kingly title!

The eyes of fire, the nostrils of air, the mouth of water, the beard of earth.

The weak in courage is strong in cunning.

The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow; nor the lion, the horse how he shall take his prey.

The thankful receiver bears a plentiful harvest.

If others had not been foolish, we should be so.

The soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.

When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius; lift up thy head!

As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.

To create a little flower is the labor of ages.

Damn braces. Bless relaxes.

The best wine is the oldest, the best water the newest.

Prayers plow not! Praises reap not!

Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!

The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands and feet Proportion.

As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt to the contemptible.

The crow wish'd everything was black, the owl that everything was white.

Exuberance is Beauty.

If the lion was advised by the fox, he would be cunning.

Improvement makes straight roads; but the crooked roads without Improvement are roads of Genius.

Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.

Where man is not, nature is barren.

Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd.

Enough! or Too much.

A Song of Liberty

1. The Eternal Female groan'd! it was heard over all the Earth.

2. Albion's coast is sick, silent; the American meadows faint!

3. Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers, and mutter across the ocean: France, rend down thy dungeon!

4. Golden Spain, burst the barriers of old Rome!

5. Cast thy keys, O Rome, into the deep down falling, even to eternity down falling,

6. And weep.

7. In her trembling hands she took the new born terror, howling.

8. On these infinite mountains of light, now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea, the new born fire stood before the starry king!

9. Flag'd with grey brow'd snows and thunderous visages, the jealous wings wav'd over the deep.

10. The speary hand burned aloft, unbuckled was the shield; forth went the hand of jealousy among the flaming hair, and hurl'd the new born wonder thro' the starry night.

11. The fire, the fire is falling!

12. Look up! look up! O citizen of London, enlarge thy countenance! O Jew, leave counting gold! return to thy oil and wine. O African! black African! (go, winged thought, widen his forehead.)

13. The fiery limbs, the flaming hair, shot like the sinking sun into the western sea.

14. Wak'd from his eternal sleep, the hoary element roaring fled away.

15. Down rush'd, beating his wings in vain, the jealous king; his grey brow'd counsellors, thunderous warriors, curl'd veterans, among helms, and shields, and chariots, horses, elephants, banners, castles, slings, and rocks.

16. Falling, rushing, ruining! buried in the ruins, on Urthona's dens;

17. All night beneath the ruins; then, their sullen flames faded, emerge round the gloomy king.

18. With thunder and fire, leading his starry hosts thro' the waste wilderness, he promulgates his ten commands, glancing his beamy eyelids over the deep in dark dismay,

19. Where the son of fire in his eastern cloud, while the morning plumes her golden breast,

20. Spurning the clouds written with curses, stamps the stony law to dust, loosing the eternal horses from the dens of night, crying:

EMPIRE IS NO MORE! AND NOW THE LION AND WOLF SHALL CEASE.

CHORUS

Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn no longer, in deadly black, with hoarse note curse the sons of joy. Nor his accepted brethren—whom, tyrant, he calls free—lay the bound or build the roof. Nor pale religious lechery call that virginity that wishes but acts not!

For everything that lives is Holy.

From *Auguries of Innocence*

To see the world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower;
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

(written 1801-3)

Stanzas from *Milton*

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

(written 1804)

PROSE

Thomas Paine

(1737-1809)

Tom Paine figures so prominently in American history that it is usually forgotten that he played a leading role in the affairs of his native England and of France as well. Few men have ever been more unjustly dealt with or more misrepresented than he. For his republicanism he was anathematized in England, for his moderation he was imprisoned in France, and for his deism he was shamefully abandoned in those United States for whose independence he had fought so ably. Although he believed in the immortality of the soul, his name has been usually associated with atheism, and Theodore Roosevelt's unworthy stigma of him as a "dirty little atheist" is typical of the injustice to which, even after death, he has been subject. Because he dared to attack the eloquence of Burke, many scholars have been content to repeat the untruth that he had no ability as a writer, whereas the fact is that he wrote with uncommon power, directness, and clarity. The time is not yet when the English-speaking world has realized that he was indeed what his biographer, Conway, has called him, "the Great Commoner of Mankind, founder of the Republic of the World, and emancipator of the human heart and mind."

He had come from the ranks of the humble and tried his hand at various manual trades before he emigrated to America in 1774. Making the acquaintance of Franklin in Philadelphia, he became editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine* and developed a vital interest in the struggle of the colonists against the injustices of the mother country. On January 10, 1776, he published his historic pamphlet, *Common Sense,* in which he urged

that the American colonies assert their independence. Nothing that had been done or said so clarified public opinion in behalf of a revolution, and Paine assumed his place at once as a leader in the fight for independence. Some of his admirers today are even of the opinion that Paine was largely responsible for the Declaration of Independence. When the war broke out, Quaker though he was, Paine joined the Revolutionary army, affirming that with the very principle of liberty at stake it was a man's duty to fight. His series of papers, *The Crisis,* was of supreme importance in adding support to Washington's forces.

When the war was over, Paine, honored as a great republican, returned to England, became friendly with Burke, whom he had admired, and particularly intimate with Godwin (see p. 100) and his circle as well as with Blake (see p. 83). Upon the appearance of Burke's *Reflections* (see I, p. 961), Paine at once replied with the several parts of his *Rights of Man* (1791-2). With simple power he demolished the bases of Burke's splendid rhetoric, and boldly supported the principles of the French Revolution. The book became so popular among the liberals of the day that the government indicted him for high treason (1792). It is said that a warning from Blake deterred Paine from returning to his lodgings where officers were waiting to arrest him. He fled to France, where he was made a citizen of the country and elected to its National Convention. Because he dared to advocate the king's banishment against those who were urging execution, Paine was one of the early prisoners of the Terror. It is said that only the mistake of a jailer helped him escape the guillotine. In the meantime *The Age of Reason* (1794) had been published, a book more often quoted against him than read. It is a strong deistic attack on orthodox Christianity, and is made up chiefly of disputations against the literal acceptance of the miracles related in the Bible. Like his predecessors, the French *philosophes,* Paine argued for a "rational" religion; his objections were not to the ethics but to the theology of Christianity, and particularly to the influence of the clergy. The book was greeted everywhere with horror. Although many clergymen today preach from their pulpits allegorical interpretations similar to Paine's of events in the Bible, in his own day Paine was considered as a kind of devil. Actually he was the kindest and most moral of men.

He was back in the United States in 1802, but none of his former comrades in the Revolutionary War would have anything to do with him. His last years were spent in poverty and neglect, and the men who had been proud to be his associates in the crucial days were now busy trying to obliterate any possible connection in people's minds between themselves and the despised "atheist." He died in 1809. Ten years later, Cobbett, who had once been a savage opponent and had come to repent his unjust attacks on Paine, carried his bones back to England. But a threatening mob awaited him when the ship arrived. Nobody knows today where Paine is buried.

Paine's thinking was formed by his readings in the French revolutionary philosophers and by the great events in America. His conceptions of the rights of man can be found in Rousseau (see p. 1136) and were basic to the French Revolution. Although he was deemed a firebrand in his own day, his conviction that every man had inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness would be accepted today by every rational person as axiomatic. As a writer he took no interest, like Burke, in rhetorical beauty. He was interested in convincing the common reader, and this he ably succeeded in doing by the unpretentious force of his style. There is often a rugged beauty in his lines, though most critics deny him any literary quality, and the straightforward clearheadedness of many of his observations cannot fail to be stimulating to the unprejudiced.

From *The Crisis*

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it *now,* deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (*not only to* TAX) but "TO BIND *us in* ALL CASES WHATSOEVER," and if being *bound in that manner,* is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious; for so unlimited a power can belong only to God. . . .

I have as little superstition in me as any man living, but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that Gold Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me, as to suppose that He has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman, or a house-breaker, has as good a pretence as he.

'Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subjected to them. Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth [fifteenth] century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors, which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised Tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

(1776)

From *The Rights of Man*

But Mr. Burke appears to have no idea of principles when he is contemplating governments. "Ten years ago," says he, "I could have felicitated France on her having a government, without inquiring what the nature of that government was or how it was administered." Is this the language of a rational man? Is it the language of a heart feeling as it ought to feel for the rights and happiness of the human race? On this ground, Mr. Burke must compliment all the governments in the world, while the victims who suffer under them, whether sold into slavery or tortured out of existence, are wholly forgotten. It is power, and not principles, that Mr. Burke venerates; and under this abominable depravity, he is disqualified to judge between them. Thus much for his opinion as to the occasions of the French Revolution. I now proceed to other considerations.

I know a place in America called Point-no-Point because, as you proceed along the shore, gay and flowery as Mr. Burke's language, it continually recedes, and presents itself at a distance before you; but when you have got as far as you can go, there is no point at all. Just thus it is with Mr. Burke's three hundred and fifty-six pages. It is therefore difficult to reply to him. But as the points

he wishes to establish may be inferred from what he abuses, it is in his paradoxes that we must look for his arguments.

As to the tragic paintings by which Mr. Burke has outraged his own imagination, and seeks to work upon that of his readers, they are very well calculated for theatrical representation, where facts are manufactured for the sake of show, and accommodated to produce, through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect. But Mr. Burke should recollect that he is writing history, and not plays, and that his readers will expect truth, and not the spouting rant of high-toned exclamation.

When we see a man dramatically lamenting, in a publication intended to be believed, that "the age of chivalry is gone!" that "the glory of Europe is extinguished forever!" that "the unbought grace of life [if any one knows what it is], the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone!" and all this because the Quixote age of chivalry nonsense is gone, what opinion can we form of his judgment, or what regard can we pay to his facts? In the rhapsody of his imagination he has discovered a world of windmills,[1] and his sorrows are that there are no Quixotes to attack them. But if the age of aristocracy, like that of chivalry, should fall (and they had originally some connection), Mr. Burke, the trumpeter of the order, may continue his parody to the end, and finish with exclaiming, "Othello's occupation's gone!"[2]

Notwithstanding Mr. Burke's horrid paintings, when the French Revolution is compared with the revolutions of other countries, the astonishment will be that it is marked with so few sacrifices; but this astonishment will cease when we reflect that *principles*, and not *persons*, were the meditated objects of destruction. The mind of the nation was acted upon by a higher stimulus than what the consideration of persons could inspire, and sought a higher conquest than could be produced by the downfall of an enemy. Among the few who fell, there do not appear to be any that were intentionally singled out. They all of them had their fate in the circumstances of the moment, and were not pursued with that long, cold-blooded, unabated revenge which pursued the unfortunate Scotch in the affair of 1745.[3]

Through the whole of Mr. Burke's book I do not observe that the Bastille[4] is mentioned more than once, and that with a kind of implication as if he were sorry it was pulled down, and wished it were built up again. "We have rebuilt Newgate," says he, "and tenanted the mansion; and we have prisons almost as strong as the Bastille for those who dare to libel the queens of France." As for what a madman, like the person called Lord G[eorge] G[ordon],[5] might say, to whom Newgate is rather a bedlam than a prison, it is unworthy of rational consideration. It was a madman that libelled, and that is sufficient apology; and it afforded an opportunity for confining him, which was the thing that was wished for. But certain it is that Mr. Burke, who does not call himself a madman, whatever other people may do, has libelled, in the most unprovoked manner and in the grossest style of the most vulgar abuse, the whole representative authority of France; and yet Mr. Burke takes his seat in the British House of Commons! From his violence and his grief, his silence on some points and his excess on others, it is difficult not to believe that Mr. Burke is sorry, extremely sorry, that arbitrary power, the power of the Pope and the Bastille, are pulled down.

Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection, that I can find throughout his book, has he bestowed on those who lingered out the most wretched of lives, a life without hope in the most miserable of prisons. It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself. Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he is to her. He is not affected by the reality of distress touching his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird. Accustomed to kiss the aristocratical hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art, and the genuine soul of nature forsakes him. His hero or his heroine must be a tragedy-victim, expiring in show, and not the real prisoner of misery, sliding into death in the silence of a dungeon.

As Mr. Burke has passed over the whole transaction of the Bastille (and his silence is nothing in his favor), and has entertained his readers with reflections on supposed facts distorted into real falsehoods, I will give, since he has not, some ac-

[1] This refers to Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, in which the hero attacks windmills, thinking they are warriors.

[2] a reference to the famous speech in Shakespeare's *Othello*, III, III, 347-357.

[3] the uprising for the Young Pretender, Prince Charles Stuart, who attempted to capture the English throne

[4] the notorious prison in Paris, destroyed on July 14, 1789

[5] the leader of a London riot in 1780 directed against Roman Catholics

count of the circumstances which preceded that transaction. They will serve to show that less mischief could scarcely have accompanied such an event when considered with the treacherous and hostile aggravations of the enemies of the revolution. . . .

I have now to follow Mr. Burke through a pathless wilderness of rhapsodies, and a sort of descant upon governments, in which he asserts whatever he pleases, on the presumption of its being believed, without offering either evidence or reasons for so doing.

Before anything can be reasoned upon to a conclusion, certain facts, principles, or data to reason from, must be established, admitted, or denied. Mr. Burke, with his usual outrage, abused the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," published by the National Assembly of France, as the basis on which the constitution of France is built. This he calls "paltry and blurred sheets of paper about the rights of man." Does Mr. Burke mean to deny that man has any rights? If he does, then he must mean that there are no such things as rights anywhere, and that he has none himself; for who is there in the world but man? But if Mr. Burke means to admit that man has rights, the question then will be: What are those rights, and how man came by them originally?

The error of those who reason by precedents drawn from antiquity, respecting the rights of man, is that they do not go far enough into antiquity. They do not go the whole way. They stop in some of the intermediate stages of an hundred or a thousand years, and produce what was then done, as a rule for the present day. This is no authority at all. If we travel still farther into antiquity, we shall find a direct contrary opinion and practice prevailing; and, if antiquity is to be authority, a thousand such authorities may be produced, successively contradicting each other; but if we proceed on, we shall at last come out right; we shall come to the time when man came from the hand of his Maker. What was he then? Man. Man was his high and only title, and a higher cannot be given him. But of titles I shall speak hereafter.

We are now got at the origin of man, and at the origin of his rights. As to the manner in which the world has been governed from that day to this, it is no farther any concern of ours than to make a proper use of the errors or the improvements which the history of it presents. Those who lived a hundred or a thousand years ago were then moderns, as we are now. They had *their* ancients, and those ancients had others, and we also shall be ancients in our turn. If the mere name of antiquity is to govern in the affairs of life, the people who are to live an hundred or a thousand years hence may as well take us for a precedent, as we make a precedent of those who lived an hundred or a thousand years ago. The fact is that portions of antiquity, by proving everything, establish nothing. It is authority against authority all the way, till we come to the divine origin of the rights of man, at the creation. Here our enquiries find a resting-place, and our reason finds a home. If a dispute about the rights of man had arisen at the distance of an hundred years from the creation, it is to this source of authority they must have referred, and it is to this same source of authority that we must now refer.

Though I mean not to touch upon any sectarian principle of religion, yet it may be worth observing that the genealogy of Christ is traced to Adam. Why, then, not trace the rights of man to the creation of man? I will answer the question. Because there have been upstart governments, thrusting themselves between, and presumptuously working to unmake man.

If any generation of men ever possessed the right of dictating the mode by which the world should be governed forever, it was the first generation that existed; and if that generation did it not, no succeeding generation can show any authority for doing it, nor can set any up. The illuminating and divine principle of the equal rights of man (for it has its origin from the Maker of man) relates not only to the living individuals, but to generations of men succeeding each other. Every generation is equal in rights to generations which preceded it, by the same rule that every individual is born equal in rights with his contemporary.

Every history of the creation, and every traditionary account, whether from the lettered or unlettered world, however they may vary in their opinion or belief of certain particulars, all agree in establishing one point, the unity of man; by which I mean that men are all of one degree, and consequently that all men are born equal, and with equal natural right, in the same manner as if posterity had been continued by creation instead of generation, the latter being the only mode by which the former is carried forward; and consequently, every child born into the world must be considered as deriving its existence from God. The world is as new to him as it was to the first man that existed, and his natural right in it is of the same kind.

The Mosaic account of the creation, whether taken as divine authority or merely historical, is full to this point, the unity or equality of man. The expression admits of no controversy. "And God said, let us make man in our own image. In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." The distinction of sexes is pointed out, but no other distinction is even implied. If this be not divine authority, it is at least historical authority, and shows that the equality of man, so far from being a modern doctrine, is the oldest upon record.

It is also to be observed that all the religions known in the world are founded, so far as they relate to man, on the unity of man, as being all of one degree. Whether in heaven or in hell, or in whatever state man may be supposed to exist hereafter, the good and the bad are the only distinctions. Nay, even the laws of governments are obliged to slide into this principle, by making degrees to consist in crimes, and not in persons.

It is one of the greatest of all truths, and of the highest advantage to cultivate. By considering man in this light, and by instructing him to consider himself in this light, it places him in a close connection with all his duties, whether to his Creator, or to the creation of which he is a part; and it is only when he forgets his origin, or, to use a more fashionable phrase, his birth and family, that he becomes dissolute. It is not among the least of the evils of the present existing governments in all parts of Europe that man, considered as man, is thrown back to a vast distance from his Maker, and the artificial chasm filled up with a succession of barriers, or sort of turn-pike gates, through which he has to pass. I will quote Mr. Burke's catalogue of barriers that he has set up between man and his Maker. Putting himself in the character of a herald, he says: "We fear God—we look with awe to kings—with affection to Parliaments —with duty to magistrates—with reverence to priests—and with respect to nobility." Mr. Burke has forgotten to put in "chivalry." He has also forgotten to put in Peter.

The duty of man is not a wilderness of turn-pike gates, through which he is to pass by tickets from one to the other. It is plain and simple, and consists but of two points: his duty to God, which every man must feel, and, with respect to his neighbor, to do as he would be done by. If those to whom power is delegated do well, they will be respected: if not, they will be despised; and with regard to those to whom no power is delegated, but who assume it, the rational world can know nothing of them.

(1791)

From *The Age of Reason*

The Author's Profession of Faith

It has been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject, and from that consideration, had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow-citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work. The circumstance that has now taken place in France of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood, and of everything appertaining to compulsive systems of religion, and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary, lest in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow-citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself.

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish Church, by the Roman Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

Examination of the Old Testament

These books, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation (which, by the bye, is a book of riddles that requires a revelation to explain it), are, we are told, the Word of God. It is, therefore, proper for us to know who told us so, that we may know what credit to give to the report. The answer to this question is that nobody can tell, except that we tell one another so. The case, however, historically appears to be as follows:

When the Church Mythologists established their system, they collected all the writings they could find and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and New Testaments are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged or dressed them up.

Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which of the books out of the collection they had made should be the Word of God, and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful, such as the books called the Apocrypha; and those books which had a majority of votes were voted to be the Word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling themselves Christians, had believed otherwise—for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of; they called themselves by the general name of the Church, and this is all we know of the matter.

As we have no other external evidence or authority for believing these books to be the Word of God than what I have mentioned, which is no evidence or authority at all, I come in the next place to examine the internal evidence contained in the books themselves.

In the former part of this essay, I have spoken of revelation; I now proceed further with that subject for the purpose of applying it to the books in question.

Revelation is a communication of something which the person to whom that thing is revealed did not know before. For if I have done a thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to tell me I have done it, or seen it, nor to enable me to tell it, or to write it. (1794)

William Godwin

(1756-1836)

A sobering lesson in the relativity of literary values is the case of William Godwin. Today the nobility of ideal in his "philosophic" pages is hardly more patent than the absurdity of many of his ideas. He was very much of a pedant, rather defective in feeling, and later in life succeeded in being both arrogant and parasitic in his dealings with his great son-in-law, the poet Shelley. Yet it was his good fortune to sum up so completely the tendencies of radical thought in his day, that in the last decade of the eighteenth century he was the acknowledged leader of some of the most talented writers of the time. He made a profound impression on young Wordsworth and Coleridge; the latter, Hazlitt, and Lamb were among his friends; and the most remarkable Englishwoman of the age, Mary Wollstonecraft, became his wife. Shelley, who married their daughter, was proud to acknowledge his discipleship to Godwin. But the most amazing of all paradoxes is that Godwin's *Political Justice*, which contains a sufficient proportion of sheer nonsense, afforded inspiration for some of the most wonderful creations of Shelley; perhaps no better instance of the inexplicable ways of genius can be cited than the manner in which the sophistry of Godwin's work was transmuted into the sublimities of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (see p. 273).

The son of a rigid Calvinist dissenting minister, William Godwin was educated to follow in his father's profession. For a while he was a practicing Nonconformist clergyman, until his arrival at London in 1782. By then his study of the French *philosophes* had turned him away from the church, and the passage of years made him an atheist. Resolved to reform the world by his philosophic system, he published in 1793 his curious synthesis of the speculations of his revolutionary predecessors, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice,* which may be said to be the first book ever written on philosophical anarchism. In order to understand the sensation it caused, it is necessary to know something of its antecedents.

Many of the French thinkers who paved the way for the French Revolution accepted the doctrine of Hobbes that man was by nature selfish, but, they believed, could be taught by the exercise of reason to co-operate in behalf of a better society. This was the position of Voltaire and most of the Encyclopedists. Others, like Rousseau, believed that man was by nature benevolent and moved to acts of evil only by the conditions of society. Both schools of thought, however, agreed in this: that man could achieve a better life than was to be found in the eighteenth century. This idea, the idea of progress, was one of the by-products of French revolutionary thought. It seems to have first emerged out of the old quarrel of the Ancients versus the Moderns. In order to show the superiority of the latter, Fontenelle, a disciple of Descartes, insisted upon the cumulative nature of advance in science and industry; he reasoned that if the moderns were merely equal to the ancients it "would mean necessarily that we were of a nature vastly inferior to theirs." Perrault continued the discussion by pointing out that all knowledge is accumulative; each generation inherits the knowledge of its predecessors and adds further to the sum. It was, however, the Abbé de St. Pierre (1658-1753) who was the most enthusiastic of the early teachers of progress; he worked out innumerable *Projects* for the immediate improvement of society, among them a plan for perpetual peace through arbitration. He was confident that the exercise of human reason would eventually bring about the millennium of perfect social accord. This conviction that the world was always improving is implicit (and often explicit) in the work of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, D'Alembert, and the Encyclopedists, who strove so valiantly to bring about reform. The most extravagant optimist of all these men, however, was Condorcet (1743-1794) who, in the shadow of the guillotine, wrote his *Sketch of an Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind,* a glowing picture of that perfect society on whose threshold he believed himself to be standing. "The perfectibility of man," he said, "is truly indefinite," and he added: "the progress of this perfectibility, henceforth independent of any power which might wish to arrest it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe on which nature has placed us. . . . Never will men retrograde."

It is this doctrine of the perfectibility of the human race and of the inevitability of its attaining perfection that Godwin accepted *in toto.* From rationalists like Voltaire he accepted his faith in the power of reason to lead mankind to truth; and from the opposing Rousseauistic school he accepted the axiom that man is by nature benevolent. Laws and governments have conspired, he thought, to deprive man of rational action (i.e. benevolent action) by imposing restraints upon him. Hence, he said, all governments are evil. Marriage, being a restraint, is an evil. (Godwin married twice, and made a considerable to-do when Shelley ran off with his daughter!) Family ties are formed without reason, and hence are evil. The age of perfection which is sure to come will see a society of free and equal men and women, living only by their reason. Reason, as taught through literature and political justice, will lead men to conquer their emotional nature, to banish disease, and even to banish death. There will be no problem of excess population in that golden age because by then men will have so overcome their passions, which being irrational are evil, that they will cease to reproduce. This progress will take place of necessity, and cannot be brought about by force. It is only as men learn more and more to live by their reasons that the millennium can be made to come.

Undoubtedly only an unemotional hair-splitter like Godwin could have written in such elaborate absurdity. The extent to which he could be ludicrous may be glimpsed from a passage in which he poses the situation where the philosopher Fénelon and a chambermaid were in a burning house and there was time to rescue only one of the two:

"Supposing I had been myself the chambermaid, I ought to have chosen to die, rather than that Fénelon should have died. The life of Fénelon was really preferable to that of the chambermaid. . . . Supposing the chambermaid had been my wife, my mother, or my benefactor, this would not alter the truth of the proposition. The life of Fénelon would still be more valuable than that of the chambermaid; and justice, pure, unadulterated justice, would still have preferred that which was most valuable. . . . My wife or my mother may be a fool or a prostitute, malicious, lying, or dishonest. If they be, what consequence is it that they are mine?"

But the book appeared at a crucial time, when the minds of Englishmen were in a ferment about the issues of the French Revolution. Wordsworth advised a young student to burn his chemistry books and read Godwin. The astute Crabb Robinson, Wordsworth's friend, said that the book "gave a turn to my mind, and in effect directed the whole course of my life. . . . It made me feel more *generously*. I had never before, nor, I am afraid, have I ever since felt so strongly the duty of not living to one's self, but of having for one's sole object the good of the community." While books far less hostile were being suppressed, *Political Justice* was left in peace by the government because it sold in a very expensive edition, and also because Godwin made a strong issue of the uselessness of violence in bringing about the millennium. In the disillusionment of the English radicals over the French Revolution, after Napoleon started his campaign of European conquest, Godwin's position as a leading philosopher suffered a complete eclipse. In 1825 Hazlitt could look back upon the decade of Godwin's popularity and say: "He blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation; no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and wherever truth, liberty, justice was the theme, his name was not far off. Now he has sunk below the horizon, and enjoys the serene twilight of a doubtful immortality." His loss of prestige was inevitable. For, although he wrote with clarity and even a certain charm, his most serious pages now read too much like passages of farce in Molière when the French master is at his most hilarious. Only the high-minded and humorless Shelley, in the next generation, was able to accord Godwin the worship he liked to receive. And for that reason, if for no other, Godwin is likely to be remembered. It must be admitted, in all fairness, that the *general effect* of Godwin's *Political Justice* was both lasting and beneficial. For the book turned men's minds more strongly than any other to man's obligation to his fellows in the community, and was instrumental in bringing about a growing realization that the betterment of the community is the soundest method of bettering the individual.

Among a mass of other writings by Godwin, one novel stands out as admirable for its intrinsic merit. *Things As They Are, or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) was the first detective novel written in our language, and the first novel to study the criminal mind. It is a well-contrived piece of fiction and will still prove interesting to the reader, particularly because of the excellence with which Godwin managed the character of the criminal Falkland. An early example of the propaganda novel, it was used by Godwin to interpret various of the doctrines in *Political Justice*; it presents an indictment of England's penal system and of the unjust power that affluence can wield over poverty.

From *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*

BOOK II

CHAPTER IV

OF THE EQUALITY OF MANKIND

The equality of mankind is either physical or moral. Their physical equality may be considered either as it relates to the strength of the body or the faculties of the mind.

This part of the subject has been exposed to cavil and objection. It has been said "that the reverse of this equality is the result of our experience. Among the individuals of our species we actually find that there are not two alike. One man is strong and another weak. One man is wise and another foolish. All that exists in the world of the inequality of conditions is to be traced to this as their source. The strong man possesses power to subdue, and the weak stands in need of an ally to protect. The consequence is inevitable: the equality of conditions is a chimerical assumption, neither possible to be reduced into practice nor desirable if it could be so reduced."

Upon this statement two observations are to be made. First, this inequality was in its origin infinitely less than it is at present. In the uncultivated state of man diseases, effeminacy, and luxury were little known; and of consequence the strength of every one much more nearly approached to the strength of his neighbor. In the uncultivated state of man the understandings of all were limited, their wants, their ideas, and their views nearly upon a level. It was to be expected that in their first departure from this state great irregularities would introduce themselves, and it is the object of subsequent wisdom and improvement to mitigate these irregularities.

Secondly, notwithstanding the encroachments that have been made upon the equality of mankind, a great and substantial equality remains. There is no such disparity among the human race as to enable one man to hold several other men in subjection, except so far as they are willing to be subject. All government is founded in opinion. Men at present live under any particular form because they conceive it their interest to do so. One part indeed of a community or empire may be held in subjection by force; but this cannot be the personal force of their despot; it must be the force of another part of the community who are of opinion that it is their interest to support his authority. Destroy this opinion, and the fabric which is built upon it falls to the ground. It follows, therefore, that all men are essentially independent. So much for the physical equality.

The moral equality is still less open to reasonable exception. By moral equality I understand the propriety of applying one unalterable rule of justice to every case that may arise. This cannot be questioned but upon arguments that would subvert the very nature of virtue. "Equality," it has been affirmed, "will always be an unintelligible fiction so long as the capacities of men shall be unequal and their pretended claims have neither guarantee nor sanction by which they can be enforced." But surely justice is sufficiently intelligible in its own nature, abstracted from the consideration whether it be or be not reduced into practice. Justice has relation to beings endowed with perception and capable of pleasure and pain. Now it immediately results from the nature of such beings, independently of any arbitrary constitution, that pleasure is agreeable and pain odious, pleasure to be desired and pain to be obviated. It is therefore just and reasonable that such beings should contribute, so far as it lies in their power, to the pleasure and benefit of each other. Among pleasures some are more exquisite, more unalloyed, and less precarious than others. It is just that these should be preferred.

From these simple principles we may deduce the moral equality of mankind. We are partakers of a common nature, and the same causes that contribute to the benefit of one contribute to the benefit of another. Our senses and faculties are of the same denomination. Our pleasures and pains will therefore be the same. We are all of us endowed with reason, able to compare, to judge and to infer. The improvement, therefore, which is to be desired for the one is to be desired for the other. We shall be provident for ourselves and useful to each other in proportion as we rise above the atmosphere of prejudice. The same independence, the same freedom from any such restraint as should prevent us from giving the reins to our own under-

standing or from uttering upon all occasions whatever we think to be true, will conduce to the improvement of all. There are certain opportunities and a certain situation most advantageous to every human being, and it is just that these should be communicated to all, as nearly at least as the general economy will permit.

There is indeed one species of moral inequality parallel to the physical inequality that has been already described. The treatment to which men are entitled is to be measured by their merits and their virtues. That country would not be the seat of wisdom and reason where the benefactor of his species was considered in the same point of view as their enemy. But in reality this distinction, so far from being adverse to equality in any tenable sense, is friendly to it and is accordingly known by the appellation of equity, a term derived from the same origin. Though in some sense an exception, it tends to the same purpose to which the principle itself is indebted for its value. It is calculated to infuse into every bosom an emulation of excellence. The thing really to be desired is the removing as much as possible arbitrary distinctions and leaving to talents and virtue the field of exertion unimpaired. We should endeavor to afford to all the same opportunities and the same encouragement, and to render justice the common interest and choice.

Chapter V

RIGHTS OF MAN

There is no subject that has been discussed with more eagerness and pertinacity than the rights of man. Has he any rights or has he none? Much may plausibly be alleged on both sides of this question, and in the conclusion those reasoners appear to express themselves with the greatest accuracy who embrace the negative. There is nothing that has been of greater disservice to the cause of truth than the hasty and unguarded manner in which its advocates have sometimes defended it; and it will be admitted to be peculiarly unfortunate if the advocates on one side of this question should be found to have the greatest quantity of truth while their adversaries have expressed themselves in a manner more consonant to reason and the nature of things. Where the question has been so extremely darkened by an ambiguous use of terms, it may at any rate be desirable to try whether by a patient and severe investigation of the first principles of political society it may be placed in a light considerably different from the views of both parties.

Political society, as has already been observed, is founded in the principles of morality and justice. It is impossible for intellectual beings to be brought into coalition and intercourse without a certain mode of conduct, adapted to their nature and connection, immediately becoming a duty incumbent on the parties concerned. Men would never have associated if they had not imagined that in consequence of that association they would mutually conduce to the advantage and happiness of each other. This is the real purpose, the genuine basis of their intercourse; and as far as this purpose is answered, so far does society answer the end of its institution.

There is only one postulate more that is necessary to bring us to a conclusive mode of reasoning upon this subject. Whatever is meant by the term "right"—for it will presently appear that the sense of the term itself has never been clearly understood—there can neither be opposite rights, nor rights and duties hostile to each other. The rights of one man cannot clash with or be destructive of the rights of another; for this, instead of rendering the subject an important branch of truth and morality, as the advocates of the rights of man certainly understand it to be, would be to reduce it to a heap of unintelligible jargon and inconsistency. If one man have a right to be free, another man cannot have a right to make him a slave; if one man have a right to inflict chastisement upon me, I cannot have a right to withdraw myself from chastisement; if my neighbor have a right to a sum of money in my possession, I cannot have a right to retain it in my pocket. It cannot be less incontrovertible that I have no right to omit what my duty prescribes.

From hence it inevitably follows that men have no rights. By right, as the word is employed in this subject, has always been understood discretion; that is, a full and complete power of either doing a thing or omitting it without the person's becoming liable to animadversion or censure from another; that is, in other words, without his incurring any degree of turpitude or guilt. Now in this sense I affirm that man has no rights, no discretionary power whatever.

It is commonly said that a man has a right to the disposal of his fortune, a right to the employment of his time, a right to the uncontrolled choice of his profession or pusuits. But this can never be

consistently affirmed till it can be shown that he has no duties prescribing and limiting his mode of proceeding in all these respects. My neighbor has just as much right to put an end to my existence with dagger or poison as to deny me that pecuniary assistance without which I must starve, or as to deny me that assistance without which my intellectual attainments or my moral exertions will be materially injured. He has just as much right to amuse himself with burning my house or torturing my children upon the rack as to shut himself up in a cell careless about his fellow men and to hide his talent in a napkin.

If men have any rights, any discretionary powers, they must be in things of total indifference, as whether I sit on the right or on the left side of my fire, or dine on beef today or tomorrow. Even these rights are much fewer than we are apt to imagine, since before they can be completely established, it must be proved that my choice on one side or the other can in no possible way contribute to the benefit or injury of myself or of any other person in the world. Those must indeed be rights well worth the contending for, the very essence of which consists in their absolute nugatoriness and inutility.

In reality nothing can appear more wonderful to a careful enquirer than that two ideas so incompatible as man and rights should ever have been associated together. Certain it is that one of them must be utterly exclusive and annihilatory of the other. Before we ascribe rights to man, we must conceive of him as a being endowed with intellect and capable of discerning the differences and tendencies of things. But a being endowed with intellect and capable of discerning the differences and tendencies of things instantly becomes a moral being and has duties incumbent on him to discharge; and duties and rights, as has already been shown, are absolutely exclusive of each other.

It has been affirmed by the zealous advocates of liberty that princes and magistrates have no rights, and no position can be more incontrovertible. There is no situation of their lives that has not its correspondent duties. There is no power entrusted to them that they are not bound to exercise exclusively for the public good. It is strange that persons adopting this principle did not go a step farther and perceive that the same restrictions were applicable to subjects and citizens.

Nor is the fallacy of this language more conspicuous than its immoral tendency. To this inaccurate and unjust use of the term "right" we owe it that the miser, who accumulates to no end that which diffused would have conduced to the welfare of thousands, that the luxurious man, who wallows in indulgence and sees numerous families around him pining in beggary, never fail to tell us of their rights, and to silence animadversion and quiet the censure of their own mind by reminding us that they came fairly into possession of their wealth, that they owe no debts, and that of consequence no man has authority to enquire into their private manner of disposing of that which is their own. A great majority of mankind are conscious that they stand in need of this sort of defence, and are therefore very ready to combine against the insolent intruder who ventures to enquire into "things that do not concern him." They forget that the wise man and the honest man, the friend of his country and his kind, is concerned for everything by which they may be affected and carries about with him a diploma constituting him inquisitor general of the moral conduct of his neighbors, with a duty annexed to recall them to virtue by every lesson that truth can enable him to read and every punishment that plain speaking is competent to inflict.

It is scarcely necessary to add that if individuals have no rights, neither has society, which possesses nothing but what individuals have brought into a common stock. The absurdity of the common opinion, as applied to this subject, is still more glaring, if possible, than in the view in which we have already considered it. According to the usual sentiment every club assembling for any civil purpose, every congregation of religionists assembling for the worship of God, has a right to establish any provisions or ceremonies, no matter how ridiculous or detestable, provided they do not interfere with the freedom of others. Reason lies prostrate under their feet. They have a right to trample upon and insult her as they please. It is in the same spirit we have been told that every nation has a right to choose its form of government. A most acute, original, and inestimable author was probably misled by the vulgar phraseology on this subject when he asserted that "at a time when neither the people of France nor the national assembly were troubling themselves about the affairs of England or the English Parliament, Mr. Burke's conduct was unpardonable in commencing an unprovoked attack upon them."

There are various objections that suggest themselves to the theory which subverts the rights of men; and if the theory be true, they will prob-

ably appear in the result to be so far from really hostile to it as to be found more fairly deducible from and consistent with its principles than with any of those with which they have inadvertently been connected.

In the first place it has sometimes been alleged, and seems to result from the reasonings already adduced under the head of justice, that men have a right to the assistance and co-operation of their fellows in every honest pursuit. But when we assert this proposition, we mean something by the word "right" exceedingly different from what is commonly understood by the term. We do not understand something discretionary, which, if not voluntarily fulfilled, cannot be considered as a matter of claim. On the contrary everything adduced upon that occasion was calculated to show that it was a matter of strict claim; and perhaps something would be gained with respect to perspicuity if we rather chose to distinguish it by that appellation than by a name so much abused and so ambiguous in its application as the term "right."

The true origin of this latter term is relative to the present state of political government, in which many of those actions which moral duty most strictly enjoins us are in no degree brought within the sphere of legislative sanction. Men uninfluenced by comprehensive principles of justice commit every species of intemperance, are selfish, hard-hearted, licentious and cruel, and maintain their right to all these caprices because the laws of their country are silent with regard to them. Philosophers and political enquirers have too frequently adopted the same principles with a certain degree of accommodation, though in fact men have no more right to these erroneous propensities in their most qualified sense than they had to them originally in all their extravagance. It is true that under the forms of society now existing in the world intemperance and the caprices of personal intercourse too frequently escape without animadversion. But in a more perfect form, though they may not fall under the cognisance of law, the offender will probably be so unequivocally reminded by the sincerity of his neighbors of the error he has committed as to be in no danger of running away with the opinion that he had a right to commit it.

A second and more important objection to the doctrine I am maintaining is derived from the rights, as they are called, of private judgment and the liberty of the press. But it may easily be shown that these, no more than the articles already mentioned, are rights of discretion. If they were, they would prove that a man was strictly justifiable in publishing what he believed to be pernicious or false and that it was a matter of perfect moral indifference whether he conformed to the religious rites of Confucius, of Mahomet, or of Christ. The political freedom of conscience and of the press, so far from being as it is commonly supposed an extension, is a new case of the limitation of rights and discretion. Conscience and the press ought to be unrestrained, not because men have a right to deviate from the exact line that duty prescribes, but because society, the aggregate of individuals, has no right to assume the prerogative of an infallible judge and to undertake authoritatively to prescribe to its members in matters of pure speculation.

One obvious reason against this assumption on the part of the society is the impossibility by any compulsatory method of bringing men to uniformity of opinion. The judgment we form upon topics of general truth is or is imagined to be founded upon evidence; and however it may be soothed by gentle applications to the betraying its impartiality, it is apt to repel with no little pertinacity whatever comes under the form of compulsion. Persecution cannot persuade the understanding, even when it subdues our resolution. It may make us hypocrites, but cannot make us converts. The government, therefore, which is anxious above all things to imbue its subjects with integrity and virtue will be the farthest in the world from discouraging them in the explicit avowal of their sentiments.

But there is another reason of a higher order. Man is not, as has been already shown, a perfect being, but perfectible. No government that has yet existed or is likely presently to exist upon the face of the earth is faultless. No government ought, therefore, pertinaciously to resist the change of its own institutions; and still less ought it to set up a standard upon the various topics of human speculation, to restrain the excursions of an inventive mind. It is only by giving a free scope to these excursions that science, philosophy, and morals have arrived at their present degree of perfection or are capable of going on to that still greater perfection in comparison of which all that has been already done will perhaps appear childish. But a proceeding absolutely necessary for the purpose of exciting the mind to these salutary excursions, and still more necessary in order to give

them their proper operation, consists in the unrestrained communication of men's thought and discoveries to each other. If every man have to begin again at the point from which his neighbor set out, the labor will be endless and the progress in an unvarying circle. There is nothing that more eminently contributes to intellectual energy than for every man to be habituated to follow without alarm the train of his speculations and to utter without fear the conclusions that have suggested themselves to him. But does all this imply that men have a right to act anything but virtue, and to utter anything but truth? Certainly not. It implies, indeed, that there are points with which society has no right to interfere, not that discretion and caprice are more free or duty less strict upon these points than upon any others with which human action is conversant. (1793)

LETTERS

Thomas Gray
(1716-1771)

To Richard West[1]

Cambridge, December, 1736

You must know that I do not take degrees, and, after this term, shall have nothing more of college impertinencies to undergo, which I trust will be some pleasure to you, as it is a great one to me. I have endured lectures daily and hourly since I came last, supported by the hopes of being shortly at full liberty to give myself up to my friends and classical companions, who, poor souls! though I see them fallen into great contempt with most people here, yet I cannot help sticking to them, and out of a spirit of obstinacy (I think) love them the better for it; and indeed, what can I do else?. Must I plunge into metaphysics? Alas, I cannot see in the dark; nature has not furnished me with the optics of a cat. Must I pore upon mathematics? Alas, I cannot see in too much light; I am no eagle. It is very possible that two and two make four, but I would not give four farthings to demonstrate this ever so clearly; and if these be the profits of life, give me the amusements of it. The people I behold all around me, it seems, know all this and more, and yet I do not know one of them who inspires me with any ambition of being like him. Surely it was of this place, now Cambridge, but formerly known by the name of Babylon, that the prophet spoke when he said, 'the wild beasts of the desert shall dwell there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall build there, and satyrs shall dance there;[2] their forts and towers shall be a den for ever, a joy of wild asses;[3] there shall the great owl make her nest, and lay and hatch and gather under her shadow; it shall be a court of dragons; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest'.[4] You see here is a pretty collection of desolate animals, which is verified in this town to a tittle, and perhaps it may also allude to your habitation, for you know all types may be taken by abundance of handles; however, I defy your owls to match mine.

If the default of your spirits and nerves be nothing but the effect of the hyp,[5] I have no more to say. We all must submit to that wayward Queen; I too in no small degree own her sway.

I feel her influence while I speak her power. But if it be a real distemper, pray take more care of your health, if not for your own at least for our sakes, and do not be so soon weary of this little world: I do not know what refined friendships you may have contracted in the other, but pray do not be in a hurry to see your acquaintance above; among your terrestrial familiars, however, though I say it that should not say it, there positively is not one that has a greater esteem for you than

Yours most sincerely, etc.

[1] A schoolfriend of Gray's at Eton who had gone up to Oxford. Gray later commemorated his untimely death in a well-known sonnet.

[2] *Isaiah*, XIII, 21.
[3] *Isaiah*, XXXII, 14.
[4] *Isaiah*, XXXIV, 13-15.
[5] short for *hypochondria*

To Richard West

LONDON, *April, Thursday* [1742]

You are the first who ever made a Muse of a cough; to me it seems a much more easy task to versify in one's sleep (that indeed you were of old famous for) than for want of it. Not the wakeful nightingale, when she had a cough, ever sung so sweetly. I give you thanks for your warble, and wish you could sing yourself to rest. These wicked remains of your illness will sure give way to warm weather and gentle exercise; which I hope you will not omit as the season advances. Whatever low spirits and indolence, the effect of them, may advise to the contrary, I pray you add five steps to your walk daily for my sake; by the help of which, in a month's time, I propose to set you on horseback.

I talked of the *Dunciad*[1] as concluding you had seen it; if you have not, do you choose I should get and send it you? I have myself, upon your recommendation, been reading *Joseph Andrews*.[2] The incidents are ill laid and without invention; but the characters have a great deal of nature, which always pleases even in her lowest shapes. Parson Adams is perfectly well; so is Mrs. Slipslop, and the story of Wilson; and throughout he shows himself well read in stage-coaches, country squires, inns, and inns of court. His reflections upon high people and low people, and misses and masters, are very good. However the exaltedness of some minds (or rather, as I shrewdly suspect, their insipidity and want of feeling or observation) may make them insensible to these light things (I mean such as characterize and paint nature), yet surely they are as weighty and much more useful than your grave discourses upon the mind, the passions, and what not. Now as the paradisaical pleasures of the Mahometans consist in playing upon the flute and lying with houris, be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux[3] and Crébillon.[4]

You are very good in giving yourself the trouble to read and find fault with my long harangues.[5] Your freedom (as you call it) has so little need of apologies that I should scarce excuse your treating me any otherwise; which, whatever compliment it might be to my vanity, would be making a very ill one to my understanding. As to matter of style, I have this to say: the language of the age is never the language of poetry, except among the French, whose verse, where the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost every one that has written has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivatives—nay sometimes words of their own composition or invention. Shakespeare and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former. Let me give you some instances from Dryden, whom everybody reckons a great master of our poetical tongue.—Full of *museful mopings*—unlike the *trim of love*—a pleasant *beverage*—a *roundelay* of love—stood silent in his *mood*—with knots and *knares* deformed—his *ireful mood*—in proud *array* —his *boon* was granted—and *disarray* and shameful rout—*wayward* but wise—*furbished* for the field—the *foiled dodderd* oaks—*disherited*—*smouldering* flames—*retchless* of laws—*crones* old and ugly—the *beldam* at his side—the *grandam-hag*—*villanize* his father's fame.—But they are infinite; and our language not being a settled thing (like the French) has an undoubted right to words of an hundred years old, provided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible. In truth, Shakespeare's language is one of his principal beauties; and he has no less advantage over your Addisons and Rowes[6] in this than in those other great excellences you mention. Every word in him is a picture. Pray put me the following lines into the tongue of our modern dramatics:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass:
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up—

and what follows. To me they appear untranslatable; and if this be the case, our language is greatly degenerated. However, the affectation of imitating Shakespeare may doubtless be carried too far; and is no sort of excuse for sentiments ill-suited or speeches ill-timed, which I believe is a

[1] a satirical poem by Alexander Pope.
[2] a novel by Henry Fielding (1707-1754).
[3] a French dramatist and novelist (1688-1763).
[4] French novelist (1707-1777).
[5] Gray had sent West part of an unfinished play, *Agrippina*
[6] Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), English dramatist and Poet Laureate.

little the case with me. I guess the most faulty expressions may be these: *silken* son of dalliance—*drowsier* pretensions—wrinkled *beldams*—*arched* the hearer's brow and *riveted* his eyes in *fearful ecstasy*. These are easily altered or omitted; and, indeed, if the thoughts be wrong or superfluous, there is nothing easier than to leave out the whole. The first ten or twelve lines are, I believe, the best; and as for the rest, I was betrayed into a good deal of it by Tacitus. Only what he has said in five words, I imagine I have said in fifty lines. Such is the misfortune of imitating the inimitable. Now, if you are of my opinion, *una litura*[7] may do the business better than a dozen; and you need not fear unravelling my web. I am a sort of spider; and have little else to do but spin it over again, or creep to some other place and spin there. Alas! for one who has nothing to do but amuse himself, I believe my amusements are as little amusing as most folks'. But no matter; it makes the hours pass; and it is better than ἐν ἀμαθίᾳ καὶ ἀμουσίᾳ ἀταβιῶνα.[8] Adieu.

To Horace Walpole

Cambridge, February 11, 1751

My dear sir:

As you have brought me into a little sort of distress, you must assist me, I believe, to get out of it as well as I can. Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it) who have taken the *Magazine of Magazines* into their hands. They tell me that an "ingenious" poem, called *Reflections in a Country Church-yard*, has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith; that they are informed that the "excellent" author of it is I by name; and that they beg not only his "indulgence," but the "honor of his correspondence," etc. As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent or so correspondent as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape the honor they would inflict upon me; and therefore am obliged to desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him, but in his best paper and character. He must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be *Elegy, Wrote in a Country Church-yard*. If he should add a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you think fit, the 102nd line may be read:

Awake and faithful to her wonted fires.

But if this be worse than before, it must go as it was. In the 126th, for "*ancient* thorn" read "*aged*."

If you behold the *Mag of Mags* in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. Adieu, sir. I am

Yours ever,
T. G.[1]

To Richard Hurd[1]

Stoke, August 25, 1757

Dear sir:

I do not know why you should thank me for what you had a right and title to,[2] but attribute it to the excess of your politeness, and the more so because almost no one else has made me the same compliment. As your acquaintance in the University (you say) do me the honor to admire, it would be ungenerous in me not to give them notice that they are doing a very unfashionable thing, for all people of condition are agreed not to admire, nor even to understand. One very great man, writing to an acquaintance of his and mine, says that he had read them seven or eight times, and that now, when he next sees him, he shall not have above thirty questions to ask. Another, a peer, believes that the last stanza of the second ode relates to King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell. Even my friends tell me they do not succeed, and write me moving topics of consolation on that head. In short, I have heard of nobody but a player[3] and a doctor of divinity that profess their esteem for them. Oh, yes! a lady of quality, a friend of Mason's,[4] who is

[7] one erasure.

[8] to live one's life without knowledge or refinement.

[1] Four days after this letter was written, Dodsley printed the poem (see p 29) as a sixpenny pamphlet. A day later the Magazine printed it as by "Mr. Gray, of Peterhouse, Cambridge."

[1] author of *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), a milestone in early romantic criticism.

[2] Gray had sent Hurd a copy of "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard." See pp. 31-35.

[3] David Garrick.

[4] William Mason, Gray's friend and biographer.

a great reader: she knew there was a compliment to Dryden, but never suspected there was anything said about Shakespeare or Milton, till it was explained to her, and wishes that there had been titles prefixed to tell what they were about.

From this mention of Mason's name you may think, perhaps, we are great correspondents; no such thing; I have not heard from him these two months. I will be sure to scold in my own name as well as in yours. I rejoice to hear you are so ripe for the press, and so voluminous—not for my own sake only, whom you flatter with the hopes of seeing your labors both public and private, but for yours too; for to be employed is to be happy. This principle of mine, and I am convinced of its truth, has, as usual, no influence on my practice. I am alone and *ennuyé* to the last degree, yet do nothing. Indeed I have one excuse: my health, which you so kindly inquire after, is not extraordinary ever since I came hither. It is no great malady but several little ones that seem brewing no good to me.

It will be a particular pleasure to me to hear whether Content dwells in Leicestershire and how she entertains herself there; only do not be too happy, nor forget entirely the quiet ugliness of Cambridge. I am, dear sir,

Your friend and obliged humble servant,

T. Gray

If Mr. Brown falls in your way, be so good as to show him the beginning of this letter, and it will save me the labor of writing the same thing twice. His first letter, I believe, was in the mail that was robbed, for it was delayed many days; his second I have just received.

William Cowper

(1731-1800)

To the Rev. William Unwin

Olney, October 31, 1779

My dear Friend,

I wrote my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say; in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct though I am a loser by it. I will endeavor to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biographies,[1] for which I thank you: with one exception, and that a swingeing[2] one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. A pensioner is not likely to spare a republican; and the Doctor, in order, I suppose, to convince his royal patron of the sincerity of his monarchical principles, has belabored that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of everything royal in his public, are the two colors with which he has smeared all the canvas. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him; and it is well for Milton that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon *Lycidas*,[3] and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is indeed ridiculous enough) the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if *Lycidas* was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it go for nothing. I am convinced, by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the *Paradise Lost*? It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute, variety without end and never equalled, unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation. Oh! I could thresh his old jacket, till I made his pension jingle in his pocket.

[1] The first volume of *Lives of the Poets*.
[2] striking.
[3] See I, pp. 922-23.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room; our love attends yourself, Mrs. Unwin, and Miss Shuttleworth, not forgetting the two miniature pictures at your elbow.—Yours affectionately,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin

October 10, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I send you four quires of verse,[1] which having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of, till I see them in print. I have not after all found time or industry enough to give the last hand to the points. I believe, however, they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness; it were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonorable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to approve it. From this charge at least I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs. I have paid one, and only one, compliment, which was so justly due that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion;—I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton,—but the compliment I mean is to Mr. Smith. It is, however, so managed that nobody but himself can make the application and you, to whom I disclose the secret,—a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of.

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons: first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance,—and secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega,[2] or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature—not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience—not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I have varied as much as I could (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string), I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance, because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible), it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency: to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you, I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

Your mother's love. She wishes that you would buy her a second-hand cream-pot, small, either kit, jug, or ewer of silver.

I shall be glad of an immediate line to apprise me of its safe arrival.

To Joseph Johnson[1]

December, 1784 (?)

I did not write the line that has been tampered with hastily, or without due attention to the construction of it; and what appeared to me its only merit is, in its present state, entirely annihilated. I know that the ears of modern verse-writers are delicate to an excess, and their readers are as

[1] *The Task* (see p. 42).

[2] Spanish dramatist (1562-1635).

[1] Cowper's publisher and bookseller.

troubled with the squeamishness as themselves. So that if a line do not run as smooth as quicksilver, they are offended. A critic of the present day serves a poem as a cook does a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post, and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope; but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly, rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them!

I have said thus much, as I hinted in the beginning, because I have just finished a much larger poem[2] than the last, which our common friend will receive by the same messenger that has the charge of this letter. In that poem there are many lines, which an ear so nice as the gentleman's who made the above-mentioned alteration, would undoubtedly condemn; and yet, (if I may be permitted to say it) they cannot be made smoother without being the worse for it. There is a roughness on a plum which nobody that understands fruit would rub off, though the plum would be much more polished without it. But lest I tire you, I will only add, that I wish you to guard me from such meddling; assuring you, that I always write as smoothly as I can; but that I never did, never will, sacrifice the spirit or sense of a passage to the sound of it.

W. Cowper

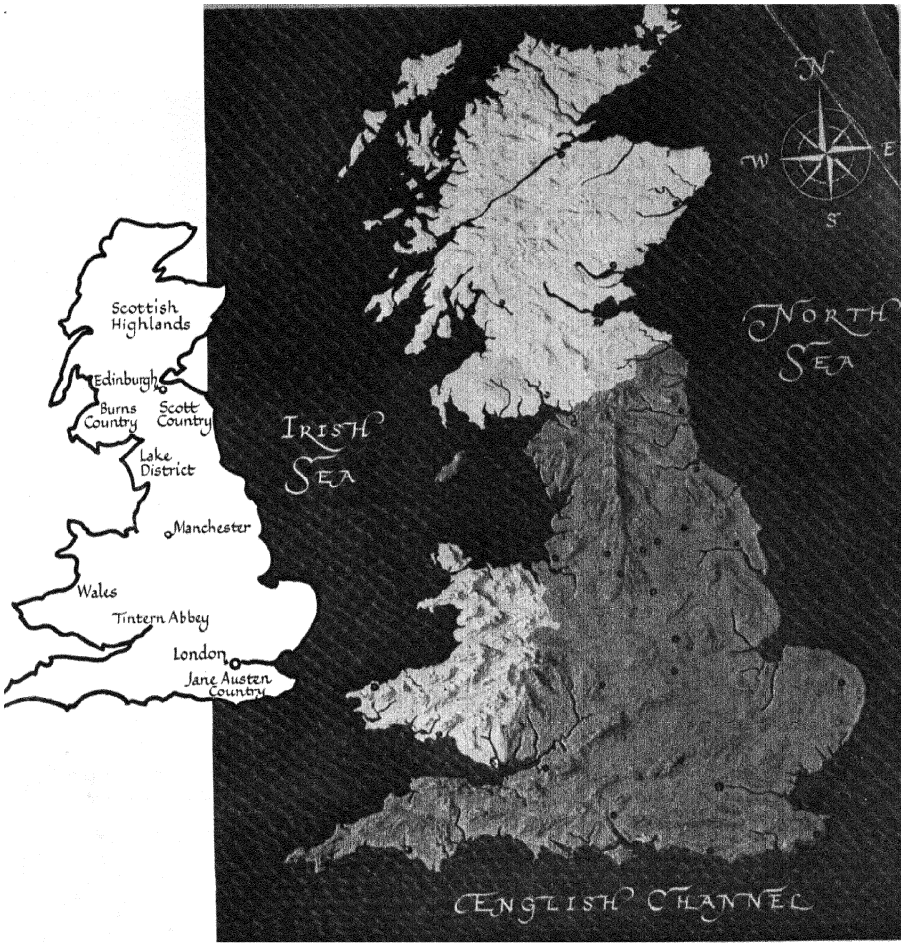
To Lady Hesketh[1]

The Lodge,
March 3, 1788.

One day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I, having taken our morning walk and returning homeward through the wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we had met them, we heard the cry of hounds at no great distance, and mounting the broad stump of an elm which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. They were all at that time in our orchard; presently we heard a terrier, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets within a few yards of us at her utmost speed, as if in pursuit of something which we doubted not was the fox. Before we could reach the other end of the wilderness, the hounds entered also; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the grove, there we found the whole weary cavalcade assembled. The huntsman dismounting, begged leave to follow his hounds on foot, for he was sure, he said, that they had killed him: a conclusion which I suppose he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the fox and the dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse of either after their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey. He soon produced dead reynard, and rejoined us in the grove with all his dogs about him. Having an opportunity to see a ceremony, which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The huntsman having by the aid of a pitchfork lodged reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on their horses contemplating the fox, for which they had toiled so hard; and the hounds assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The huntsman remounted; cut off a foot, and threw it to the hounds;—one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and drawing down the fox by the hinder legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when throwing the fox to the distance of some yards, and screaming like a fiend, "tear him to pieces"—at least six times repeatedly, he consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with. I have been in at the death of a fox, and you now know as much of the matter, as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England.

Yours,
W. C.

[2] *The Task* (see p. 42)
[1] Cowper's cousin.



A relief map of England and Scotland, showing the highland and lowland areas. The inset map indicates some of the regions where a relationship may be seen between topography and the literature of the period.

THE ROMANTIC AGE

(1798-1832)

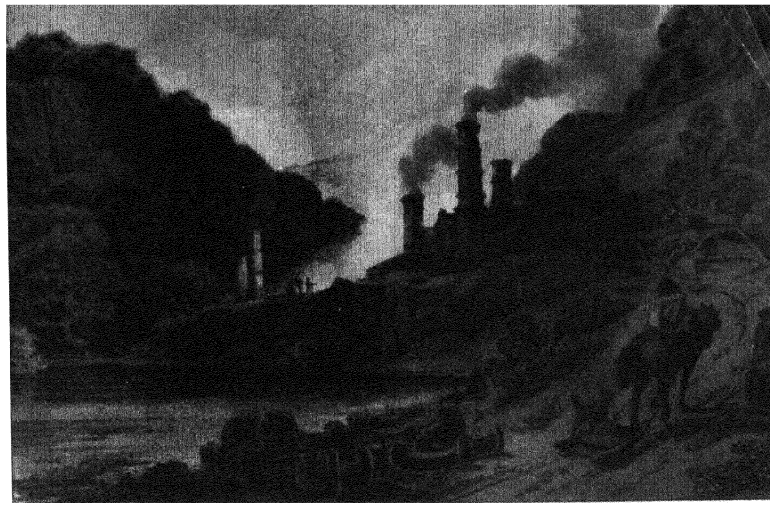


An English farmyard of a century ago. England was at this time still largely agricultural, but the times were changing rapidly. The children of this farmer may well have been forced to seek work in an industrial city. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

The Emancipation of the Creative Imagination

TO COME UPON the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats after a century of satirical heroic couplets is to enter an endlessly varied and luxuriant forest after traversing the paths of a formal garden. Neoclassicism had achieved much in forging a lucid English prose; it had sharpened critical intelligence and fostered superb wit and brilliant satire. But it had made its unique achievements while denying itself ecstatic emotion and rapturous vision—infallible signs, to a good rationalist, of a deteriorating mentality. Neoclassicism gave us a Pope and a Swift, but it could never have given us a Shakespeare or a Milton. Pope's verse offers us every kind of pleasure poetry can offer—except the highest and the deepest; for the heights and depths are unattainable by a poetry which is held in check by the reins of reason and convention. As Coleridge eloquently put it, the poet should "bring the whole soul of man into activity"; if "Good Sense is the Body of poetic genius," Imagination is "the Soul that is everywhere."

As we have noted in the first chapter of this volume, the creative imagination was emancipated in the course of a gradual process that can be traced from Thomson through Burns and Blake. Indeed, the roots of nineteenth-century romanticism are to be sought in the preceding century: in the timid departures from neoclassical precepts by such men as Thomson,



Ironworks at Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, in 1805. Already the English countryside was being marred by factory chimneys darkening the sky with smoke. About such factories would soon cluster the squalid hovels of the workers. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

Gray, Collins, Chatterton, Macpherson, and Cowper; in the sharp acceleration of the Industrial Revolution at home; in the French Revolution and the violent literary revolution in Germany. Moreover, Burns and Blake, whose important works had been written before the close of the eighteenth century, were true romanticists in every sense of the word.

Nevertheless, we are justified in fixing 1798 and 1832 as the dates of the Romantic Movement. These decades marked the height of its poetical achievement. The year 1798 saw the publication of *Lyrical Ballads,* which contained the first important work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the two leading poets and theorists of the movement. It was their example which showed beyond doubt that neoclassicism was dead. Finally, the year 1832 saw not only the passage of a great Reform Bill, which ushered in the Victorian Era, but also the first significant volume by the leading Victorian poet, Tennyson.

Revolutions at Home and Abroad

Two movements of worldwide significance formed the background during the Romantic generation: the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution.

Inevitably the face of England changed with the steady advance of industry. New machines invented in the eighteenth century—the flying shuttle



Village life in the early nineteenth century. Upper left: *haymaking.* Upper right: *a cottage spinning wheel.* Lower left: *a lacemaker.* Lower right: *a cottager's evening meal.* (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

(1733), the spinny jenny (1764), the water frame (1769), Crompton's "mule," to name only a few—had completely mechanized the textile industry and made for the development of the factory system. As home manufacture began to disappear, the sturdy yeoman class—that class long regarded as the very backbone of English life—began to disappear too. With the invention of new machinery, more workers came to be needed in the factories, so that men, women, and even children were uprooted from rural areas and transplanted to the towns. Old occupations faded away as new drudgeries were born. Improved roads and canals and, somewhat later, railroads linked together the domestic markets. Mass production developed to fill the needs of expanding markets abroad. The capitalist middleman assumed an increasingly significant role in national life; he was buying his way into the land-owning class or demanding the power to rule the England whose wealth he was increasing.

In the eyes of the private craftsman and handicraft worker, this industrial change was the work of devils. His livelihood wiped out by the machine, he had no choice but to enter the expanding towns to work for the manufacturers. Because there was a surplus of laborers, wages were low; village worker and small farmer were both ruined when the wealthy, hunt-loving squires and lords succeeded in enclosing the common land.

The humble folk were held submissive largely by an ingenious Poor Law which kept them from starvation. According to one historian, the living standard of people in the lower ranks of society dropped by one third from 1790 to 1825. In the same period England's industrial wealth increased vastly. The country was able to withstand—at times almost alone—the onslaughts of Napoleon and to forge, with iron and gold, a ring of enemies that finally crushed him. It was upon this paradox of wealth accumulating while men decayed that Britain laid the foundations of its nineteenth-century industrialism and came to be known as the workshop of the world. Some few Englishmen began to amass enormous fortunes. A vast number of others began to fester in the spreading slums of the cities.

It was not until the Victorian Age that writers would attack the horrors and injustices of industrial life. Before such social problems could be broached, the Romantics had first to set forth the principles of equality and social justice in England as the French writers and philosophers were doing in France. But even before this could be undertaken, there was the need to establish, after a century of conformity, the right of the individual to his own full life. The living and working conditions in the industrial towns failed to arouse the indignation of the Romantic writers. They found discussions of abstract principles far more congenial and exhilarating. Their education had not prepared them to face and deal with the new social issues of their time. Higher education was still classical rather than technological; some of the contemporaries of Edmund Cartwright, inventor of the power loom, valued him more for his taste in Latin poetry than for



Child labor: a factory supervisor whipping a boy employee. With such conditions in mind, Elizabeth Barrett Browning later wrote:

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary . . .
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.
For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places . . ."

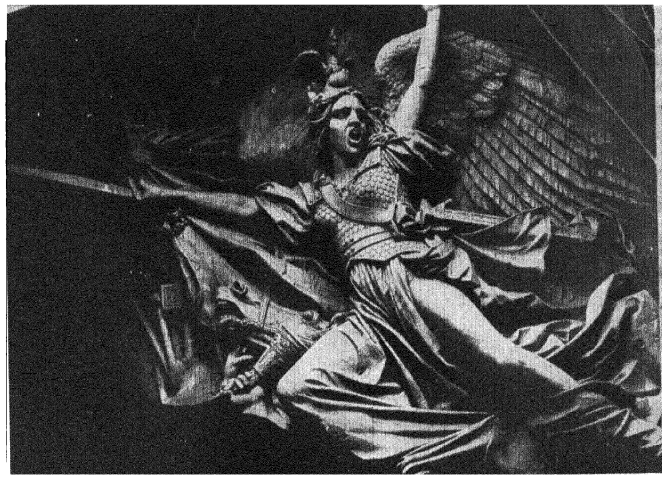
his machines. Even such a reformer as Thomas Jefferson dreaded large urban populations, and as a novelist Jane Austen ignored them. The clergyman Thomas R. Malthus in 1798 argued that the misery of the poor must always remain, for human beings breed faster than the food supply increases. His famous *Essay on Population*—"an apparatus for destroying cheerfulness" —made the growing misery of the working classes seem to be a law of nature.

Furthermore, it was not from the wage-earner group, uneducated and with no leisure for self-cultivation, that the major poets and authors sprang. Little in their experience led them to see the significance of the seams of iron or beds of coal that underlay western and northern England. Their hearts and minds were elsewhere: in a colorful past or the private joys and agonies of their hearts. As a group the Romanticists knew almost nothing about factory towns; and they showed no desire to learn more by direct experience. Even Charles Lamb, who by exception was a wage-earner himself, used his genius to escape from the humdrum world of business; and Shelley's outbursts in favor of revolution seemed to his contemporaries the mad declamations of a self-tormented exile. Until the urban laboring population could itself become vocal, its grievances and hopes could not be fully brought before the country. To do so was a task that awaited the Victorians and their successors. Until that time the urban industrial workers remained largely outside literature, neither figuring in it nor reading it, except when mentioned by such a poet as Thomas Hood (see p. 331).

The revolution in France, however, excited enormous interest from the start. It furnished in abundance the issues about which discussions of political liberty could center. From the day the Bastille fell (July 14, 1789), all eyes were turned upon France.

The Revolution itself had been prepared by the French *philosophes*, who had borrowed much of their political theory from English sources (see pp. 1136-1149). With the fall of the Bastille, English writers returned the compliment by an equally sincere admiration. With the exception of Burke, every important man of letters was a sympathizer with the Revolution. A tide of excitement and praise for revolutionary hopes swelled through the land. William Wordsworth spoke for all generous hearts in his famous autobiographical lines:

> *Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,*
> *But to be young was very Heaven!*

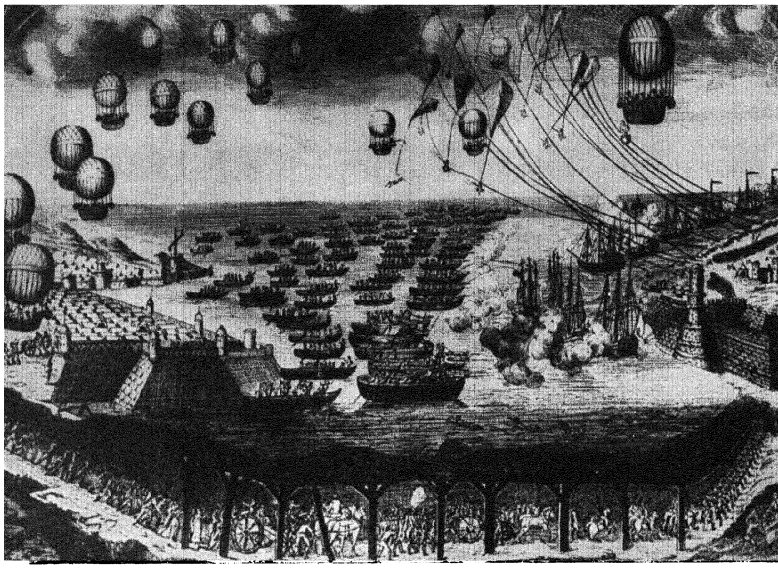


"La Marseillaise." A detail of the Arc de l'Etoile, Rude's sculpture is a personification of the world-famous song.

The chief historical facts of this central drama of the Romantic generation are these: For three years the revolutionists of France held the admiration won by their great pronouncements on the rights of man. But in 1792 they undertook a war, started as a measure of self-defense, against their neighbors. Gradually the Revolution became a monster of tyranny. In the next year they executed their king, Louis XVI. Their heads dizzy with power, the revolutionists declared war on England in 1793, and thus began the long contest between the two nations. The years 1793 to 1794 marked the Reign of Terror, climaxed by the execution of Robespierre; 1795 brought the establishment of the Directory, a five-man committee set up to manage the nation. The next year saw the rise of Napoleon to a military dictatorship with continued aggression upon neighboring states, and this aggression gradually turned English radicals away from sympathy with the Revolution. Soon only the most stubborn radicals wished well to France. The British Navy won the great Battle of the Nile in August 1798, the first of Napoleon's major upsets; and the Peace of Amiens effected an armed truce in 1802.

Just a year later hostilities recommenced, a duel of "mighty opposites" to the death. Napoleon held the center of Europe; England ranged the periphery with her fleet, her expeditions, and her gold. In 1805 the Battle of Trafalgar (see p. 121) marked the peak of English naval glory. Seven years later Napoleon was at the gates of Moscow; in 1814 he abdicated his throne, to return in March 1815 for one hundred days. Then came Waterloo.

During these bitter years the lights of hope for a better world burned dim in England. As in all wars, lines were savagely drawn between friend



An imaginary plan for invading England in 1804, from a contemporary drawing. In 1804 there was widespread alarm when Napoleon massed troops on the French coast opposite Dover.

and foe. The agents of a hard-pressed, terrified government were unleashed upon the idealists who had championed Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity as the watchword of the future. Thus, Thomas Paine escaped arrest by a matter of minutes while fleeing to France; Coleridge and Wordsworth were thought to be spies when strolling near the coast in 1797. As for William Godwin, although he was spokesman of the philosophic radicals, he was left alone because the Prime Minister, Pitt, knew that Godwin's *Political Justice* cost several guineas and felt that no one who could afford a copy would be likely to be subversive!

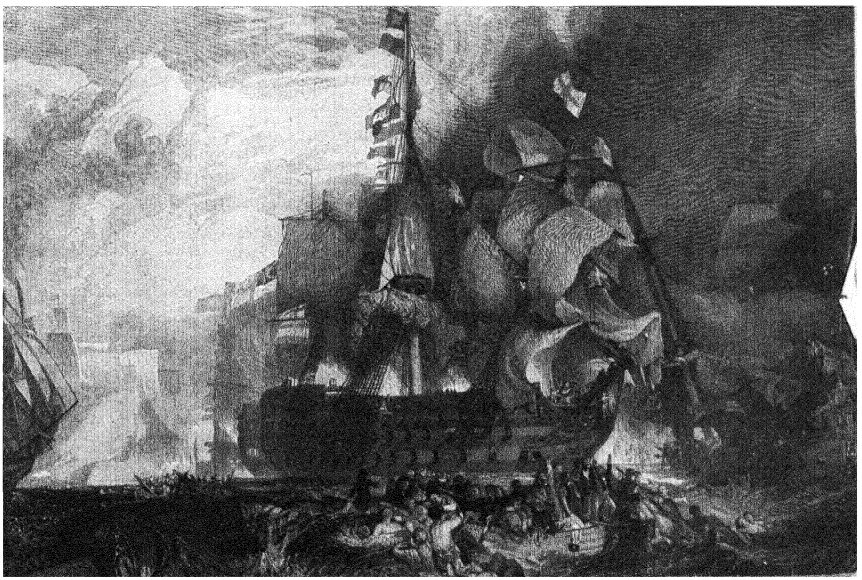
The first generation of romantic poets—Wordsworth (1770-1850), Coleridge (1772-1834), and Southey (1774-1843)—all began as vigorous advocates of republicanism. Wordsworth's imagination was powerfully awakened by his experiences in France during the crucial years of 1791-92; and when England went to war with France in 1793 his sympathies were with his country's enemy. Southey and Coleridge, excited by hopes of a better world, in 1794 formed plans for a new society to be founded across the Atlantic. But as the Revolution ran its course, all three suffered a change of heart. By 1798, when the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge announced their genius to the world, both of them, as well as Southey, were in retreat to conservatism. In three of the books of Wordsworth's *Prelude* one can read of the decline of the French Revolution as an ideal in English thought

and sentiment. No one of these poets paused until he had gone the full distance. Instead of politics, it was to Nature that they turned for self-fulfillment.

This denial of the Revolution typifies the reversal of opinion among most liberals. Scott (1771-1832), a man of Wordsworth's generation, was frankly a prop of feudal ideals. Of the second generation of romantic poets only Shelley (1792-1822) believed until the end in revolutionary principles. Byron (1788-1824) was assuredly a rebel, but his philosophy was negative. Keats (1795-1821) felt that political matters and ideals had no place in great poetry. And by the time Byron, Shelley, and Keats had reached manhood, the French Revolution had already been converted to the purposes of the Napoleonic empire. These new poets, consequently, began to write in an intellectual atmosphere charged with skepticism over the possibility of emancipating society (though Shelley never lost his optimism).

Hopes for a better world did not rise materially after Waterloo. The Tories held power until 1830. Since 1811 George III of England had been "an old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king," with his insufferable eldest son acting as regent. This worthy, the very thought of whom provoked the Duke of Wellington to the bitterest profanity, eventually reigned from 1820 to 1830 as George IV. His brother, William IV, was king until 1837. George III and his gross sons brought royalty into such disrepute that

"The Battle of Trafalgar," from an engraving after J. M. W. Turner.



republicanism found ardent supporters in England as late as the reign of Victoria (1837-1901).

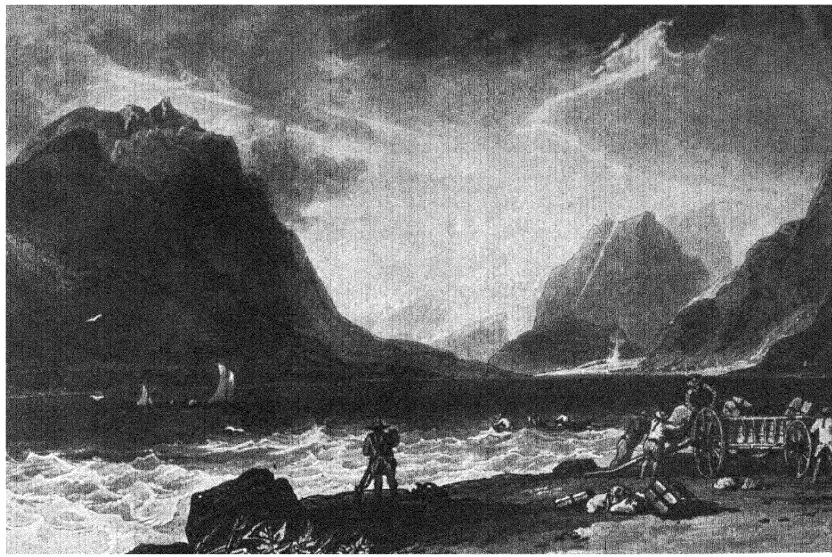
With Napoleon's downfall a peace of exhaustion fell upon Europe and a seven-year depression settled over England. The lot of the industrial classes became worse. Laws that favored agriculture over industry forbade the importation of cheap grain. Because of the supremacy of landowners in Parliament, these "corn laws" could not be repealed. Attempts at political reform met with savage resistance by Tory leaders, now reinforced by the prestige of Wellington, the hero of Waterloo. England was dotted with "pocket" boroughs and "rotten" boroughs, each sending its representatives to the House of Commons from deserted villages or noblemen's estates, while the new industrial cities had no voice. In the face of threatened violence by the Whigs and their lower-class allies, the Duke of Wellington and a band of die-hard Tory peers absented themselves from Parliament and permitted the passage of the great Reform Bill of 1832.

This measure was, in effect, a revolution in favor of the manufacturing middle class. Three years before, in 1829, the Catholic Emancipation Bill had removed many of the political disabilities of Catholics in Ireland and England. Although these two measures were admittedly only belated compromises, their long-range effects changed the government of Britain. They provided a base from which later reformers could move toward universal adult suffrage. They were, in one sense, the English response to those deep impulses that had led to revolutions on the continent—impulses dammed up or turned aside by long wars for survival, from 1793 to 1815. But by the time the reforms came, all the great romantic writers were old or silent or dead; hence 1832 marks the end of a literary as well as a political era.

German Influences on English Romanticism

How the literatures of other European nations affected that of England has been a frequent theme of earlier chapters of this work. Italy was the cradle of the Renaissance for all Europe (see I, p. 254 ff). France was the elegant guide to most of Europe in the days of Louis XIV (1638-1715). In the latter part of the eighteenth century German thought and literature regained its voice, which had been almost silent since the time of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. After the Reformation, many of the great religious wars were fought on German soil, until the Peace of Westphalia (1648). For a long time German writing had been negligible.

Indeed, the birth of modern German letters was delayed until the eighteenth century. Even under the enlightened Frederick the Great (1712-1786),



"The Lake of Thun," from an engraving after J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851). Turner was the most romantic of the nineteenth-century English painters, and the most daringly original. His bold yet delicately subtle use of color had a notable influence on the work of the later French impressionist painters. The Lake of Thun, in Switzerland, affords magnificent views of the snowy Oberland peaks—a natural delight to the true Romanticist.

German writers received little encouragement, this monarch being far more interested in the language and literary models of the country of Voltaire. The authority of French neoclassicism was undisputed, as German authors sedulously aped French originals. But the slowness of the birth of German literature was due chiefly to the political structure of the land. It would be more accurate to speak of "Germanies" than of a Germany in the eighteenth century. The territory was divided into many petty states of varying size and population, each with its prince, who usually ruled his province with an iron hand.

As revolutionary doctrine elaborated itself in France, young men in Germany naturally hungered for it as a hope of liberation. Like the French, they too turned to English literature for guidance, and the preromantic nature poets—Thomson, Gray, Macpherson (see pp. 17, 26, 53)—had considerable vogue among them. But Shakespeare especially was a light shining upon their world of darkness. To the German romanticists he seemed to be the perfect example of Rousseau's teaching—a natural genius achieving sublimity, without the aid of books or classical dogma, by the simple direction of his gifts and of nature. The famous translation of Shakespeare

by A. W. Schlegel, done between 1797 and 1810, is one of the chief monuments of the German romantic school.

Lessing (1729-1781), by his penetrating criticism of French drama and his vigorous preference for Shakespeare in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767-68), helped make the first cracks in the neoclassical ice. The young Schiller, undergoing what amounted to incarceration during his compulsory attendance at a military academy, found in Shakespeare a release from an intolerable routine, and the fountain at which he first drank literary inspiration. Shakespeare, in truth, became something of a midwife to German literature; and the enormous quantity of German Shakespearean commentary is a testimonial to his importance to the country. National consciousness was now awakened in writers, and the tocsin was sounded by an extravagant play by the dramatist Klinger, *Sturm und Drang* (i.e., Storm and Stress) in 1776, a call to free German letters from their shackles. The ensuing period has since been called the era of *Sturm und Drang*. Leaders of the new movement were J. G. Herder (1744-1803), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and J. C. F. von Schiller (1759-1805).

But from the beginning the *Sturm und Drang* revolt was frustrated. The trammels of political oppression were impossible to break, and the epoch turned to despair and pessimism. Two types of heroes evolved as an expression of this defeatism. One, to be found in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (see p. 1149), was the oversensitive man crushed by the pain and cruelty of life. The other, exemplified by the hero of Schiller's *The Robbers* (see p. 1153), was the strong man of stormy passions who, refusing to succumb to an evil and knavish society, wages eternal war against it.

A tradition of self-conscious, complex romanticism followed these authors in the works of younger men. The brothers August Wilhelm (1767-1845) and Friedrich (1772-1829) Schlegel worked the fields of criticism, poetry, translation, and novel writing. Friedrich von Hardenberg, known to literature as Novalis (1772-1801), produced poetry of unearthly beauty. Then the work of these men was popularized for all Europe by an astonishing Frenchwoman, Madame de Staël, whose volume *De l'Allemagne* (1810-13), presented Germany as a nation of poets and philosophers ardently seeking the mystic blue flower of idealism. The debt of later French romanticism to her is very large, and her profound influence can be seen in a later English writer, Thomas Carlyle.

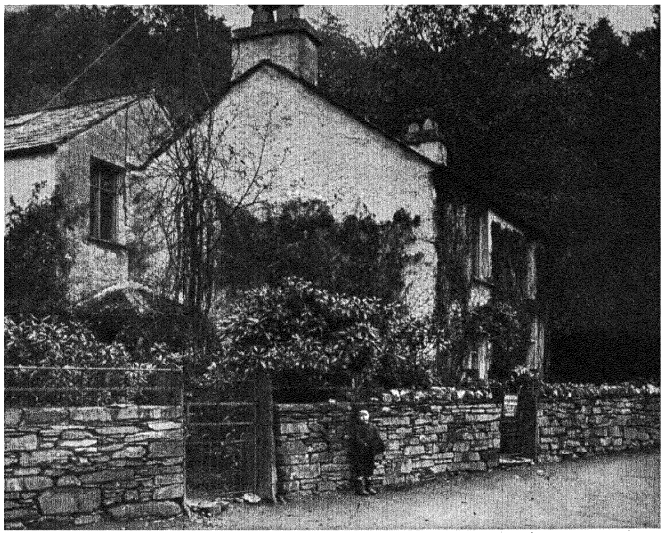
As the hopes of English liberals in the French Revolution were thwarted,



Left to right: *a showman at Hyde Park Corner; a playbill vendor at Drury Lane Theatre; a vendor of hair brooms near Shoreditch Church.* (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

these Germanic tones, which already appealed to the sentimental, became more and more common in English poetry. Echoes of suffering over "world sorrow" (in the manner of Werther) are to be found throughout the pages of the second generation of English romantic poets. And the titanic hero (as in Schiller's *The Robbers*), battling against Fate and society, was recreated again and again by Byron and (consciously or unconsciously) formed a model for the poet's own life.

On the philosophical side, too, the English romantic movement received considerable impetus from Germany. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), student of Locke, supplied the basis for romanticism in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), by challenging the power of reason to penetrate to ultimate reality. Kant's followers further elaborated upon this supersensory world of reality. Man was thus depicted as essentially nonintellectual. His instinctive, intuitive life is his truer one. Thus, as J. H. Randall sums up the final implications of this school of philosophy, "The poet or the saint is a truer and better guide on the pathway of life and thought than the scientist. Religion, morals, art, literature, social and political philosophy, and education should recognize this fundamental fact and build upon it. Religion is not a science to be demonstrated, but a matter of the heart, a life to be lived. . . . Art is not a matter of form and structure, but of rich sentiment and feeling. Society is not a cold-blooded enterprise founded on self-interest, but a vast organism pressing onward to realize dimly seen ideals." It was this train of speculation which influenced the literary theories and opinions of Coleridge (see p. 184), who provided the Romantic Movement with some of its fundamental doctrine.

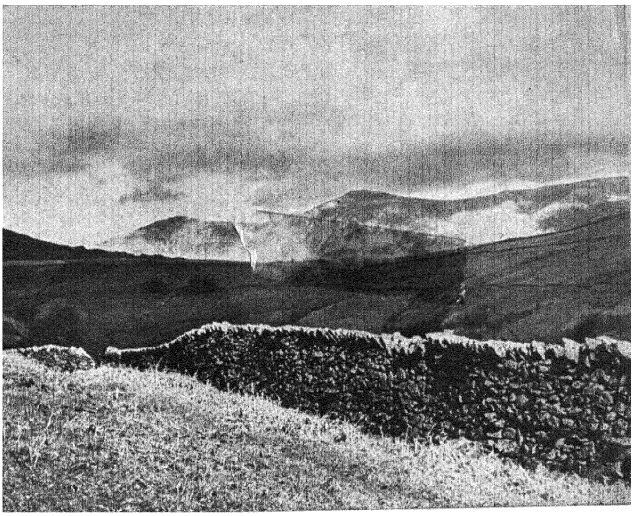


Dove Cottage, Grasmere. In 1799, after a visit to Germany, Wordsworth and his sister rented this abandoned inn. Coleridge later settled near them.

The First Generation of Romantics

William Wordsworth is the first great figure of the Romantic Movement, the man who gave English poetry a new vision of Nature. Born in the Lake District of northwestern England, he imbibed in youth impressions which were to supply inspiration for his long career. As a young man he was a disciple of Rousseau and an enthusiast for the French Revolution. Disillusioned by the success of Napoleon, he was still in his twenties when he renounced his earlier hopes of regenerating humanity through politics. His volume issued jointly with Coleridge, the *Lyrical Ballads*, appeared in 1798 and has long been recognized as the first great literary document of the English Romantic Movement. By that year he had already decided to find in the realm of sensibility and the imagination the means for affirming his hopes for mankind. The insignificant events of country life, the thoughts and talk of children, the feelings evoked by natural scenery, the simple tragedies of the humble—these were his chosen subjects. And for them he employed the language of plain people, rejecting the conventional "poetic diction" of Pope and his school.

Wordsworth's poetic theories were announced to the world in the important "Preface" (see p. 335) which he wrote to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Living, as did Coleridge and Southey, in the Lake District (for which reason all three are known as the "Lake Poets"), he remained constant to Rousseauistic teachings by turning to nature for his philosophic education.



Kirkstone Pass. Here Wordsworth, his sister, and Coleridge tramped many miles almost daily, inspired by the beauties of the English countryside.

He came, mystically, to understand and perceive a unity in all things and to discover in nature an anchor and a guide for his moral ideas. Those ideas he intended to expound in a monumental work to be called *The Recluse*; of it he wrote only the long fragments known as *The Recluse* (1800), *The Prelude* (1798-1805)—the record of the growth of his mind (see p. 156)—and *The Excursion* (1797-1814)—a refutation of the pessimism engendered by the failure of the French Revolution. After 1814 his production fell off as his reputation grew.

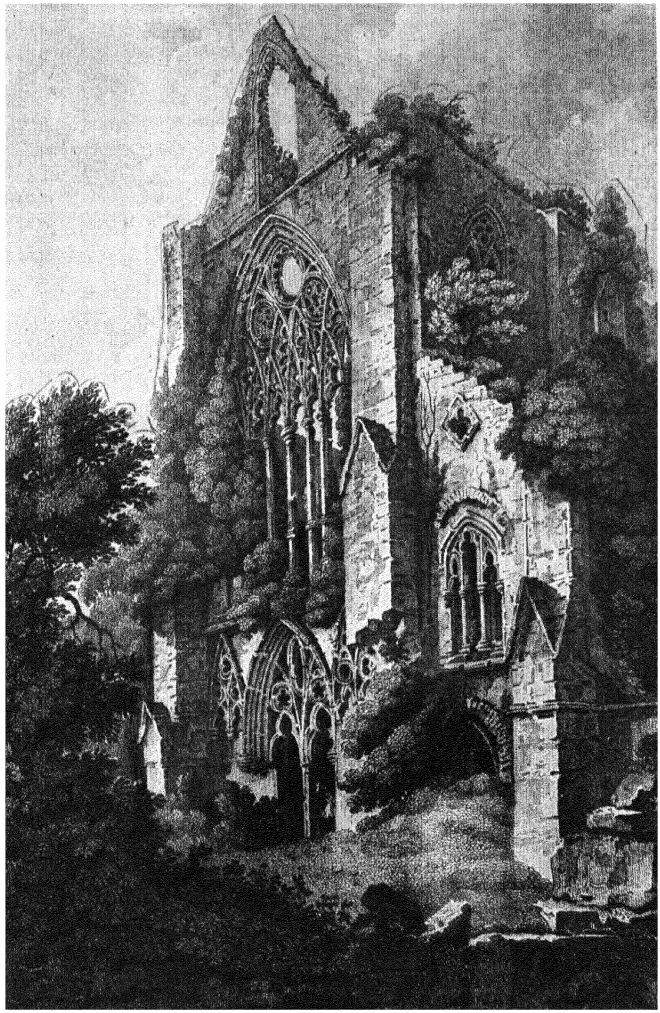
Wordsworth's long poems are admittedly uneven; and since he is above all a "poet of experience," many readers take to him but slowly. Thus, the American historian Henry Adams once confessed that he could not enjoy Wordsworth until he was thirty. Perhaps a certain depth and continuity of reflection are required to match the poet's own habit of long meditation over his lengthier pieces. It is chiefly, therefore, in a number of shorter poems that many can more readily find Wordsworth's mystical insight expressing itself in poetic perfection. The diary of his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth (see p. 346), is a vivid commentary on some of the occasions that blossomed into these poems.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, his close friend, whose genius ignited and was ignited by Wordsworth's, was a poet of sublime gifts. His personal weaknesses prevented him from doing himself full justice, however, and he attained his high place by only a handful of poems—any one of which, nonetheless, would have assured its author of immortality. It was agreed between them that Wordsworth's task was to transfigure ordinary occurrences

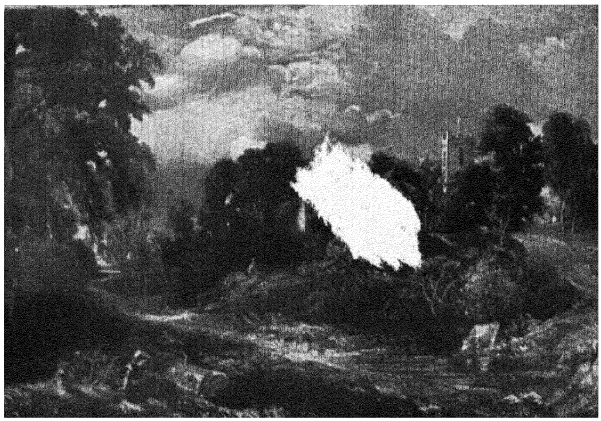
by the light of imagination. Coleridge's poetry was to do the reverse—to find that "semblance of truth sufficient to procure for [the] . . . shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (see p. 187) is as remarkable for the amazing veracity achieved in a story of fantastic invention as are the simple details of Wordsworth's lines. This magical poem, like the strange witch-tale, *Christabel* (see p. 198), shows the strong influence upon Coleridge of the old ballads.

Opium, German metaphysics, love of talk, and lack of self-confidence eventually killed Coleridge's impulse to create poetry. But the transfiguring quality of his imagination and his command over the music of verse prove him to have been second to none of the romantic poets in genius. His later years were devoted to lecture and criticism, profoundly affected by his studies of Kantian philosophy; he lost the gift of poetic creation, but he became one of the chief critics of the Romantic Movement. The debt of later English and American writers to this strange genius is beyond calculation. Carlyle, Emerson, Poe, and many others drew upon him for ideas or forms; and modern scholarship has by no means exhausted the richness of his astonishing mind.

Neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge received the measure of recognition accorded to their industrious friend Robert Southey, whose verse few people now read. Though he was an assiduous writer, kept to his task both by his love of letters and by the desire to care for his family, his gifts were vastly inferior to those of his fellow Lake Poets. He was, nevertheless, a much more companionable man than Wordsworth or Coleridge; and his cheerful good-nature still attracts readers—though more to his letters and his prose than to his poetry. In his youth he was very much the revolutionist, was expelled from school, read Rousseau and Goethe, and evolved with Coleridge plans for a perfect society. When still young he wrote, in an inflammatory strain, *Wat Tyler* and *Joan of Arc*, both full of references to the French Revolution. Recovering from his radical fervor after his marriage, he set himself the ambitious project of "exhibiting all the more important and poetical forms of mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem." Parts of this plan were realized in a series of epics: *Thalaba* (1801), set in Arabia; *Madoc* (1805), in Mexico; *The Curse of Kehama* (1801), in India; and *Don Roderick* (1814), in Spain. These poems, written with great dexterity if with no deep poetic insight, indicate the romantic interest in exotic



Tintern Abbey, on the bank of the River Wye. Built late in the thirteenth century, the Abbey contains some of the finest architectural details of its period. All "ruined piles" were venerated by the Romanticists, but none more justly than this. Wordsworth composed his poem a few miles upstream from the Abbey.



Rural Suffolk in the early nineteenth century, after John Constable (1776-1837). The great English landscape painter rebelled against the brown tones considered fashionable for a masterpiece and began, in 1811, to paint outdoors so as to catch the true colors of nature. Together with Turner he did much to show the public the beauties of nature. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

lands. Southey also wrote a number of ballads. Although in 1813 he was made Poet Laureate, his compositions after his fortieth year were mostly in prose. Of his prose works the best are the whimsical miscellany, *The Doctor* (1834-47), and the biographies of Nelson (1813) and John Wesley (1820). A virile author, his wholesomeness, love of fun, hard work, and devotion to his family render him attractive. The importance of his books is historical rather than artistic, and they demonstrate the more obvious aspects of romanticism.

Similar strictures must be made upon the work of Sir Walter Scott (see p. 210). Early an enthusiastic student of the old ballads, he published a collection of them, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03), an important supplement to Percy's *Reliques*. He next turned to the composition of historical narrative poems, and these at once received considerable acclaim. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811), and *Rokeby* (1813) show his romantic reverence (exhibited also in his private life) for the feudal past and chivalric lore. Vigorous and martial, Scott is still an interesting, though not a great, poet. Upon the appearance of Byron on the literary horizon, he willingly abandoned the field to a superior rival and turned to the writing of novels, in which he had an even greater success. In them his love of historic pageantry was further exploited (see p. 211).

But neither Scott with his inventiveness nor Southey with his facile balladry and adventures in the exotic can be allowed the highest praise as writers, for they both fall short of the greater gifts of some of their contemporaries. What, then, it now devolves upon us to ask, is the quintessence of romanticism at its best?

Romanticism Triumphant

The answer to that question has been too often essayed for us to hope that we can satisfactorily settle the matter. It is simple enough to describe the attributes of writers whom the world recognizes as "romantic"; that we have already done (see pp. 2-13). It is equally simple to point out how the works included in the following pages exhibit the romantic revulsion against the authority of Reason,[1] the romantic appreciation of natural beauty,[2] the romantic interest in the country and country folk,[3] the romantic love of the past,[4] the romantic concern with other lands,[5] the romantic element of melancholy,[6] and the virtual abandonment of the heroic couplet. Some works, indeed—a long poem like Byron's *Manfred* or a short one like Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*—possess every one of the romantic traits we have enumerated.

But the unifying point of view behind all these manifestations is not so easy to state. It is true that the Romantic Movement was something of a conscious protest—against the superstructure of civilization (as with Wordsworth), against the tyranny of Reason (as with Coleridge), against the lack of color in modern life (as with Scott), against middle-class respectability (as with Byron), against the evils of contemporary society (as with Shelley), or against the prosaic quality of everyday living (as with Keats). These rebellions indicate that the romanticist, unlike the Addisonian author (whose perfect milieu was the calm sense and good manners of a drawing room), was primarily an individualist, seeking to expose his own values to his public. Why, then, were these romantic values so many-sided?

[1] See Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and *Expostulation and Reply*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon*, Shelley's *To a Skylark*, Keats's *Lamia*, Lamb's *Popular Fallacies*, or De Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis*.

[2] See Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and *I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud*, Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, Byron's *Childe Harold*, Shelley's *The Cloud* and *Ode to the West Wind*, or Keats's *To Autumn* and *Ode to a Nightingale*.

[3] See Wordsworth's *Michael* or Hazlitt's *On Going a Journey*.

[4] See Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*, Coleridge's *Christabel*, Scott's *Pibroch of Donald Dhu*, Byron's *Don Juan*, Shelley's *Ozymandias*, Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, or Landor's *Pentameron*.

[5] See Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, Byron's *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, Shelley's *The Indian Serenade*, or Landor's *Pericles to Aspasia*.

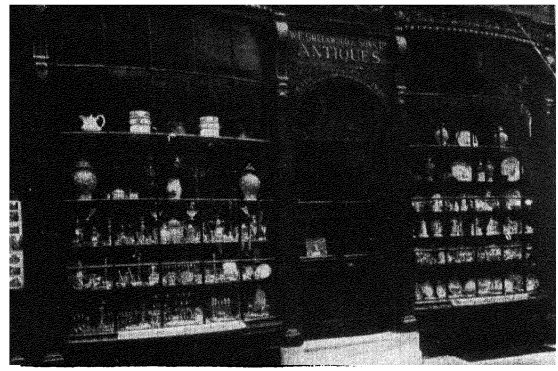
[6] See Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimation of Immortality*, Coleridge's *Dejection*, Scott's *Proud Maisie*, Byron's *Stanzas for Music*, Shelley's *Mutability* and *Adonais*, Keats's *Ode on Melancholy*, Landor's *Rose Aylmer*, Lamb's *Dream Children*, or De Quincey's *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*.

The answer would seem to be that the romanticist typically looked at life and nature not with the common-sense objectivity of the neoclassicist but always imaginatively. Everything he saw or heard was at once invested with the radiance of his imagination. Thus, a neoclassicist's thoughts on a tree would be likely to lead him to speak of its affording "a pleasant shade." A romanticist, however, would see the tree clothed in imaginative association; the mind of Wordsworth could associate it with the slow march of time (*Yew Trees*), that of Coleridge with the tropical luxuriance of Eastern lands (*Kubla Khan*), that of Scott with the merry hunting parties of olden times (*Hunting Song*), that of Shelley with the changing social order (*Ode to the West Wind*), and that of Keats with the "embalmed darkness" of woods in mid-May (*Ode to a Nightingale*). In this triumphant exploiting of his individual insight lies much of the romanticist's power.

This imaginative approach of the romanticist is characteristic not only of his subject matter but of his style as well. Nothing could be less valid than the oft-heard distinction between romanticist and neoclassicist that the former was interested only in *what* he had to say and the latter in *how* he said it. Shelley was in no degree less concerned with the perfection of his style than was Pope, nor on purely stylistic grounds can he be deemed less of a master. But a distinction between the methods of these two poets can certainly be made. Pope, having decided on the criteria of a perfect style (normally, with him, the heroic couplet), will adapt what he has to say to the limits of that style. Shelley, on the other hand, will approach the question of style imaginatively; for him the problem will be to find the perfect technique for expressing what he has to say. Thus, the romanticist is led to employ a variety of poetic techniques.

Romantic Writers of Prose

Such an elastic view of form is discoverable in prose writers as well as poets. Clarity and lucidity, all-important ideals for Addison and Swift, become no longer the highest virtues in romantic prose. If intuitive meanings, beyond the scope of mere common sense, are to be communicated, the clear, sharp outlines of neoclassical prose must be dimmed and rendered flexible. Whereas the neoclassical poet tried to achieve the rational tone of prose in his verse, the romanticist will try to achieve the imaginativeness of poetry in his prose. Even the vocabulary of the romanticist is

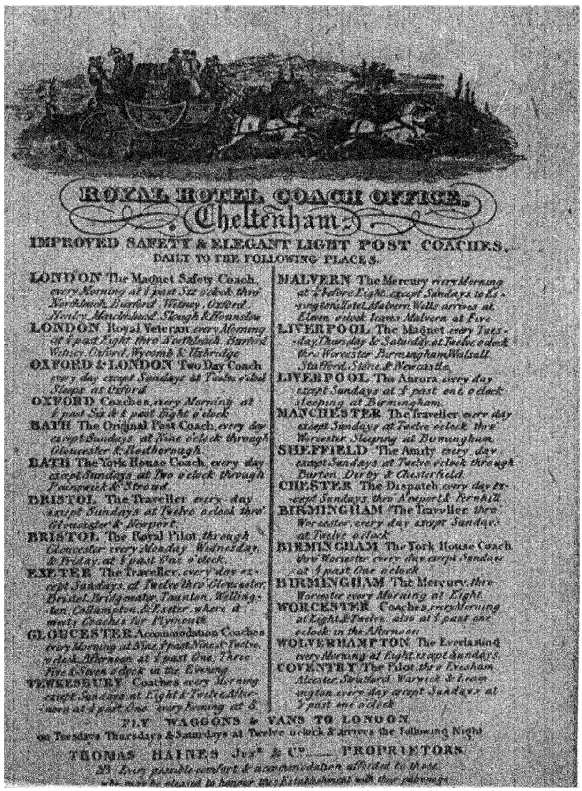


A London shop front, around 1810. Charles Lamb, child of the city, alone among the Romantics appreciated the wonders of London, whose sights and sounds he much preferred to those of the country. "O! her lamps at night! her rich goldsmiths, printshops, toyshops, mercers, hardwaremen, pastrycooks!" he wrote ecstatically to a friend. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

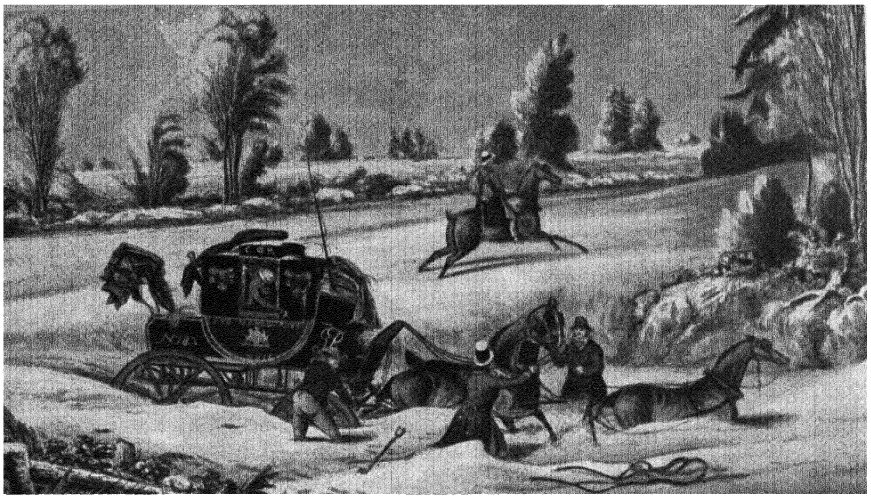
garbed in imaginative connotation. By a neoclassicist such as Swift each word was employed in a precise, "dictionary" meaning; romanticists prefer to use words for their overtones, their associations, their power of suggestion.

It is not strange, therefore, that the leading romantic prose writers, Charles Lamb (1775-1834), William Hazlitt (1778-1830), and Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) should have been on intimate terms with the Lake Poets—and indeed have left some valuable records of their friendships. Lamb, however, spent most of his life as a clerk in a business office in the city of London, whose romantic qualities he was one of the earliest writers to explore. If he is thus, alone of the romantic group, little concerned with the country, his love of the town has nothing in common with the Augustan preference for it as a center of culture. He throbs to the warmth and color of London, to its sounds and sights, to its humanity. In him we find, also, the romanticists' rediscovery of the Elizabethans. His *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets* (1808) was a successful attempt to reawaken interest in a period largely ignored by the Augustans. A devotee of the quaint and the antique, he was an enthusiastic adventurer among forgotten books. His favorite authors were Sir Thomas Browne and Robert Burton, the echoes of whose cadences and diction may be heard in his own pages. Like Hazlitt and De Quincey, Lamb won immortality for himself not through any ambitious work but through a series of essays which appeared in periodicals. The best of them, collected under the titles of *The Essays of Elia* (see p. 362) and *The Last Essays of Elia*, are perhaps the favorite familiar essays in English. In his essays and letters, his affections and prejudices, sentiment and wit, kindliness and whimsicality all reflect for us one of the most lovable personalities in our literature.

Lamb's friend William Hazlitt was made of more passionate stuff. A man with a very wide range of interests, he wrote with zest and vigorous opinion on all kinds of subjects. His *The Round Table* (1817), *Table Talk* (1821-22), and *The Plain-Speaker* (1826), if less charming than Lamb, contain some of the finest essays in our language for their variety and virility. His appreciations of literature, particularly the Elizabethan, are admirable for their taste and quick sympathy, as is attested by his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818), *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (1819), and *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820). Alone of his generation Hazlitt retained faith in the French Revolution, even to the point of praising Napoleon. His life was in part a series of bitter quarrels and extraordinary impulses. He defended himself from the onslaughts of reviewers with savagery—a quality which was the obverse of the admiration which he displayed



Left: A timetable, around 1820. Above, right: A mishap to a mail coach caught in a blizzard. The coaches were so timed that every minute lost had to be made up on the road. Indeed, some coach firms even offered to refund the fares if the coach was late. It was from a seat upon a mail coach that De Quincey witnessed an incident that inspired The Vision of Sudden Death. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)



toward such a man as Coleridge. His mastery of English has rarely been equaled (see *On Familiar Style,* p. 398). As Robert Louis Stevenson said ruefully: "We are fine fellows, but we can't write like William Hazlitt."

Thomas De Quincey, indefatigable writer and omnivorous reader, is most famous for his use of a prose that embodies most of the characteristics of poetry. It is in his records of his visions while under the influence of opium, as in *Suspiria de Profundis* (see p. 404) and *The English Mail-Coach* (see p. 408), that we find his prose at its most poetic. His autobiographical *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821) inaugurated the series which reveals his dreams; it contains, like his *Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets,* psychological studies of his literary friends.

A transitional figure is Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864). Though there were strong elements of romanticism in his own make-up, he was a sincere worshiper of the classics and professed to have little sympathy with the exuberance of his romantic contemporaries. But his reverence for classic art did not come by way of the Augustans; he loved the productions of Greece and Rome, and he approached them with an enkindled imagination which the "polite" eighteenth century would never have understood. It was the spirit, as much as the form, of the ancients which charmed him, and his *Hellenics* (see p. 325) are remarkable for their fidelity to "antique" beauty. On some occasions Landor's subjects were frankly romantic, as in the Oriental poetic tale of *Gebir* (1798); but even there his classical desire for conciseness is exhibited in the style. In his absorbingly interesting revelations of the souls and times of historical personages—the *Imaginary*

Conversations, such as *Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn* (see p. 384), and *The Pentameron* (see p. 387)—his prose has some of the clarity and also the grandeur of the ancient masters of rhetoric. The topic of these conversations, however, is often romantic and imaginative, and often as much of Landor is unfolded to us as of the persons of these fragmentary dramas.

The Literary Reviews

Periodical literature, as distinguished from books, had appeared some time before in English literary history. The newsletter began as early as the seventeenth century; often it was wretched stuff and, moreover, it was not issued with the dependable regularity of a true periodical. In *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* Steele and Addison had raised the periodical essay to the heights of literary excellence, with a reading public estimated at 20,000. But *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were still not like our modern magazine. What we now call a general magazine dates back to 1707, when a monthly *Miscellany* began a run of two years. In January 1731, a journeyman printer, Edward Cave, produced a monthly periodical intended "to treasure up, as in a Magazine, the most remarkable pieces" of writing and news of the day. He called it *The Gentleman's Magazine,* and in it he featured a record of events, articles of instruction, Parliamentary debates, and even some poetry. Within eight years it had a circulation of 10,000 copies, and some of its earlier numbers ran into five editions. During the fifty years after its birth, about sixty other magazines appeared in London, while Scotland produced ten and Ireland eleven of their own.

Somewhat later were the "reviews"—*The Monthly Review,* which started in 1749, and the *Critical Review,* established in 1756 by the novelist Smollett. For half a century these works set the tone for their imitators and marked the increase of what Smollett called "the judicious reader." At the beginning of the new century, this type of periodical assumed new importance because of the vigorous personalities of the men behind three new reviews.

On October 10, 1802, the initial number of the *Edinburgh Review* appeared. Immediately successful, this magazine was edited by the Whig, Francis Jeffrey, a man of liberal views and a stubborn rationalist, who had no objection to the more superficial aspects of romanticism but could not tolerate the mystical outpourings of the Lake Poets and their disciples. In February, 1809, under the tutelage of the conservative Scott, a rival Tory publication appeared, the *Quarterly Review,* of which the leading spirits were William Gifford, Robert Southey, and John G. Lockhart. Some years later, in 1817, a second Tory magazine, *Blackwood's Edinburgh*

Magazine, was launched, with some of the same staff as the *Quarterly,* but far more relentless in its Toryism. The presiding geniuses of *Blackwood's* were John Wilson and John G. Lockhart; they looked with favor on the now conservative Wordsworth, the feudal Scott, and the aristocratic Byron. With Coleridge they had little patience. But it was against the liberal Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and the latter's disciple Keats that their vituperative fury was unleashed. Shelley, who received three bitter attacks from the *Quarterly,* was damned by silence from the liberal *Edinburgh Review,* which treated Keats in much the same fashion. On the whole, however, all three magazines showed little disposition to direct opinion. They admired what was safe to admire and attacked what was not likely to be defended. And hence flows their historical importance. For by reading them we procure a fairly accurate picture of the reading public's tastes and prejudices.

They mark also the steady growth of book publishing. From a tight little ring of booksellers, who had themselves developed from the stationers of Renaissance London, new and powerful figures arose to exploit the writings of leading authors in quite modern ways. One of the best known of these publishers was John Murray III, fancifully called "The Emperor of the West," the friend and adviser of Byron, the producer of cookbooks, travel volumes, and poetry. Scott himself entered deeply into publishing, to his lasting misfortune. An ever-growing number of professional writers could now make a living by their pens. The patronage system, so important a feature of earlier centuries of English literary history, had vanished.

The Second Generation of Romantic Writers

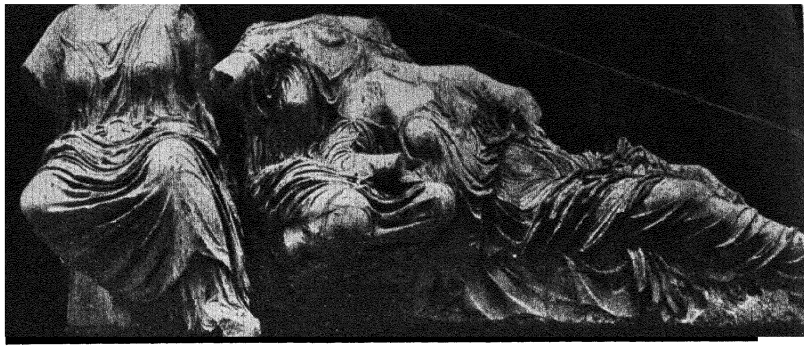
Byron (1788-1824), Shelley (1792-1822), and Keats (1795-1821) began to write in a Napoleonic or post-Napoleonic world. The French Revolution was over—an apparent failure—and the forces of reaction were triumphant in Europe. The despair of Werther's frustration or of the Robber's defiance was more congenial than ever to an atmosphere that could nourish little hope for humanity's liberation. Already, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, the revolutionists of an earlier day, were complete converts to conservatism and willing props of the *status quo.* Consequently the younger poets in this second generation of romanticism rebelled more fiercely than had their predecessors. There is a quality of greater intensity and passion in what they wrote, and one has the feeling that all three, short-lived as they were, consumed themselves with their own heat.

Byron, unfortunate in his parents and early environment, and marked by a physical defect, felt himself destined for an ironic fate even when he

was but a youth. Insanely proud, mordantly witty, fatally handsome, he began his career in the disdainful role of a dilettante with a volume of verse, *Hours of Idleness* (1807). Treated as he deserved by the *Edinburgh Review*, he retaliated with a brilliant satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). After a journey to Spain and the East, he published the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* (see p. 224) and became famous overnight. In this poem he introduced through his hero the first of a series of self-portraits, to be met with in many of his later poems—the disillusioned man, living, like the hero of *The Robbers*, in revolt against society. Such are the heroes of *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Parisina*—all romantically laid in an exotic setting—and *Manfred*, *Cain*, and others. Less because he had much hope for humanity than because he despised the smug order of his day, he scoffed at Tories, befriended liberals like Leigh Hunt, lived like a roisterer with such friends as Tom Moore (see p. 328), and deliberately outraged the conventional by his cynicisms and loose talk. Perhaps his most shocking literary crime was his making the first murderer, Cain, the hero of a drama that is intended to enlist our sympathies against God. His last major work, *Don Juan* (see p. 247), is a strange mixture of exalted poetry and malicious satire—a fine expression of the duality of his nature. None of his contemporaries succeeded in making so powerful an appeal as he to the public—not only in his flair for striking the perfect pose for the times but also on account of his effective choice of subjects. His greatest weakness, because of which he has steadily lost ground, was his facility, which made revision or artistic care tedious to him.



Byron in Albanian dress, a portrait by Thomas Phillips, painted in 1813, the year after the great success of the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. *Both the pose and the costume show us some aspects of Romanticism at its extreme. This was also the year of Byron's* Giaour, *and in this painting the poet resembles one of his dashing pirate heroes.*



"The Three Fates," from the east pediment of the Parthenon, a part of the Elgin collection, purchased in 1816 for the British Museum. The vandalism involved in depriving Greece of her own great monuments is beyond dispute, but it was the sight of such magnificent fragments that dazzled the imagination of Keats, for this "Grecian grandeur" is indeed the "shadow of a magnitude" and has given Englishmen an understanding of the glory that was Greece.

On the Continent Byron was long considered the supreme English romanticist and was the most widely read. Curiously enough, however, he remained a lifelong admirer of the neoclassic writers. In his published poetry and in his letters he paid homage to Dryden and Pope, scoffing at the efforts of his own day: "We are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system," he wrote to Murray, his publisher, "not worth a damn in itself. . . . I took Moore's poems and my own, and went over them side by side with Pope's, and I was really astonished . . . and mortified at the ineffable distance in point of sense, harmony, effect, and even imagination, passion, *and invention*, between the little Queen Anne's man and us of the Lower Empire."

Completely dissimilar in character was the man whose friendship Byron enjoyed, Percy Bysshe Shelley. The foundation of Byron's revolt was pride; that of Shelley's was love. Renouncing in his youth the comforts of a well-established country gentleman's home, he devoted himself to the cause of human emancipation. Inspired by Godwin's teaching on the perfectibility of the human race, Shelley fired his imagination with visions of how happy humanity could yet be. His *Queen Mab*, written when he was twenty-one, paints a picture of that better day; his *The Revolt of Islam*, five years later, proves that the French Revolution was only premature and not finally lost. And his masterpiece of 1819, *Prometheus Unbound* (see p. 273), a hymn of triumph over oppression, sets forth the means by which humanity shall be free—the force of all-encompassing love. Touched with such inner harmony as "is in immortal souls," Shelley's nature was understood by no one—though Byron had some apprehension of it. It was the same love

which urged him as a boy to aid the cause of Irish freedom, involved him in an unwise marriage, and entangled the rest of his brief life in tragedy.

It was the same spirit which enabled him to become one with nature: with the lark in *To a Skylark* (see p. 283), with the wind in *Ode to the West Wind* (see p. 271), with the cloud in *The Cloud* (see p. 282). In all things he found assurance of man's progress. Thus, tinged though Shelley's work is with the melancholy of the era, he was fundamentally the one great optimist among his contemporaries. The persistent note in his poetry is ethereal rapture; his lines take wing, whether he writes of unattainable beauty in *Alastor* (see p. 261), of the life of the soul in *Epipsychidion* (see p. 284), of his sorrow over the death of his fellow poet Keats in *Adonais* (see p. 287), or of the dramatic story of Beatrice Cenci in his poetic tragedy *The Cenci* (1819). Social poet though he believed himself to be, Shelley stands in the eyes of his admirers as one of the greatest of nature poets—a genius of such sensibility and subtlety that he could penetrate into the very heart of nature and put into words truths that seem to be beyond expression.

Yet in his own day Shelley was an outcast from conventional society, and complete acceptance of his social doctrines has never come. To the Victorian Matthew Arnold he was "a beautiful but ineffectual angel"; to Mark Twain he was a genius who stepped into his own self-contained maturity as one would through a door; to the philosopher Santayana he was "a finished child of nature . . . a dogmatic, inspired, perfect, and incorrigible creature . . . illuminated and blind." These are comments on the personality of the man. Similar reservations about the dazzling looseness of his imagery and the abstractness of his visions were hinted at in a letter that John Keats wrote to him in 1820, advising him: "curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together." With or without such reservations, critics have found in Shelley the incomparable poet of youth—the man who more frequently than most arouses new readers to the music of English verse.

John Keats, whose life was even briefer than that of his elegist, Shelley, was a poet who turned away from the problems of society to celebrate imperishable beauty. In his few years of almost tropical blossoming, he turned from the study of medicine to poetry, absorbing Spenser and the Elizabethans and Milton with the passionate swiftness of a doomed mortal. He rejected the eighteenth century, "*wed*

To musty laws lined out with wretched rule,"

and sought for a richer spirit such as he discovered in the art of the Greeks, medieval lore, the Renaissance, or in his own imagination. Savagely attacked for his sensuous excesses in his apprentice verse, he advanced in craftsmanship with each new work until he was cut down by fatal illness.

But his great achievements do not need the pathos of his personal life to lend them enduring appeal. They are the masterpieces of a major poet. Like the painter, the sculptor, and the musician, Keats sought for loveliness of line, color, form, and sound. His verse is richly laden with stores of tangible beauties. Unlike Shelley, he never scorned the earth, and to him nature, mankind, and art were but spheres of keen esthetic experience. In his contemplation of Greek marbles or vases (*Ode on a Grecian Urn*)—an Elizabethan translation of Homer (*On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*)—a Greek legend (*Endymion*)—a medieval superstition (*The Eve of St. Agnes*)—the autumn (*To Autumn*)—a star (*Bright Star*)—or a bird's song (*Ode to a Nightingale*), his "pole star" was ever the same, beauty. Perhaps no poet before him "brings together," as the French critic Legouis says, "so many riches in a single line or a single stanza."

The Novel during the Romantic Period

The nineteenth century witnessed the complete collapse of drama as literature. A number of the great poets, it is true, wrote in the dramatic form. Wordsworth's *The Borderers*, Coleridge's *Remorse*, Southey's *Wat Tyler* and his *The Fall of Robespierre* (written with Coleridge) are early examples. Byron wrote a number of plays, and two of his best works, *Manfred* and *Cain* are dramas. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is generally considered his masterpiece, and his tragedy *The Cenci* has been called the finest since Otway. But none of these, however interesting to read, with the possible exception of *The Cenci*—and that has rarely been attempted by actors—is possible to present in the theater. On the other hand, the new plays which held the boards are wholly unreadable and cannot be seriously considered as worthy of preservation.

The novel, however, which had made promising beginnings in the eighteenth century (see Vol. I, pp. 785-792), continued to make notable advances through the preromantic period. Under the influence of the French revolutionary philosophers, and of Rousseau in particular, a crop of radical novels appeared: Robert Bage's *Man As He Is* (1792) and *Hermsprong, or Man As He Is Not* (1796); Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792) and *Hugh Trevor* (1794); Mrs. Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature*

and Art (1796); and, best of them (see p. 102), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799). Meanwhile the novel of terror and mystery, the so-called "Gothic novel," had been inaugurated by Horace Walpole (see Vol 1, p. 974) in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Employing Walpole's medieval trappings, Clara Reeve wrote *The Old English Baron* (1777). Of this school, however, the climax is to be seen in Anne Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797), which delighted Europe with tremors of horror over the persecutions of a fair heroine in dark dungeons and winding corridors of medieval buildings. Mrs. Radcliffe had a feeling for authentic romantic effects in nature and background, and she always maintained an impeccable moral tone. But Matthew Gregory Lewis won even greater success by piling horror upon horror in his novel *The Monk* (1796) and introducing considerable licentiousness into the framework of his story. The best of the terror novels is *Vathek* (1784), originally written in French by its author, William Beckford, and later translated into English. Beckford was a kind of forerunner of Byron, a true romanticist who, despite a huge fortune, could not find happiness and so spent his days in despairing misanthropy. *Vathek,* modeled on Voltaire's romances, is perhaps the finest piece of Orientalism produced in England during the eighteenth century. It is a remarkable mixture of the sardonic, the grotesque, the witty, and the terrible; but its concluding description of Hell is almost Miltonic in its grandeur.

These novels of terror constituted an important element in the hastening of the Romantic Movement. In the early years of the century, Matthew ("Monk") Lewis continued his stories of violence with *Tales of Terror* (1800), *Tales of Wonder* (1801), and *Romantic Tales* (1808). Charles Maturin, an Irish clergyman, continued the tradition with *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Mary Shelley wrote what became the most famous of these novels in her highly Rousseauistic *Frankenstein* (1818).

During the Romantic Period the two greatest novelists were Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen (1775-1817). The former's novels we discuss below in connection with his poetry (p. 211). Miss Austen, one of the most delightful and engaging of English novelists, was no friend of the romanticists. Her *Northanger Abbey* (1818) was, in fact, deliberately anti-romantic in purpose and was intended as a burlesque on the Radcliffe school of terror novels. The daughter of a Hampshire clergyman, she set herself the task of writing about the minor affairs of village life, which she knew from personal experience. Lively, graceful, with a calmly rational



A nineteenth-century garden. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.) *The difference between the eighteenth-century formal garden (See I, p. 779) and the nineteenth-century "natural" one reflects the changing attitudes toward nature. A minor poet of the time, Richard Payne Knight wrote:*

> But ah! how diff'rent is the formal lump
> Which the improver plants and calls a clump!
> Break, break, ye nymphs, the fence that guards it round!
> With browsing cattle, all its forms confound!
> As chance or fate will have it, let it grow;—
> Here spiring high;—there cut or trampled low.

view of life, Jane Austen is a true descendant of Addison. It was a tiny blade she wielded against what she conceived to be romantic nonsense and pretense, but a sharp one. *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) is a witty counterpoise to the sentimental traditions of love; her heroine finds happiness through calm sense, while her butt, the heroine's sister, encounters only wretchedness because she stipulates for rapture. *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), generally agreed to be her masterpiece, is a brilliant study of the manners of a small community and is a lesson on the necessity of not judging by appearances. Her other novels — *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), and *Persuasion* (1818) — are all admirable comedies, lively, often brilliant, however confined in their milieu, and full of sanity and sound judgment. Jane Austen is, in a fashion, the last of the Augustans.

The Romantics Evaluated

Like the Age of Reason that preceded it, Romanticism was a movement that affected the entire western world. Every country of Europe experienced

its tidal waves, and they spread across the Atlantic in the next generation. Every country felt, too, the crosscurrents, backwash, and eddies that make romanticism so involved a phenomenon to chart.

The great dualities, or apparent contradictions, of romanticism must impress every thoughtful reader. It tried to touch the heights of unspeakable bliss; it plummeted to the blackest despair. It was revolutionary in its appeal to a perfect future; it could also flee to what Jefferson called "the Gothic idea that we are to look backwards instead of forwards for the improvement of the human mind." Romanticism is a mass of paradoxes: it was productive of freedom and personal emancipation, yet blind to the tyrannies toward which unrestricted individualism can lead. Inheriting the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the statement of the Rights of Man, it saw them debauched by Napoleon. Its eyes fixed on the color and pageantry of the Middle Ages, it was blind to the industrial slums of its own generation. It is these contradictions, which could be multiplied endlessly, that make the verdicts of later critics upon romanticism so widely variant. One can find nearly every good or ill of modern life laid at its door.

Relatively few of the leading romantics led long or peaceful lives. Plagued by dreams, drugs, or longings for impossibilities, they burned themselves out. Typically we associate with so many of the romantic writers, musicians, and artists some form of excess—the quality that led Goethe, in old age, to say to his biographer Eckermann: "the Romantic I call the sick, the Classic the healthy." Neither Rousseau, the apostle of romanticism, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Hazlitt, nor the American Poe, found peace amidst the contradictions of life.

Yet what makes literature great is not the absence of faults but the presence of power. This power the great romantics had in abundance. Their intensity, their vividness, their charm, their very excess of egoism, their youth, their haunting sense of "something far more deeply interfused" in life than the elegance and wit of their predecessors give them power over us today. We live with the same contradictions they explored, contradictions magnified by science and technology. We too live in a society shattered by world wars, the thought of a better future eclipsed by the realities of the present. The visions of the great romantics have validity still; the incantations of their verse still charm and raise, alternately, hope and despair.

Romanticism ranks with the Renaissance as one of the great movements of the modern mind. We are its inheritors. We may disavow but we cannot evade our spiritual legacy.

William Wordsworth

(1770-1850)

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in the Lake District of Cumberland on April 7 of the same year, 1770, in which was born that other storm-center of romanticism, Ludwig van Beethoven. The family of one girl and three boys, of which William was the second, lost its mother when he was eight. Five years later Wordsworth's father died, leaving his children as legacy a sum owing to him by the future Lord Lonsdale, who had no intention of paying it. In the meantime William and his elder brother, Richard, had been sent to school at Hawkshead, on Esthwaite Water. Fortunately his uncles were willing to see him through St. John's College, Cambridge, and he entered there in 1787. In 1790 he made a summer tour on foot with a college friend, Robert Jones, through France, the Rhine valley, Switzerland, and northern Italy—a vacation that proved important to his career as a poet. In January 1791 he took his B.A., and left to spend some months in London.

At this time the revolution in France was proceeding with such moderation as won it the support of most English liberals. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette seemed to be in no danger, and few leaders of either party agreed with the rhetorical warnings of Burke (see I, p. 959). In November of 1791 Wordsworth went to France to learn its language. The excitement in Paris affected him little, and he went on to Orleans, in the neighborhood of which he remained until October 1792. It was here that his soul was at last awakened as a result of his intimacy with Michel Beaupuy and Annette Vallon.

Beaupuy, an army officer stationed at Blois, was an enthusiastic devotee of the Revolution. Of him Wordsworth has left us a grateful portrait in the ninth book of *The Prelude* (see p. 156). This high-minded revolutionary made him understand the democratic principles for which Frenchmen were struggling, and strengthened his interest in the writings of Rousseau. The two would take long walks along the banks of the Loire, Wordsworth listening attentively as his mind expanded before new prospects. Once when they came upon a girl wasted by starvation, Beaupuy made his argument alive by exclaiming: "'Tis against *that* we are fighting."

But Wordsworth's fervor for France was conditioned also by another being, of whose very existence the world was unaware until recently. At Orleans he had become acquainted with Annette Vallon, a girl of good family, with whom he fell in love. The two met frequently in secret, and soon she was with child by him. It will never be known why he did not marry her. Wordsworth's many apologists have extended all kinds of excuses, none of them very convincing. It is true that she was a Roman Catholic, but that could have been no impediment to the free-thinker that Wordsworth then was. Nor can much stock be placed in the explanation that a marriage in France of 1792 would have been of questionable validity, inasmuch as such a ceremony would at least have satisfied Annette's relatives.

The answer, it is fair to suppose, lay in Wordsworth's character. Surely no poet of his magnitude possessed a personality less attractive. Try as we will, we cannot escape the impression of hardness, self-satisfaction, and lack of generosity in his make-up—though to say this much is to invoke the wrath of his many idolaters. At any rate, when Annette gave birth to a daughter, Caroline, Wordsworth was in Paris, not at her side in Orleans. In the metropolis, he tells us, he was trying in vain to associate himself with the revolutionary activities of the Girondists. His allowance exhausted, he returned to England, ostensibly to procure the consent of his guardians to a marriage with Annette. Once

there, however, he preferred to allow his sister Dorothy to be his advocate. She pleaded for him with such ill success that she was forbidden to see him. By degrees giving up whatever hopes he may have entertained of marrying Annette, Wordsworth busied himself with literary affairs in London. We need not, be it said, sentimentalize over Annette. If the poet broke his promise to her and left the full responsibility of raising their child to her, it cannot be thought that being his wife would have led her to a happier or fuller life than she actually had. It is enough to record that her existence was not a tragic one, and that she lived to see her daughter married to a man of standing in the community.

As for Wordsworth, his brief experience in France was stamped indelibly on his soul. The philosophy he had learned from Beaupuy was to make him, even after he had turned against the Revolution, the great poetic voice of the humble and the lowly. His love affair, however well he managed to conceal it from the public, had awakened his heart and left upon it a scar that would not heal. Again and again he was to return in his poems to the theme of the woman abandoned with her child by her lover.

In London he became friendly with the young revolutionists surrounding Godwin, and for a while was himself somewhat influenced by the latter's absurd speculations (see p. 100). When England declared war against France in 1793, Wordsworth took the position of these radicals, and sided with the country of Beaupuy. In the same year he issued his first two volumes, *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, the second the result of his Alpine journey. Both are in heroic couplets, and show much indebtedness to the melancholy of the graveyard school of poetry. Still a friend to the French Revolution, he wrote an eloquent reply to Bishop Watson's sermon on *The Wisdom of God in Having Made Both Rich and Poor*; but it is typical of him that having thus expressed his iconoclasm, he allowed it to remain unpublished.

His activities and occupations are not clear until January 1795, when he was left a legacy of nine hundred pounds, which enabled him to satisfy his wish of devoting his life to poetry. When he was offered by a friend a house at Racedown, he gladly accepted. At last his faithful sister could also gratify her one desire, to know "the day of felicity, the day in which I am once more to find a home under the same roof with my brother." History affords few examples of such complete and unselfish consecration as that of Dorothy to her brother. A talented woman (see p. 346), she chose to have no life apart from his, and they were thenceforth inseparable. She was mother, sister, and dearest friend to him, always patient and understanding. It was her greatest happiness to feed the flame of his poetic inspiration; if she could do that, she asked no more of life. It was she who now, at Racedown, turned aside the bitterness in his heart by aiding him in finding peace and comfort in Nature all about him.

It was here, too, that Wordsworth came to know well the great genius with whom his name will be forever linked, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The latter was tremendously impressed with his new friend; "I feel myself a little man by his side," he confessed. In his enthusiasm, Coleridge insisted that they must live near each other; whereupon the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden, a few miles from Coleridge's home at Nether Stowey. Daily they saw one another, William, Dorothy, and Coleridge, and tramped miles together, intoxicating themselves with talk and plans. At length Wordsworth and Coleridge decided to issue jointly a volume of poems in which the former was to make humble subjects seem magical, and Coleridge was to make supernatural subjects seem real. This book, the epoch-making *Lyrical Ballads*, was published in September 1798, and contained some of Wordsworth's finest poems (*We Are Seven, Lines Written in Early Spring, Expostulation and Reply, The Tables Turned,* and *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*) and Coleridge's incomparable *Ancient Mariner*. The friendship between the two men was, at first, fruitful for both. Completely dissimilar in temperament, they did each other much good. Coleridge, with his fiery imagination, his wide reading, and his torrential flood of ideas, ignited Wordsworth's mind and gave it new perspectives and understanding. Wordsworth, on the other hand, self-contained, reserved,

steady of habit, and strong of soul, made Coleridge realize the need of disciplining his affectionate, voluble temper if he were ever to accomplish great things. In this creative relationship Dorothy also filled an important function as a link between the two men; there can be little doubt that she and Coleridge were greatly attracted to each other.

Although *Lyrical Ballads* was severely attacked in some quarters, it sold well enough to justify a second printing in 1800, which contained some important new poems. These two editions took up the renascence of poetry so ably begun by Blake and Burns, and made it plain that the new era was opened. For the volume of 1800, indeed, Wordsworth wrote a long and important *Preface* (see p. 335) to explain to the public what he had been attempting and to announce his poetic credo. This is one of the most important critical documents in our literature, for in effect it struck a mortal blow at neoclassical theory. "The principal object . . . proposed in these Poems," he says, "was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them . . . in a selection of language really used by men, . . . and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them . . . the primary laws of our nature. . . . Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language." Here the Rousseauistic creed is reduced to poetic practice. Rousseauistic, too, is his description of the creative process: "All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." But he did not fail to add that the poet must also think "long and deeply" over his material.

We have in these words the causes of Wordsworth's greatest successes and failures in poetry. The utter perfection of such works as the *Lucy* poems, *The Solitary Reaper,* and *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (see p. 174) is owing to their beautiful simplicity and the happy union of thought and feeling. But sometimes Wordsworth seems to have merely *felt* without thinking (instances when he degenerates into sentimentality) or to have *thought* without feeling (in verses that are surprisingly arid). Moreover, his "selection of language really used by men" is sometimes without inspiration. An example of such prosaic diction and of the bathos into which he could fall is the ludicrous *Andrew Jones* (1800), which opens:

I HATE that Andrew Jones; he'll breed
His children up to waste and pillage.
I wish the press-gang or the drum
With its tantara sound would come,
And sweep him from the village!

I said not this, because he loves
Through the long day to swear and tipple;
But for the poor dear sake of one
To whom a foul deed he had done,
A friendless man, a travelling cripple!

By no known canons of art can such verse be called poetry. Surely no poet who could soar as high as Wordsworth ever, at his worst, sank so low. Perhaps this disparity in his work is the result of a complete absence of humor in his temperament and his tendency to be satisfied with himself. It is characteristic of him, for example, that he should have attributed the hostility with which the *Lyrical Ballads* was greeted to the best poem in the volume, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner.* On the other hand, he did not always (fortunately!) pursue his theory of poetic diction. The sublimities of *Tintern Abbey, Yew Trees,* and *The Prelude* are certainly not achieved through vocabulary in common use.

Late in 1798 William and Dorothy went to Germany with Coleridge, but continued on their own way to Goslar without him. There the poet's sentiments were chiefly nostalgic, and he wrote a number of fine lyrics about England, the *Lucy* poems among

them. On their return the Wordsworths went to live in their native Lake Country on the shore of Grasmere Lake, where they rented an abandoned inn that they named "Dove Cottage." For the rest of his long life Wordsworth resided in this neighborhood. When Coleridge came back he, too, was near by, and the companionship of his imaginative friend unloosed in Wordsworth a marvelous flow of poetic inspiration. The ensuing years (1800-1807) were the most productive in his career. In 1802 Lord Lowther decided to pay with interest the debt owing to the Wordsworths, and this new financial security made it possible for him to marry his childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson, on October 4, 1802. It was a strange wedding-present that Coleridge made them, his *Dejection, an Ode*.

On August 14, 1803, not many days after Mrs. Wordsworth had given birth to their first son, the poet, his sister, and Coleridge set out in a jaunting car for an extended tour of Scotland. After two weeks in their company, Coleridge left them to travel alone on foot, being allotted six out of the thirty-five pounds in their common purse for his expenses. The separation was fruitful for all concerned. For Coleridge it helped to clarify his growing coolness of feeling for Wordsworth. For William it meant a series of sights and impressions which inspired some of his loveliest lyrics—*At the Grave of Burns, Stepping Westward, The Solitary Reaper,* and *Yarrow Unvisited* (see p. 173). For Dorothy the tour supplied material for her vivid *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (see p. 347).

In 1804 Coleridge left for a stay of two years in Malta. By the time he returned, real intimacy between the two poets was over. The separation which followed soon enough marks the end of the great poetic creativeness of both men. Later, in his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge was able to see Wordsworth's abilities more clearly, in their merits and defects.

The death of his brother John at sea in 1805 left a profound mark upon Wordsworth, turning his thoughts more and more toward orthodox Christianity. Napoleon's conversion of the French Revolution for his own ends had long ago disillusioned the poet in his radicalism. And as he grew older Wordsworth's conservatism hardened. He tried for a number of years to procure a government post, and in 1813 was appointed Distributor of Stamps in Westmoreland County, an office that brought a good income and required little labor. In 1819, after several removals, the Wordsworths moved to Rydal Mount, where he lived until his death in 1850. For the last thirty years of his life, Wordsworth was a staunch opposer of all political change, and disapproved heartily of Parliamentary Reform, Catholic Emancipation, universal suffrage, and the freedom of the press. He had no sympathy for the younger romantic poets who owed so much to his example, and expressed contempt for the work of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, all of whom he long outlived. He continued to write, but with less frequency and much less inspiration, though on occasion he could still turn out an admirable poem; and although his last works lack the magic of his earlier endeavors, they possess many striking lines. Upon the death of Southey he was appointed Poet Laureate in 1843. Late in life he dictated to Miss Fenwick the interesting series of notes to his various poems (herein printed at the head of each). He died on April 23, 1850, and was buried in Grasmere churchyard. A monument to him was erected in Westminster Abbey.

To do justice to this major poet two conditions are required of the reader: the dissociation of his poetry from his unsympathetic personality, and the discounting of that "mass of inferior work" of which his admirer Matthew Arnold speaks. When we have done so much, we shall not wonder, even if we cannot entirely agree, when Arnold places him below only Shakespeare and Milton in English poetry.

Although Wordsworth is commonly described as our great "Nature poet," the term is misleading, for to most minds it would imply that he was a great painter of natural scenery. There are indeed some wonderful pictures of Nature in his poetry, but on the whole he was not interested in representing the sights and sounds of Nature to the extent to which were, for instance, Shelley and Keats. To him the *thoughts* inspired by what he

saw and heard in Nature were of greater importance. Hence, it is more correct to call him a great meditative poet who found the source of his reflections in Nature. In his greatest poems she is recognized as "the nurse, the guide, the guardian . . . , and soul" of his moral being. This pantheistic mysticism which enabled him to "see into the life of things," when he felt a oneness in all created Nature—

"a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things,"

—was an insight he won to only after the feverish days in France. In order to trace the history of his development he wrote *The Excursion* (1814) and *The Prelude* (1850), two long parts of an unfinished autobiographical poem. In its first version, *The Prelude*, like Rousseau's *Confessions*, was a faithful record of his intellectual and emotional experiences; even the Annette Vallon episode appeared in it, though in a somewhat disguised form. But he did not publish it, and continued to revise it, ever modifying his radicalism and pantheism, as first represented, to suit the conservatism and orthodoxy of his later years. When it was finally printed in 1850, though the world was given some of his most beautiful poetry, it was granted something less than an accurate account of his earlier life.

This development he had already briefly, but sublimely, dealt with in *Tintern Abbey* (see p. 153). As a child he had been like a wild, thoughtless animal, drinking in unconsciously the wonders of Nature. Then, in young manhood, Nature became a passion to him; he loved her for her "colors" and "forms." In his later twenties this "appetite" passed, and he learned to listen to Nature for "the still, sad music of humanity." This analysis was important to Wordsworth, and it is therefore in the light of it that we should read such poems as *Expostulation and Reply*, *Tintern Abbey*, the *Lucy* poems, *My Heart Leaps Up*, and *Michael*.

To measure the accomplishment of Wordsworth, indeed, one need not do more than compare the last-named, *Michael*, his great "pastoral poem," with any of the many neoclassical pastorals. How far a cry it is from the pretty artificialities of Pope's school to the deep and quiet humanity of that masterpiece! One then well understands what Wordsworth came to mean to the nineteenth century, and how fitting are Matthew Arnold's lines on him:

He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain,
Our youth returned; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furled,
The freshness of the early world.

For a modern view of Wordsworth, see Aldous Huxley's *Wordsworth in the Tropics*, p. 1050.

We Are Seven

Written at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798, under circumstances somewhat remarkable. The little girl who is the heroine I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793. Having left the Isle of Wight and crossed Salisbury Plain, as mentioned in the preface to "Guilt and Sorrow," I proceeded by Bristol up the Wye, and so on to North Wales, to the Vale of Clwydd, where I spent my summer under the roof of the father of my friend, Robert Jones. In reference to this Poem I will here mention one of the most remarkable facts in my own poetic history and that of Mr. Coleridge. In the spring of the year 1798, he, my Sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden, pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Lenton and the valley of Stones near it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the New Monthly Magazine set up by Phillips the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aikin. Accordingly we set off and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the "Ancient Mariner," founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend, Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I myself suggested—for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime, and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvock's Voyages a day or two before that while doubling Cape Horn they frequently saw Albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or fifteen feet. "Suppose," said I, "you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary Spirits of those regions take upon them to avenge the crime." The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The Gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time; at least, not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous after-thought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular:—

> "And listened like a three years' child;
> The Mariner had his will."

These trifling contributions, all but one (which Mr. C has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded) slipt out of his mind as they well might. As we endeavored to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening) our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. We returned after a few days from a delightful tour, of which I have many pleasant, and some of them droll-enough, recollections. We returned by Dulverton to Alfoxden. The "Ancient Mariner" grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds, and we began to talk of a Volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium. Accordingly I wrote "The Idiot Boy," "Her eyes are wild," etc., "We are seven," "The Thorn," and some others. To return to "We are seven," the piece that called forth this note, I composed it while walking in the grove at Alfoxden. My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate that while walking to and fro I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited it to Mr. Coleridge and my Sister, and said, "A prefatory stanza must be added, and I should sit down to our little tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task were finished." I mentioned in substance what I wished to be expressed, and Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza thus:—

> "A little child, dear brother Jem,"—

I objected to the rhyme, "dear brother Jem," as being ludicrous, but we all enjoyed the joke of hitching-in our friend, James T——'s name, who was familiarly called Jem. He was the brother of the dramatist, and this reminds me of an anecdote which it may be worth while here to notice. The said Jem got a sight of the Lyrical Ballads as it was going through the press at Bristol, during which time I was residing in that city. One evening he came to me with a grave face, and said, "Wordsworth, I have seen the volume that Coleridge and you are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel, for, if published, it will make you everlastingly ridiculous." I answered that I felt much obliged by the interest he took in my good name as a writer, and begged to know what was the unfortunate piece he alluded to. He said, "It is called 'We are seven.'" Nay! said I, that shall take its chance, however, and he left me in despair. I have only to add that in the spring of 1841 I revisited Goodrich Castle, not having seen that part of the Wye since I met the little Girl there in 1793. It would have given me greater pleasure to have found in the neighboring hamlet traces of one who had interested me so much; but that was impossible, as unfortunately I did not even know her name. The ruin, from its position and features, is a most impressive object. I could not but deeply regret that its solemnity was impaired by a fantastic new Castle set up on a projection of the same ridge, as if to show how far modern art can go in surpassing all that could be done by antiquity and nature with their united graces, remembrances, and associations.—*Wordsworth.*

> ——— A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

"Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be."

Then did the little maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree."

"You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

"And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

"So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
Quick was the little maid's reply,
"O master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

(1798)

Lines Written in Early Spring

Actually composed while I was sitting by the side of the brook that runs down from the Comb, in which stands the village of Alford, through the grounds of Alfoxden. It was a chosen resort of mine. The brook fell down a sloping rock so as to make a waterfall considerable for that country, and across the pool below had fallen a tree, an ash if I rightly remember, from which rose perpendicularly, boughs in search of the light intercepted by the deep shade above. The boughs bore leaves of green that for want of sunshine had faded into almost lily-white; and from the underside of this natural sylvan bridge depended long and beautiful tresses of ivy which waved gently in the breeze that might poetically speaking be called the breath of the waterfall. This motion varied of course in proportion to the power of water in the brook. When, with dear friends, I revisited this spot, after an interval of more than forty years, this interesting feature of the scene was gone. To the owner of the place I could not but regret that the beauty of this retired part of the grounds had not tempted him to make it more accessible by a path, not broad or obtrusive, but sufficient for persons who love such scenes to creep along without difficulty —*Wordsworth.*

I heard a thousand blended notes
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What Man has made of Man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure,—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What Man has made of Man?

(1798)

Expostulation and Reply

This poem is a favorite among the Quakers, as I have learnt on many occasions. It was composed in front of the house at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798.—*Wordsworth*

"Why, William, on that old gray stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

"Where are your books?—that light bequeathed
To Beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply:—

"The eye,—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come
But we must still be seeking?

"Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old gray stone,
And dream my time away."

(1798)

The Tables Turned

AN EVENING SCENE ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Up! up! my friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long, green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless,—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings,
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things,—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

(1798)

Lines

Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour July 13, 1798

(No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days, with my Sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume of which so much has been said in these Notes.—(The Lyrical Ballads, as first published at Bristol by Cottle.)—*Wordsworth.*

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild, secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration—feelings, too,
Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened—that serene and blessed mood
In which the affections gently lead us on—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again;
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts

That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever Nature led; more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In Nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay;
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee; and in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshiper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service; rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

(1798)

Lucy

Wordsworth never revealed in his notes the identity of the girl celebrated in these famous lyrics. Professors Harper and Legouis take her to be some early unknown love of the poet. Frances Winwar, disagreeing with them, observes that this was "no earthly passion," and offers a possible clue by remarking that "Lucy was a name which Wordsworth had for Dorothy."

1

Strange fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

2

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove;
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

3

I traveled among unknown men
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

4

Three years she grew in sun and shower;
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown:
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Ev'n in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mold the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

"And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

5

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

(written 1799)

From *The Prelude*

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM

ADVERTISEMENT

The following Poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805.

The design and occasion of the work are described by the Author in his Preface to the "Excursion," first published in 1814, where he thus speaks:—

"Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment.

"As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.

"That work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it, was a determination to compose a philosophical Poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled the 'Recluse'; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.

"The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labor which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

Such was the Author's language in the year 1814.

It will thence be seen, that the present Poem was intended to be introductory to the "Recluse," and that the "Recluse," if completed, would have consisted of Three Parts. Of these, the Second Part alone viz. the "Excursion," was finished, and given to the world by the Author.

The First Book of the First Part of the "Recluse" still remains in manuscript; but the Third Part was only planned. The materials of which it would have been formed have, however, been incorporated, for the most part, in the Author's other Publications, written subsequently to the "Excursion."

The Friend, to whom the present Poem is addressed, was the late SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed.

Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the Poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the Author (after his return to his own country), are recorded in his Verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the *Sibylline Leaves*, p. 197, ed. 1817, or *Poetical Works, by S. T. Coleridge*, vol. I. p. 206.

RYDAL MOUNT, *July 13th*, 1850.

From *Book I*

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favored in my birth-place, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which erelong
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 't was my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation;—moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the gray sky.

She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colors of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature—purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapors rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons; happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

From *Book IX*

A band of military Officers,
Then stationed in the city,[1] were the chief
Of my associates: some of these wore swords

[1] Orleans.

That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.
In age and temper differing, they had yet
One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
(Save only one, hereafter to be named)
Were bent upon undoing what was done:
This was their rest and only hope; therewith
No fear had they of bad becoming worse,
For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred,
Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,
In anything, save only as the act
Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile
He had sat lord in many tender hearts;
Though heedless of such honors now, and changed:
His temper was quite mastered by the times,
And they had blighted him, had eaten away
The beauty of his person, doing wrong
Alike to body and to mind: his port,
Which once had been erect and open, now
Was stooping and contracted, and a face,
Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts
Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed,
As much as any that was ever seen,
A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour,
That from the press of Paris duly brought
Its freight of public news, the fever came,
A punctual visitant, to shake this man,
Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
Into a thousand colors; while he read,
Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
Continually, like an uneasy place
In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
Of universal ferment; mildest men
Were agitated; and commotions, strife
Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.
The soil of common life was, at that time,
Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,
And not then only, "What a mockery this
Of history, the past and that to come!
Now do I feel how all men are deceived,
Reading of nations and their works, in faith,
Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
Oh! laughter for the page that would reflect
To future times the face of what now is!"
The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain
Devoured by locusts,—Carra, Gorsas,[2]—add
A hundred other names, forgotten now,
Nor to be heard of more; yet, they were powers,
Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
And felt through every nook of town and field.
Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief
Of my associates stood prepared for flight
To augment the band of emigrants in arms
Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
With foreign foes mustered for instant war.
This was their undisguised intent, and they
Were waiting with the whole of their desires
The moment to depart.
An Englishman,
Born in a land whose very name appeared
To license some unruliness of mind;
A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But though untaught by thinking or by books
To reason well of polity or law,
And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,
Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
Of nations and their passing interests
(If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
Tales of the poets, as it made the heart
Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;
Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
And ill could brook, beholding that the best
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
Of many benefits, in later years
Derived from academic institutes
And rules, that they held something up to view
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far

[2] Revolutionary journalists.

Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
In honor, as in one community,
Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction open lay to all that came,
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
A gift that was come rather late than soon.
No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
And stung with injury, at this riper day,
Were impotent to make my hopes put on
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
In honor to their honor: zeal which yet
Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
Forth like a Polar summer: every word
They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
Confusion-stricken by a higher power
Than human understanding, their discourse
Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
I triumph.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
In gallant soldiership, and posting on
To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
Yet at this very moment do tears start
Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep—
I wept not then,—but tears have dimmed my sight,
In memory of the farewells of that time,
Domestic severings, female fortitude
At dearest separation, patriot love
And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,
Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;
Even files of strangers merely seen but once.
And for a moment, men from far with sound
Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
Entering the city, here and there a face,
Or person, singled out among the rest,
Yet still a stranger and beloved as such;
Even by these passing spectacles my heart
Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,
Already hinted at, of other mold—
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
And with an oriental loathing spurned,
As of a different caste. A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order. Man he loved
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
And all the homely in their homely works,
Transferred a courtesy which had no air
Of condescension; but did rather seem
A passion and a gallantry, like that
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honor set apart,
And ignorance in the laboring multitude.

For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
Than later days allowed; carried about me,
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find
Error without excuse upon the side
Of them who strove against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not;
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
Where good and evil interchange their names,
And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
With vice at home. We added dearest themes—
Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power,
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth, the one to break
Bondage, the other to build liberty
On firm foundations, making social life,
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure
As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honorable deeds
Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,
That would be found in all recorded time,
Of truth preserved and error passed away;
Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
And how the multitudes of men will feed
And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen
They are to put the appropriate nature on,
Triumphant over every obstacle
Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,
And what they do and suffer for their creed;
How far they travel, and how long endure;
How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,
From least beginnings; how, together locked
By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.

To aspirations then of our own minds
Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
A living confirmation of the whole
Before us, in a people from the depth
Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
And continence of mind, and sense of right,
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

From *Book XI*

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!—O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress—to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth
The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
(As at some moments might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full-blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy,—who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—
Now was it that both found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their hearts' desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!

But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

Why should I not confess that earth was then
To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,
Seems, when the first time visited, to one
Who thither comes to find in it his home?
He walks about and looks upon the spot
With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds,
And is half-pleased with things that are amiss,
'T will be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked
From every object pleasant circumstance
To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
With genial feelings still predominant;
When erring, erring on the better part,
And in the kinder spirit; placable,
Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
See as they have been taught—Antiquity
Gives rights to error; and aware, no less
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of License as of Liberty;
And above all—for this was more than all—
Not caring if the wind did now and then
Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
Prospect so large into futurity;
In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
Diffusing only those affections wider
That from the cradle had grown up with me,
And losing, in no other way than light
Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

(written 1799-1805)

Michael

A Pastoral Poem

Written at Town-end, Grasmere, about the same time as "The Brothers." The Sheepfold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley, more to the north.—*Wordsworth.*

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved; not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale[1]
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, he heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,

[1] the valley in which Wordsworth lived many years.

"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honorable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old,
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labor did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim, the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighborhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake;
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use

Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.
And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sat with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The Clipping Tree, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.
And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old,
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.
But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?
Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.
While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
"When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman,—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade,—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?"
At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.

There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy;—at the churchdoor
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel, floored
With marble which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough;—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember;—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life has been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see

That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mold.
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go."
At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
"This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone,—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so;—yes—yes—
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—But, I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well;
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."
The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.
A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.
There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.

And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
Is gone;—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighborhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

(1800)

My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold

Written at Town-end, Grasmere.—*Wordsworth.*

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

(written 1802)

Resolution and Independence

Written at Town-end, Grasmere. This old Man I met a few hundred yards from my cottage; and the account of him is taken from his own mouth. I was in the state of feeling described in the beginning of the poem, while crossing over Barton Fell from Mr. Clarkson's, at the foot of Ullswater, towards Askham. The image of the hare I then observed on the ridge of the Fell.—*Wordsworth.*

There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods;
The jay makes answer as the magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness, and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name.

I heard the skylark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare:
Even such a happy child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and all from care;
But there may come another day to me,—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can he expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

I thought of Chatterton,[1] the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
Of him[2] who walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough, along the mountainside:
By our own spirits we are deified:
We Poets in our ~~youth begin in gladness;~~
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven,
I saw a man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore gray hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence,
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence:
So that it seems a thing endued with sense;—
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;—

Such seemed this man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long gray staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon that muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

A gentle answer did the old man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew;
And him with further words I thus bespake:
"What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet vivid eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest,—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

He told, that to these waters he had come
~~To gather leeches, being old and poor:~~
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor,
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

The old man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labor, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"

He with a smile did then his words repeat;
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
"Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old man's shape, and speech,—all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,

[1] See p. 58 [2] Burns, see p 65

Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanor kind,
But stately in the main; and when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn, to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.
"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!"

(written 1802)

Composed by the Seaside near Calais, August, 1802

Fair Star of evening, Splendor of the west,
Star of my country!—on the horizon's brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the nations. Thou, I think,
Should'st be my Country's emblem; and should'st wink,
Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies.
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory! I with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

It Is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free

This was composed on the beach near Calais, in the autumn of 1802.—*Wordsworth*

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free.
The holy time is quiet as a nun,
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea;
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Dear Child! dear Girl![1] that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine;
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Near Dover, September, 1802

Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood;
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,
The coast of France—the coast of France how near!
Drawn almost into frightful neighborhood.
I shrunk; for verily the barrier flood
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,
A span of waters; yet what power is there!
What mightiness for evil and for good!
Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity;
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
Only, the Nations shall be great and free.

On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic[2]

Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;
And was the safeguard of the west: the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free;
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And when she took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.[3]
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great, is passed away.

(written 1802)

[1] Wordsworth's French daughter, who met him at Calais for a visit.

[2] Venice, which had had a glorious period of commercial prosperity in the Eastern trade during the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, was finally conquered by Napoleon in 1797 and her territory divided between France and Austria.

[3] It was a custom for the Doge of Venice to drop a ring annually into the Adriatic as a symbol of this espousal.

To Toussaint L'Ouverture[1]

Toussaint, the most unhappy man of men!
Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;—
O miserable Chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exaltations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

(written 1802)

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will.
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Written in London, 1802

This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that in this and the succeeding Sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth.

[1] Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803) was a negro slave who led a revolution and temporarily secured independence for Haiti. He was eventually conquered and died in a French prison.

It would not be easy to conceive with what a depth of feeling I entered into the struggle carried on by the Spaniards for their deliverance from the usurped power of the French. Many times have I gone from Allan Bank in Grasmere vale, where we were then residing, to the top of the Raise-gap as it is called, so late as two o'clock in the morning, to meet the carrier bringing the newspaper from Keswick. Imperfect traces of the state of mind in which I then was may be found in my Tract on the Convention of Cintra, as well as in these Sonnets.—*Wordsworth.*

O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
The wealthiest man among us is the best.
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore:
Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

London, 1802

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, sword and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy Soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

Yew Trees

Written at Grasmere. These yew-trees are still standing, but the spread of that at Lorton is much diminished by mutilation. I will here mention that a little way up the hill, on the road leading from Rosthwaite to Stonethwaite (in Borrowdale), lay the trunk of a yew-tree, which appeared as you approached, so vast was its diameter, like

the entrance of a cave, and not a small one. Calculating upon what I have observed of the slow growth of this tree in rocky situations, and of its durability, I have often thought that the one I am describing must have been as old as the Christian era. The tree lay in the line of a fence. Great masses of its ruins were strewn about, and some had been rolled down the hillside and lay near the road at the bottom. As you approached the tree, you were struck with the number of shrubs and young plants, ashes, etc., which had found a bed upon the decayed trunk and grew to no inconsiderable height, forming, as it were, a part of the hedgerow. In no part of England, or of Europe, have I ever seen a yew-tree at all approaching this in magnitude, as it must have stood. By the bye, Hutton, the old Guide, of Keswick, had been so impressed with the remains of this tree, that he used gravely to tell strangers that there could be no doubt of its having been in existence before the flood.—*Wordsworth.*

There is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore;
Not loth to furnish weapons for the bands
Of Umfraville or Percy[1] ere they marched
To Scotland's heaths; or those that crossed the sea
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poictiers.[2]
Of vast circumference and gloom profound
This solitary Tree! a living thing
Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed. But worthier still of note
Are those fraternal Four of Borrowdale,[3]
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;
Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
That threaten the profane;—a pillared shade,
Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes
May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton
And Time the Shadow;—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
United worship; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's[4] inmost caves.

(written 1803)

[1] English noblemen prominent in border warfare.
[2] battles in the Hundred Years' War between England and France occurring in 1415, 1346, and 1356 respectively.
[3] a vale in the Lake District of England south of Derwentwater.
[4] a mountain rising out of Borrowdale valley.

At the Grave of Burns, 1803

SEVEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

For illustration, see my Sister's Journal.—*Wordsworth.* (See p. 347.)

I shiver, Spirit fierce and bold,
At thought of what I now behold:
As vapors breathed from dungeons cold,
Strike pleasure dead,
So sadness comes from out the mould
Where Burns is laid.

And have I then thy bones so near,
And thou forbidden to appear?
As if it were thyself that's here
I shrink with pain;
And both my wishes and my fear
Alike are vain.

Off weight—nor press on weight!—away
Dark thoughts!—they came, but not to stay;
With chastened feelings would I pay
The tribute due
To him, and aught that hides his clay
From mortal view.

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius "glinted" forth,
Rose like a star that touching earth,
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
The struggling heart, where be they now?
Full soon the Aspirant of the plough,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave.

I mourned with thousands, but as one
More deeply grieved, for He was gone

Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How Verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Alas! where'er the current tends,
Regret pursues and with it blends,—
Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
By Skiddaw[1] seen,—
Neighbors we were, and loving friends
We might have been;

True friends though diversely inclined;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibres are entwined,
Through Nature's skill,
May even by contraries be joined
More closely still.

The tear will start, and let it flow;
Thou "poor Inhabitant below,"
At this dread moment—even so—
Might we together
Have sat and talked where gowans[2] blow,
Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed
Within my reach; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast!
But why go on?—
Oh! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
His grave grass-grown.

There, too, a Son, his joy and pride,
(Not three weeks past the Stripling died,)
Lies gathered to his Father's side,
Soul-moving sight!
Yet one to which is not denied
Some sad delight:

For *he* is safe, a quiet bed
Hath early found among the dead,
Harbored where none can be misled,
Wronged, or distrest;
And surely here it may be said
That such are blest.

And oh for Thee, by pitying grace
Checked oft-times in a devious race,
May He who halloweth the place
Where Man is laid
Receive thy Spirit in the embrace
For which it prayed!

Sighing I turned away; but ere
Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
Music that sorrow comes not near,
A ritual hymn,
Chaunted in love that casts out fear
By Seraphim.

[1] a mountain in the Lake District.
[2] daisies.

Stepping Westward

While my Fellow-traveler and I were walking by the side of Loch Ketterine, one fine evening after sunset, in our road to a Hut where, in the course of our Tour, we had been hospitably entertained some weeks before, we met, in one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region, two well-dressed Women, one of whom said to us, by way of greeting, "What, you are stepping westward?"—*Wordsworth.*[1]

"What, you are stepping westward?"—"Yea."
—'Twould be a *wildish* destiny,
If we, who thus together roam
In a strange Land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of Chance:
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on?

The dewy ground was dark and cold;
Behind, all gloomy to behold;
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny:
I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound
Of something without place or bound;
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

The voice was soft, and she who spake
Was walking by her native lake:
The salutation had to me
The very sound of courtesy:
Its power was felt; and while my eye
Was fixed upon the glowing Sky,
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of traveling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

(written 1803)

[1] See Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 349.

The Solitary Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands.
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.[1]

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

(written 1803)

Yarrow Unvisited

See the various Poems the scene of which is laid upon the banks of the Yarrow; in particular, the exquisite Ballad of Hamilton beginning

"Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny Bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome Marrow!—"

—*Wordsworth.*

From Sterling Castle[1] we had seen
The mazy Forth unraveled.
Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,
And with the Tweed had traveled:
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my *winsome Marrow*,
'Whate'er betide, we 'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow.'

'Let Yarrow folk, *frae* Selkirk town,
Who have been buying, selling,
Go back to Yarrow, 't is their own;
Each maiden to her dwelling!
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow!
But we will downward with the Tweed,
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

'There's Gala Water, Leader Haughs,[2]
Both lying right before us;
And Dryburgh,[3] where with chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus;
There's pleasant Teviot dale, a land
Made blithe with plough and harrow:
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

'What 's Yarrow but a river bare,
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder.'
Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn:
My True love sighed for sorrow:
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

'Oh! green,' said I, 'are Yarrow's holms,
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,[4]
But we will leave it growing.
O'er hilly path, and open Strath,[5]
We 'll wander Scotland thorough;
But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the dale of Yarrow.

'Let beeves and home-bred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake

[1] islands to the west of Scotland.
[1] cf. Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 350.

[2] The Gala flows into the Tweed near Abbotsford. The Leader joins the Tweed near Melrose. Haughs are low-lying lands occasionally overflowed.
[3] a ruined abbey.
[4] a quotation from *The Braes of Yarrow* by Hamilton of Bangour. The "apple" was probably the rowan-berry.
[5] a river valley

Float double, swan and shadow!
We will not see them; will not go,
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;
Enough if in our hearts we know
There 's such a place as Yarrow.

'Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it:
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
We'll keep them, winsome Marrow!
For when we 're there, although 't is fair,
'T will be another Yarrow!

'If Care, with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly,—
Should we be loath to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy;
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'T will soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow!'

(written 1803)

She Was a Phantom of Delight

Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The germ of this poem was four lines composed as a part of the verses on the Highland Girl. Though beginning in this way, it was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious.—*Wordsworth.*

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From Maytime and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman, too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eyes serene
The very pulse of the machine:
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveler between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

(written 1804)

I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud

Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The Daffodils grew and still grow on the margin of Ullswater, and probably may be seen to this day as beautiful in the month of March, nodding their golden heads beside the dancing and foaming waves.—*Wordsworth.*

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee—
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company.
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

(written 1804)

The World Is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus[1] rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

(written 1806)

Ode

Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

This was composed during my residence at Town-end, Grasmere. Two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself; but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or *experiences* of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere—

> "A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death!"—

But it was not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the Spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines—

> "Obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;" etc.

To that dream-like vividness and splendor which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here: but having in the poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favor. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations, and, among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the "Immortality of the Soul," I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorising me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet.

> "The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety."
> —*Wordsworth.*

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

[1] a sea-god in the service of Neptune; Triton was also a sea-god.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound,
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief;
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.
The ~~cataracts blow their trumpets~~ from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday—
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy shepherd-boy!

Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee.
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon;
Both of them speak of something that is gone.
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pygmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song;
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife.
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

Thou whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind—
Mighty prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,

In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction; not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised.
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O, ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(written 1802-6)

Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland

This was composed while pacing to and fro between the Hall of Coleorton, then rebuilding, and the principal Farm-house of the Estate, in which we lived for nine or ten months. I will here mention that the Song on the Restoration of Lord Clifford, as well as that on the feast of Brougham Castle, were produced on the same ground —*Wordsworth.*

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice:

In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a Tyrant,[1] and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven.
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft;
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left;
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee!

(written 1807)

Yarrow Visited

SEPTEMBER, 1814

As mentioned in my verses on the death of the Ettrick Shepherd, my first visit to Yarrow was in his company We had lodged the night before at Traquhair, where Hogg had joined us and also Dr. Anderson, the Editor of the British Poets, who was on a visit at the Manse Dr. A. walked with us till we came in view of the Vale of Yarrow, and, being advanced in life, he then turned back. The old Man was passionately fond of poetry, though with not much of a discriminating judgment, as the Volumes he edited sufficiently show. But I was much pleased to meet with him, and to acknowledge my obligation to his collection, which had been my brother John's companion in more than one voyage to India, and which he gave me before his departure from Grasmere, never to return. Through these Volumes I became first familiar with Chaucer, and so little money had I then to spare for books, that, in all probability, but for this same work, I should have known little of Drayton, Daniel, and other distinguished poets of the Elizabethan age, and their immediate successors, till a much later period of my life. I am glad to record this, not from any importance of its own, but as a tribute of gratitude to this simple-hearted old man, whom I never again had the pleasure of meeting. I seldom read or think of this poem without regretting that my dear Sister was not of the party, as she would have had so much delight in recalling the time when, travelling together in Scotland, we declined going in search of this celebrated stream, not altogether, I will frankly confess, for the reasons assigned in the poem on the occasion.—*Wordsworth*

And is this—Yarrow?—*This* the Stream
Of which my fancy cherished,
So faithfully, a waking dream?
An image that hath perished!

O that some Minstrel's harp were near,
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air,
That fills my heart with sadness!

Yet why?—a silvery current flows
With uncontrolled meanderings;
Nor have these eyes by greener hills
Been soothed, in all my wanderings.
And, through her depths, Saint Mary's Lake
Is visibly delighted;
For not a feature of those hills
Is in the mirror slighted.

A blue sky bends o'er Yarrow vale,
Save where that pearly whiteness
Is round the rising sun diffused,
A tender hazy brightness;
Mild dawn of promise! that excludes
All profitless dejection;
Though not unwilling here to admit
A pensive recollection.

Where was it that the famous Flower
Of Yarrow Vale lay bleeding?
His bed perchance was yon smooth mound
On which the herd is feeding:
And haply from this crystal pool,
Now peaceful as the morning,
The Water-wraith ascended thrice—
And gave his doleful warning.

Delicious is the Lay that sings
The haunts of happy Lovers,
The path that leads them to the grove,
The leafy grove that covers:
And Pity sanctifies the Verse
That paints, by strength of sorrow,
The unconquerable strength of love;
Bear witness, rueful Yarrow!

But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation:
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy.

That region left, the vale unfolds
Rich groves of lofty stature,
With Yarrow winding through the pomp
Of cultivated nature;

[1] Napoleon Bonaparte

And, rising from those lofty groves,
Behold a Ruin hoary!
The shattered front of Newark's Towers,
Renowned in Border story.

Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,
For sportive youth to stray in;
For manhood to enjoy his strength;
And age to wear away in!
Yon cottage seems a bower of bliss,
A covert for protection
Of tender thoughts, that nestle there—
The brood of chaste affection.

How sweet, on this autumnal day,
The wild-wood fruits to gather,
And on my True-love's forehead plant
A crest of blooming heather!
And what if I enwreathed my own!
'Twere no offence to reason;
The sober Hills thus deck their brows
To meet the wintry season.

I see—but not by sight alone,
Loved Yarrow, have I won thee;
A ray of fancy still survives—
Her sunshine plays upon thee!
Thy ever-youthful waters keep
A course of lively pleasure;
And gladsome notes my lips can breathe,
Accordant to the measure.

The vapors linger round the Heights,
They melt, and soon must vanish;
One hour is theirs, no more is mine—
Sad thought, which I would banish,
But that I know, where'er I go
Thy genuine image, Yarrow!
Will dwell with me—to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow.

From *The River Duddon*

It is with the little river Duddon as it is with most other rivers, Ganges and Nile not excepted, —many springs might claim the honor of being its head. In my own fancy I have fixed its rise near the noted Shire-stones placed at the meeting-point of the counties, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire. They stand by the wayside on the top of the Wrynose Pass, and it used to be reckoned a proud thing to say that, by touching them at the same time with feet and hands, one had been in the three counties at once. At what point of its course the stream takes the name of Duddon I do not know. I first became acquainted with the Duddon, as I have good reason to remember, in early boyhood. Upon the banks of the Derwent I had learnt to be very fond of angling. Fish abound in that large river; not so in the small streams in the neighborhood of Hawkshead; and I fell into the common delusion that the farther from home the better sport would be had. Accordingly, one day I attached myself to a person living in the neighborhood of Hawkshead, who was going to try his fortune as an angler near the source of the Duddon. We fished a great part of the day with very sorry success, the rain pouring torrents, and long before we got home I was worn out with fatigue; and, if the good man had not carried me on his back, I must have lain down under the best shelter I could find. Little did I think then it would be my lot to celebrate, in a strain of love and admiration, the stream which for many years I never thought of without recollections of disappointment and distress

During my college vacation, and two or three years afterwards, before taking my Bachelor's degree, I was several times resident in the house of a near relative who lived in the small town of Broughton. I passed many delightful hours upon the banks of this river, which becomes an estuary about a mile from that place. The remembrances of that period are the subject of the 21st Sonnet. The subject of the 27th is in fact taken from a tradition belonging to Rydal Hall, which once stood, as is believed, upon a rocky and woody hill on the right hand as you go from Rydal to Ambleside, and was deserted from the superstitious fear here described, and the present site fortunately chosen instead. The present Hall was erected by Sir Michael le Fleming, and it may be hoped that at some future time there will be an edifice more worthy of so beautiful a position. With regard to the 30th Sonnet it is odd enough that this imagination was realised in the year 1840, when I made a tour through that district with my wife and daughter, Miss Fenwick and her niece, and Mr. and Miss Quillinan. Before our return from Seathwaite chapel the party separated. Mrs. Wordsworth, while most of us went further up the stream, chose an opposite direction, having told us that we should overtake her on our way to Ulpha. But she was

tempted out of the main road to ascend a rocky eminence near it, thinking it impossible we should pass without seeing her. This, however, unfortunately happened, and then ensued vexation and distress, especially to me, which I should be ashamed to have recorded, for I lost my temper entirely. Neither I nor those that were with me saw her again till we reached the Inn at Broughton, seven miles. This may perhaps in some degree excuse my irritability on the occasion, for I could not but think she had been much to blame. It appeared, however, on explanation, that she had remained on the rock, calling out and waving her handkerchief as we were passing, in order that we also might ascend and enjoy a prospect which had much charmed her. "But on we went, her signals proving vain." How then could she reach Broughton before us? When we found she had not gone on before to Ulpha Kirk, Mr. Quillinan went back in one of the carriages in search of her. He met her on the road, took her up, and by a shorter way conveyed her to Broughton, where we were all reunited and spent a happy evening.

I have many affecting remembrances connected with this stream. Those I forbear to mention; especially things that occurred on its banks during the later part of that visit to the seaside of which the former part is detailed in my "Epistle to Sir George Beaumont."

The river Duddon rises upon Wrynose Fell, on the confines of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire; and, having served as a boundary to the last two counties for the space of about twenty-five miles, enters the Irish Sea, between the Isle of Walney and the Lordship of Millum. —*Wordsworth.*

V

Sole listener, Duddon! to the breeze that played
With thy clear voice, I caught the fitful sound
Wafted o'er sullen moss and craggy mound—
Unfruitful solitudes, that seemed to upbraid
The sun in heaven!—but now, to form a shade
For Thee, green alders have together wound
Their foliage; ashes flung their arms around;
And birch-trees risen in silver colonnade.
And thou hast also tempted here to rise,
'Mid sheltering pines, this cottage rude and grey;
Whose ruddy children, by the mother's eyes
Carelessly watched, sport through the summer day,
Thy pleased associates:—light as endless May
On infant bosoms lonely Nature lies.

XX

The old inventive Poets, had they seen,
Or rather felt, the entrancement that detains
Thy waters, Duddon! 'mid these flowery plains—
The still repose, the liquid lapse serene,
Transferred to bowers imperishably green,
Had beautified Elysium! But these chains
Will soon be broken;—a rough course remains,
Rough as the past; where thou, of placid mien,
Innocuous as a firstling of the flock,
And countenanced like a soft cerulean sky,
Shalt change thy temper; and with many a shock
Given and received in mutual jeopardy,
Dance, like a Bacchanal,[1] from rock to rock,
Tossing her frantic thyrsus[2] wide and high!

[1] a woman who celebrates the dance of Bacchus.
[2] a staff surmounted by a bunch of vine or ivy leaves.

XXVI

Return, Content! for fondly I pursued,
Even when a child, the Streams—unheard, unseen;
Through tangled woods, impending rocks between;
Or, free as air, with flying inquest viewed
The sullen reservoirs whence their bold brood—
Pure as the morning, fretful, boisterous, keen,
Green as the salt-sea billows, white and green—
Poured down the hills, a choral multitude!
Nor have I tracked their course for scanty gains;
They taught me random cares and truant joys,
That shield from mischief and preserve from stains
Vague minds, while men are growing out of boys;
Maturer fancy owes to their rough noise
Impetuous thoughts that brook not servile reins.

XXXIV

I thought of thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away,—Vain sympathies!
For, backward, Duddon! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the Stream, and shall forever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

(written 1820)

Mutability

From low to high doth dissolution climb,
And sink from high to low, along a scale
Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail;
A musical but melancholy chime,
Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,
Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.
Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more; drop like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

(written 1821)

Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge

Tax not the royal Saint[1] with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned
(Albeit laboring for a scanty band
Of white-robed Scholars only) this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence!
—Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more:—
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

(written 1821)

To a Sky-lark

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

(written 1825)

Yarrow Revisited

In the autumn of 1831, my daughter and I set off from Rydal to visit Sir Walter Scott before his departure for Italy. This journey had been delayed by an inflammation in my eyes till we found that the time appointed for his leaving home would be too near for him to receive us without considerable inconvenience. Nevertheless we proceeded and reached Abbotsford on Monday. I was then scarcely able to lift up my eyes to the light. How sadly changed did I find him from the man I had seen so healthy, gay, and hopeful, a few years before, when he said at the inn at Paterdale, in my presence, his daughter Anne also being there, with Mr Lockhart, my own wife and daughter, and Mr. Quillinan,—"I mean to live till I am *eighty*, and shall write as long as I live." But to return to Abbotsford, the inmates and guests we found there were Sir Walter, Major Scott, Anne Scott, and Mr. and Mrs Lockhart, Mr. Liddell, his Lady and Brother, and Mr. Allan the painter, and Mr. Laidlow, a very old friend of Sir Walter's. One of Burns's sons, an officer in the Indian service, had left the house a day or two before, and had kindly expressed his regret that he could not await my arrival, a regret that I may truly say was mutual. In the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sang, and Mrs. Lockhart chanted old ballads to her harp; and Mr. Allan, hanging over the back of a chair, told and acted odd stories in a humorous way. With this exhibition and his daughter's singing, Sir Walter was much amused, as indeed were we all as far as circumstances would allow. But what is most worthy of mention is the admirable demeanor of Major Scott during the following evening, when the Liddells were gone and only ourselves and Mr. Allan were present. He had much to suffer from the sight of his father's infirmities and from the great change that was about to take place at the residence he had built, and where he had long lived in so much prosperity and happiness. But what struck me most

[1] King Henry VI, who founded King's College.

was the patient kindness with which he supported himself under the many fretful expressions that his sister Anne addressed to him or uttered in his hearing. She, poor thing, as mistress of that house, had been subject, after her mother's death, to a heavier load of care and responsibility and greater sacrifices of time than one of such a constitution of body and mind was able to bear. Of this, Dora and I were made so sensible, that, as soon as we had crossed the Tweed on our departure, we gave vent at the same moment to our apprehensions that her brain would fail and she would go out of her mind, or that she would sink under the trials she had passed and those which awaited her. On Tuesday morning Sir Walter Scott accompanied us and most of the party to Newark Castle on the Yarrow. When we alighted from the carriages he walked pretty stoutly, and had great pleasure in revisiting those of his favorite haunts Of that excursion the verses "Yarrow revisited" are a memorial. Notwithstanding the romance that pervades Sir Walter's works and attaches to many of his habits, there is too much pressure of fact for these verses to harmonise as much as I could wish with other poems. On our return in the afternoon we had to cross the Tweed directly opposite Abbotsford. The wheels of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream, that there flows somewhat rapidly; a rich but sad light of rather a purple than a golden hue was spread over the Eildon hills at that moment, and, thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the sonnet beginning—"A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain." At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and in the morning of that day Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which upon the whole he had led. He had written in my daughter's Album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her, and, while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence—"I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake they are probably the last verses I shall ever write." They show how much his mind was impaired, not by the strain of thought but by the execution, some of the lines being imperfect, and one stanza wanting corresponding rhymes: one letter, the initial S, had been omitted in the spelling of his own name. In this interview also it was that, upon my expressing a hope of his health being benefited by the climate of the country to which he was going, and by the interest he would take in the classic remembrances of Italy, he made use of the quotation from "Yarrow unvisited" as recorded by me in the "Musings at Aquapendente" six years afterwards. Mr Lockhart has mentioned in his Life of him what I heard from several quarters while abroad, both at Rome and elsewhere, that little seemed to interest him but what he could collect or heard of the fugitive Stuarts and their adherents who had followed them into exile. Both the "Yarrow revisited" and the "Sonnet" were sent him before his departure from England Some further particulars of the conversations which occurred during this visit I should have set down had they not been already accurately recorded by Mr. Lockhart. I first became acquainted with this great and amiable man—Sir Walter Scott—in the year 1803, when my sister and I, making a tour in Scotland, were hospitably received by him in Lasswade upon the banks of the Esk, where he was then living. We saw a good deal of him in the course of the following week: the particulars are given in my sister's Journal of that tour.—*Wordsworth*

The gallant Youth, who may have gained,
  Or seeks, a 'winsome Marrow,'
Was but an Infant in the lap
  When first I looked on Yarrow;
Once more, by Newark's Castle-gate
  Long left without a warder,
I stood, looked, listened, and with Thee,
  Great Minstrel of the Border![1]

Grave thoughts ruled wide on that sweet day,
  Their dignity installing
In gentle bosoms, while sere leaves
  Were on the bough, or falling;

But breezes played, and sunshine gleamed—
  The forest to embolden;
Reddened the fiery hues, and shot
  Transparent through the golden.

For busy thoughts the Stream flowed on
  In foamy agitation;
And slept in many a crystal pool
  For quiet contemplation:
No public and no private care
  The freeborn mind enthralling,
We made a day of happy hours,
  Our happy days recalling.

[1] Sir Walter Scott.

Brisk Youth appeared, the Morn of Youth,
With freaks of graceful folly,—
Life's temperate Noon, her sober Eve,
Her Night not melancholy;
Past, present, future, all appeared
In harmony united,
Like guests that meet, and some from far,
By cordial love invited.

And if, as Yarrow, through the woods
And down the meadow ranging,
Did meet us with unaltered face,
Though we were changed and changing;
If, *then*, some natural shadows spread
Our inward prospect over,
The soul's deep valley was not slow
Its brightness to recover.

Eternal blessings on the Muse,
And her divine employment!
The blameless Muse, who trains her Sons
For hope and calm enjoyment;
Albeit sickness, lingering yet,
Has o'er their pillow brooded;
And Care waylays their steps—a Sprite
Not easily eluded.

For thee, O Scott! compelled to change
Green Eildon-hill and Cheviot
For warm Vesuvio's vine-clad slopes;[2]
And leave thy Tweed and Teviot
For mild Sorrento's breezy waves;
May classic Fancy, linking
With native Fancy her fresh aid,
Preserve thy heart from sinking!

Oh! while they minister to thee,
Each vying with the other,
May Health return to mellow Age,
With Strength, her venturous brother;
And Tiber, and each brook and rill
Renowned in song and story,
With unimagined beauty shine,
Nor lose one ray of glory!

For Thou, upon a hundred streams,
By tales of love and sorrow,
Of faithful love, undaunted truth,
Hast shed the power of Yarrow;
And streams unknown, hills yet unseen,
Wherever they invite Thee,
At parent Nature's grateful call,
With gladness must requite Thee.

A gracious welcome shall be thine,
Such looks of love and honor
As thy own Yarrow gave to me
When first I gazed upon her;
Beheld what I had feared to see,
Unwilling to surrender
Dreams treasured up from early days,
The holy and the tender.

And what, for this frail world, were all
That mortals do or suffer,
Did no responsive harp, no pen,
Memorial tribute offer?
Yea, what were mighty Nature's self?
Her features, could they win us,
Unhelped by the poetic voice
That hourly speaks within us?

Nor deem that localised Romance
Plays false with our affections;
Unsanctifies our tears—made sport
For fanciful dejections:
Ah, no! the visions of the past
Sustain the heart in feeling
Life as she is—our changeful Life,
With friends and kindred dealing.

Bear witness, Ye, whose thoughts that day
In Yarrow's groves were centred;
Who through the silent portal arch
Of mouldering Newark entered;
And climb the winding stair that once
Too timidly was mounted
By the 'last Minstrel,'[3] (not the last!)
Ere he his Tale recounted.

Flow on for ever, Yarrow Stream!
Fulfil thy pensive duty,
Well pleased that future Bards should chant
For simple hearts thy beauty;
To dream-light dear while yet unseen,
Dear to the common sunshine,
And dearer still, as now I feel,
To memory's shadowy moonshine!

(written 1831)

[2] Scott's ill health had compelled him to go to Italy.

[3] a reference to Scott's *The Lay of The Last Minstrel.*

The Trosachs[1]

As recorded in my sister's Journal, I had first seen the Trosachs in her and Coleridge's company. The sentiment that runs through this Sonnet was natural to the season in which I again saw this beautiful spot; but this and some other sonnets that follow were colored by the remembrance of my recent visit to Sir Walter Scott, and the melancholy errand on which he was going.—*Wordsworth.*

There's not a nook within this solemn Pass,
But were an apt confessional for One
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,
That Life is but a tale of morning grass
Withered at eve.—From scenes of art which chase
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes
Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass
Untouched, unbreathed upon:—Thrice happy quest,
If from a golden perch of aspen spray
(October's workmanship to rival May),
The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast
That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay,
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest!

(written 1831)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(1772-1834)

The career of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the most tragic in the annals of English poetry. In Oliver Elton's eloquent words, "the history of his life is largely one of designs unfulfilled—mere broken arcs—and of surmises thrown out rather than worked out." His genius was of the most splendid order, yet few critics would maintain that to form a collection of his great poetry it would be necessary to add more than two or three poems to the handful we print in these pages. Like Wordsworth, he long outlived his period of poetic fertility, though, unlike him, he wrote little verse during the later years. During that part of his life, however, his creative mind was as active as ever in its concern with criticism and philosophy, and if he produced no poetry of importance, he was the author of some significant prose.

He was born October 21, 1772, the thirteenth child of the rector of Ottery St. Mary's, in Devonshire. By his third year he was reading the Bible, and soon developed, like his father, into a bookworm. Of the many that he read in his childhood, no work made a profounder impression on him than *The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night* (see p. 1123). It opened to him that world of magic and mystery which was to be mirrored in most of his great poetry, and was partly responsible for his lifelong tendency to find the world of his imagination more real than the everyday world about him. The similarity in character between the boy and his father drew them close to each other, and the good vicar did little to discourage or to discipline his son in the bookish dream-world in which he was already living.

The death of his father in 1781, however, put an end to this happy existence as well as to his adventures in the Devonshire countryside that he had come to love dearly. Through the influence of one of his father's former pupils, he was sent, just before his tenth birthday, to Christ's Hospital in London. There he met his fellow student Charles Lamb, who remained, except for an interval occasioned by a misunderstanding, his close friend for the rest of his days. Graphic pictures of life at this charity school for the gifted poor appear in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (see p. 351) and in Lamb's *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago* (see p. 364).

Still without funds, he was admitted as a sizar to Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1791, the year in which Wordsworth left that university. The next year he received a gold

[1] a romantic valley in the Highlands, made famous by Scott in his *The Lady of the Lake.*

medal for his Greek ode on the slave trade, and in 1793 he won a scholarship. He was reading everything, and had fallen particularly under the spell of Bowles, Chatterton, and Macpherson (see p. 53). But his books could not cure the restlessness he felt because of the exciting happenings across the Channel. This was the year in which Louis XVI was beheaded, and in which, also, England and France engaged in war against each other. Moreover, his debts at Cambridge were mounting, and his reckless life was not improving his health. Already he had formed the habit of taking opium for every kind of physical illness to deaden pain, which he could never beat. For no apparent reason, he suddenly left Cambridge in November 1793 for London. Within a few days, in sheer desperation over his impecuniousness and his general dissatisfaction with himself, he had enlisted in His Majesty's Light Dragoons for a period of eight years under the incredible name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke. An avowed detester of war, a disciple of Godwin, and a dreamer who dreaded mounting a horse, Coleridge was thus already manifesting his talent for doing precisely the thing to make himself most miserable. Through the intercession of a brother, however, the young poet was released and allowed to return to Cambridge.

During the summer of 1794 he went on a visit to Oxford and became acquainted with the young Robert Southey, who was then on fire with the writings of Voltaire. Both lads were staunchly republican and were thoroughly disgusted with the conservatism of England when measured by French standards. Together they elaborated a plan for forming a new life to be lived Rousseauistically in America in a colony which they would form on the banks of the Susquehanna. "Pantisocracy," Coleridge named this new order of society in which all would be equal. With his mother as a first recruit, Southey began to look around for other followers. His sweetheart, Edith Fricker, was ready to follow him anywhere. Her sister, Mary, married to Southey's friend Robert Lovell, was enthusiastic too. In order to raise money for their experiment, Coleridge and Southey planned to lecture and print their poems. In the meantime, it would also be necessary that each be provided with a mate; Lovell was already married, Southey would soon be, but Coleridge was unattached. There were still three unengaged sisters of Edith and Mary Fricker; and since the family seemed to be involved with the destiny of Pantisocracy, Coleridge allowed himself to become betrothed to the eldest, Sara. He was far too busy with other matters to give much attention to this detail; the theory of their new society engrossed him. "In the book of pantisocracy," he said, "I hope to have comprised all that is good in Godwin." His boundless enthusiasm can be read in the absurd poem he wrote *To a Young Ass, Its Mother Chained to It near a Log* (1794).

Poor little Foal of an oppressed race!
I love the languid patience of thy face . . .
Do thy prophetic fears anticipate,
Meek Child of Misery! thy future fate?
The starving meal, and all the thousand aches
'Which patient Merit of the Unworthy takes'? . . .
It seems to say, 'And have I then one *friend?'*
Innocent foal! thou poor despis'd forlorn!
I hail thee Brother—*spite of the fool's scorn!*
And fain would take thee with me, in the Dell
Where high-soul'd Pantisocracy shall dwell!
Where Mirth shall tickle Plenty's ribless side,
And smiles from Beauty's Lip on sunbeams glide,
Where Toil shall wed young Health that charming Lass!
And use his sleek cows for a looking-glass—
Where Rats shall mess with Terriers hand-in-glove
And Mice with Pussy's Whiskers sport in Love. . .

Other plans failing to provide enough money, Southey and Coleridge collaborated on a play, *The Fall of Robespierre* (published 1794). Within the year both pantisocrats had

married their respective Miss Frickers. Before another year had passed, Coleridge was so overwhelmed with financial responsibilities that the Pantisocratic dream was shattered before the impact of hard necessity. Southey, following the gleam of financial security, abandoned their ideal altogether, by such venality shocking Coleridge into a complete loss of regard for him.

In 1796 Coleridge published his first volume of verse. Meanwhile, tentative schemes for grand literary projects were buzzing through his head; he managed to think of a new one before he could do anything to realize its predecessor. Nothing was easier for his fertile brain than to conceive splendid plans; nothing was more difficult for it than to acquire the patience to carry them out. He found relief from the hauntings of his literary conscience by editing a short-lived newspaper, *The Watchman*, by preaching occasionally as a Unitarian, and by his favorite method of escape—talk. At last in 1797, while he was established at Nether Stowey, he came to know the Wordsworths. William he worshiped at once as the greatest man he had ever met, and Wordsworth was not unwilling to accept the homage from another of such gifts. Dorothy Wordsworth, too, was soon dear to Coleridge. And when brother and sister removed to Alfoxden to be near their new friend, the three would take long walks daily, enriching one another by the exchange of personalities, impressions, and ideas. "Three persons and one soul," as one of them put it, they became. And the fruit of this unity was *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), in which appeared Coleridge's great poem, *The Ancient Mariner* (see p. 187).

Now he had found himself, and his incomparable imagination achieved expression within the space of a few months not only in *The Ancient Mariner*, but also in the priceless *Kubla Khan* (see p. 196) and the first part of the magical *Christabel* (see p. 198). For this complete realization Coleridge was undoubtedly deeply indebted to Wordsworth, from whom he was able to learn, for a while, habits of regular work, and who helped him, by his own example, to achieve simplicity and directness in his expression. On the other hand, Wordsworth's debt to him was no less great, for the contact with Coleridge's marvelous imagination sent sparks to his own brain, and inaugurated the period of his greatest composition. It was at this time that, while preaching at Shrewsbury, he met the young William Hazlitt, an occasion that the essayist well described in *My First Acquaintance with Poets*. In 1799, aided by an annuity from the Wedgwood family, Coleridge set out with William and Dorothy for Germany. There he encountered the last great influence in his life, German philosophy and literature. Returning later than the Wordsworths, he moved with his family to Keswick, not distant from Grasmere, where William and Dorothy were now living.

In 1800 he published a translation of parts of Schiller's play, *Wallenstein*, and spent much time in London lecturing and writing for the periodicals. Already his powers of poetic concentration were weakening. In 1803 he again accompanied his friends on their tour of Scotland, but soon parted from them because of the unfortunate effect they seemed to be having on one another. The great friendship was cooling. Next year found him going to Malta as a secretary to a diplomatic attaché. And now he had gradually become more and more deeply involved in his studies of German philosophy. Three years after his return to England, he began publication of *The Friend* (1809), a magazine devoted to politics and philosophy. By this time nothing was left of his intimacy with the Wordsworths, and little of his poetic creativeness.

He thereafter turned his attention to lecturing, talking, and the writing of prose, though it is unlikely that he ever was free from the torturing thoughts of his lost genius. In the scholarly work which he was now doing, however, he made important contributions to English literature. It was he who awoke England to the treasures of German philosophy and letters. Under the influence of his beloved Goethe (see p. 1141) and Lessing, he elaborated the literary philosophy of the Romantic Movement, marvelously exhibited in the *Biographia Literaria* (see p. 351) of 1817, and in his superlative criticisms of Shakespeare (later collected as *Essays and Lectures*).

Great literary critic and theorist though he was, Coleridge the philosopher would by many not be exchanged for Coleridge the poet of *The Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan, Dejection, Frost at Midnight,* and *Christabel.* Nowhere have all the virtues of romanticism been more magnificently given life than in these imaginative, deeply felt, and richly musical poems. Why was his period of poetic power so brief? The answers are many. For one, he never learned the discipline of patient labor, and was too dependent on having pen in hand at moments of inspiration. For another, his passion for reading afforded an easy pretense for not writing. Again, the opium habit, against which he fought an increasingly losing fight, crippled his will. German metaphysics, too, acted as a kind of drug that turned aside his original gifts into channels of intricate speculation. Moreover, the endless current of ideas surging through his mind made talking an inviting avenue of self-expression; his later days of retirement in Highgate were clouded with unceasing metaphysical talk. But perhaps more important than all these, as Frances Winwar has recently proved with much evidence, the poet in Coleridge was killed by Wordsworth. He had abased his genius before the latter, and allowed himself to depreciate and injure his own powers as a gift of love and reverence to the other. His own impetuous, unreserved affection fell on the strong wall of Wordsworth's character, and destroyed itself—and his poetic gifts. Wordsworth's inner hardness only co-operated to quench his friend's never too confident gifts; he accepted full love from Coleridge, was nourished by his adoration, and gave nothing but discouragement in exchange.

But the gentle-souled Coleridge, even when his own creative days were over, continued to inspire others. About him, in his older days, clustered young men to listen to his inspiring monologues, enkindled by the shining vistas of philosophy he opened to them. One of them, Thomas Carlyle (see p. 636), painted a bizarre portrait:

> Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. His express contributions to poetry, philosophy, or any specific province of human literature or enlightenment, had been small and sadly intermitted; but he had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. . . . No talk, in his century or in any other could be more surprising. . . . It was talk not flowing anywhither like a river, but spreading everywhere in inextricable currents and regurgitations like a lake or sea. . . . So that, most times, you felt logically lost; swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world.

The great poet was succeeded by the great teacher.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

IN SEVEN PARTS

This, one of the greatest achievements in English poetry, found little favor when it first appeared in *Lyrical Ballads.* "The strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper," was the opinion of one critic. Never was contemporary criticism more put to shame by the judgment of time than in this instance.

Originally the poem was to have been done in collaboration by Coleridge and Wordsworth, but the latter actually contributed only two unimpressive lines (see p. 150, *above,* for his account of the genesis of the work). Coleridge's imagination was so fired by the subject that he evolved the whole rapidly. Certain alterations which he made in the second edition removed the few crudities of the first version. His use of the ballad stanza, a result

of his admiration for Percy's *Reliques*, is to be noted. But most remarkable is his uncanny power to make real the supernatural, a power itself almost eerie. He "reconstructed the process of a dream," Frances Winwar says, "imparting to it through the keenness of his senses the daylight truth of an ordinary happening. . . . It was as if on the brightest of days he had taken control of the sun and the elements, of life and death, of waking and dream, and mingled them all in a phantasy from which, wonderfully, one did not awaken. . . . Yet of all the elements he employed there was not one that could have been above the understanding of the simplest farmer about Nether Stowey."

Prof. J. L. Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu* (1927) presents an engrossing study of the literary origins of the poem.

Argument

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell: and in what manner the Ancient Mariner came back to his own Country.

Part I

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin,
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand;
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, gray-beard loon!"
Eftsoons[1] his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child.
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man and constrained to hear his tale

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line

"The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

"Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—"
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding Guest heareth the bridal music, but the Mariner continueth his tale

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole

"And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

"With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

"And now there came both mist and snow,

[1] at length.

And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

The land of ice, and of fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen

"And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

"The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality

"At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

"It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating ice

"And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

"In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,[2]
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—"With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross!"

Part II

"The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

"And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck

"And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when the fog cleared off they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime

"Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze continues, the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line

"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed

"Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

"All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

"Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

"Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

"The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!

[2] rope running to the masthead.

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

A Spirit had followed them, one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels, concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more

"About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

"And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

"And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner, in sign wherof they hang the dead sea bird round his neck

"Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

Part III

"There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off

"At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.[3]

"A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer approach it seemeth him to be a ship, and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

[3] *ywis*, certainly

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

A flash of joy,

"See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal,—
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

And horror follows. For can it be a *ship* that comes onward without wind or tide?

"The western wave was all aflame,
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship

"And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

"Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun

"Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

The Spectre Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton-ship

"Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Like vessel, like crew!

Death and Life in Death have diced for the ship's crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner

"The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun

"The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the rising of the Moon

"We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after another,

"One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

His shipmates drop down dead

"Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner

"The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!"

PART IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him,

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

"I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance

"Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm

"The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth that they should live and so many lie dead

"I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

"I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

"I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men

"The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival

"An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

"The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

"Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm

"Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes;

They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

"Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty and their happiness

"O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:

He blesseth them in his heart

A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware;
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,

The spell begins to break

And I blessed them unaware.

"The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

Part V

"Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain

"The silly[4] buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

"My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

"I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the elements

"And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

"The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

"And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

"The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The bodies of the ship's crew are inspired, and the ship moves on,

"The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

"They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

"The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

"The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."

But not by the souls of the men, nor by demons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"
"Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

[4] empty.

"For when it dawned—they dropped
their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their
mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

"Around, around, flew each sweet
sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

"Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

"And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

"It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

"Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome Spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance

"Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The Spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

"The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her
length
With a short uneasy motion.

"Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

The Polar Spirit's fellow demons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong, and two of them relate, one to the other that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward

"How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard, and in my soul discerned,
Two voices in the air.

"'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

"The Spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

"The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'"

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

"'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?'

SECOND VOICE

"'Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

"'If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance, for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure

"'But why drives on that ship so fast
Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE

"'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.'

"'Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

"I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

The supernatural motion is retarded, the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew

"All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

"The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

"And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

The curse is finally expiated

"Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

"But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

"It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

"Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country

"Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

"We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

"The harbor-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

"The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

"And the bay was white with silent light
Till, rising from the same,
The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies, Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colors came.

"A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

"Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
And appear in their own forms of light A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

"This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

"This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

"But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer:
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

"The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

"I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

The Hermit of the wood,

"This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

"He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

"The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

Approacheth the ship with wonder

"'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

"'Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

"'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

"The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

The ship suddenly sinketh

"Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat

"Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

"Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

"I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

"I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

"And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrieve him, and the penance of life falls on him

"'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

"Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land,

"Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

"I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

"What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

"O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

"Oh sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

"To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach by his own example love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth

"Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
~~Both man and bird and beast.~~

~~"He prayeth best, who loveth best~~
All things both great and small;
For the dear God ~~who loveth~~ us,
He ~~made and loveth~~ all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

(1798)

Kubla Khan

This wonderful poem is a "fragment" only in the sense that Coleridge captured in it but a segment of his dream. As a poem it is complete, and not a word could be added to it. The sheer magic by which the sense of the lines and their music are interfused is beyond description.

"In the summer of the year 1797 the author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in Purchas's *Pilgrimage*: 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall.' The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awakening he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away, like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter.

'Then all the charm
Is broken—all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
And each misshapes the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth! who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes—

The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo, he stays,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror'

Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him Αὔριον ἄδιον ἔσω, but the tomorrow is yet to come."—*Coleridge*

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But O, that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced;
Amid whose swift, half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail.
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw.
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

(written 1797)

Frost at Midnight

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant[1] slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks, the idling Spirit
By its own mood interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school,[2] with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger!* and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang

[1] Hartley Coleridge, born 1796.
[2] Christ's Hospital, cf Lamb's description, p. 364

From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the *stranger's* face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in Himself.
Great universal Teacher! He shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall,
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

(1798)

Christabel

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION. 1816

'The first part of the following poem was written in the year 1797, at Stowey, in the county of Somerset. The second part after my return from Germany, in the year 1800, at Keswick, Cumberland. Since the latter date my poetic powers have been, till very lately, in a state of suspended animation But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than with the liveliness of a vision; I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year.

'It is probable, that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods, or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect But for this, I have only my own indolence to blame. . . .

'I have only to add, that the metre of the Christabel is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion.'—*Coleridge.*

Part I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,
Tu—whit!——Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch.
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:

'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothèd knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill, the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandalled were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

"Mary mother, save me now!"
(Said Christabel,) "And who art thou?"

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
"Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!"
Said Christabel, "How camest thou here?"
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

"My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced, I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she),
And help a wretched maid to flee."

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
And comforted fair Geraldine:
"Oh well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline:
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth, and friends withal,
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall."

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.

Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
"All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me."

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side:
"Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!"
"Alas, alas!" said Geraldine,
"I cannot speak for weariness."
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall.
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
"Oh softly tread," said Christabel,
"My father seldom sleepeth well."

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And jealous of the listening air,
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
As still as death, with stifled breath!
And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

"O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?"
Christabel answered—"Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the gray-haired friar tell,
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!"
"I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"

But soon with altered voice, said she—
"Off wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee."
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?

And why with hollow voice cries she.
"Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
"Alas!" said she, "this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wildered you!"
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, " 'tis over now!"

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright;
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countrée.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
"All they, who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell,
Even I in my degree, will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, "So let it be!"
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close:
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
Oh shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied,
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,
Ah well-a-day!
And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
"In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow:
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair:
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air."

The Conclusion to Part I

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
Amid the jagged shadows
Of mossy leafless boughs,
Kneeling in the moonlight,
To make her gentle vows;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, oh call it fair, not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is—
O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, tu—whoo! tu—whoo!
Tu—whoo! tu—whoo! from wood and fell!

And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep,
And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere?
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!

Part II

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
Knells us back to a world of death.
These words Sir Leoline first said,
When he rose and found his lady dead:
These words Sir Leoline will say,
Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began,
That still at dawn the sacristan,
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
Five and forty beads must tell
Between each stroke—a warning knell,
Which not a soul can choose but hear
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

Saith Bracy the bard, "So let it knell!
And let the drowsy sacristan
Still count as slowly as he can!
There is no lack of such, I ween,
As well fill up the space between."
In Langdale Pike and Witch's lair,
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,
With ropes of rock and bells of air
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother;
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borrowdale.

The air is still! through mist and cloud
That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from the bed;
Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,
And nothing doubting of her spell
Awakens the lady Christabel.
"Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well."

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
Oh rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet; and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air,
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
"Sure I have sinned!" said Christabel,
"Now heaven be praised if all be well!"
And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet,
With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown,
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same,
As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between:—
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face:
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.

Oh then, the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side,
He would proclaim it far and wide,
With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they who thus had wronged the dame,
Were base as spotted infamy!
"And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men!"
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!
For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

And now the tears were on his face,
And fondly in his arms he took
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
Prolonging it with joyous look.
Which when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,
The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
(Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)

Again she saw the bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
And nothing saw but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!
With new surprise,
"What ails then my beloved child?"
The Baron said—His daughter mild
Made answer, "All will yet be well!"
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,
Had deemed her sure a thing divine.
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
And with such lowly tones she prayed,
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.

"Nay!
Nay, by my soul!" said Leoline.
"Ho! Bracy, the bard, the charge be thine!
Go thou, with music sweet and loud,
And take two steeds with trappings proud,
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,
And clothe you both in solemn vest,
And over the mountains haste along,

Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,
Detain you on the valley road.
And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes
Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,
And reaches soon that castle good
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

"Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet
More loud than your horses' echoing feet!
And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!
Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—
Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me.
He bids thee come without delay
With all thy numerous array;
And take thy lovely daughter home:
And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array
White with their panting palfreys' foam:
And by mine honor! I will say,
That I repent me of the day
When I spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!
—For since that evil hour hath flown,
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine."

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing;
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious hail on all bestowing!—
"Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet might I gain a boon of thee,
This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me;
That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warned by a vision in my rest!
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
Sir Leoline! I saw the same
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wondered what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old tree.

"And in my dream methought I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck.
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower;
But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye!
And thence I vowed this self-same day,
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,
Half-listening heard him with a smile;
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
His eyes made up of wonder and love;
And said in courtly accents fine,
"Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove
With arms more strong than harp or song,
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!"
He kissed her forehead as he spake,
And Geraldine, in maiden wise,
Casting down her large bright eyes,
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline;
Softly gathering up her train,
That o'er her right arm fell again;
And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast,
And looked askance at Christabel—
Jesu Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance!—
One moment—and the sight was fled!
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;

And Geraldine again turned round,
And like a thing that sought relief,
Full of wonder and full of grief,
She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind;
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
Still picturing that look askance
With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view—
As far as such a look could be
In eyes so innocent and blue!

And when the trance was o'er, the maid
Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
Then falling at the Baron's feet,
"By my mother's soul do I entreat
That thou this woman send away!"
She said: and more she could not say:
For what she knew she could not tell,
O'ermastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
Sir Leoline? Thy only child
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
So fair, so innocent, so mild;
The same, for whom thy lady died!
O, by the pangs of her dear mother
Think thou no evil of thy child!
For her, and thee, and for no other,
She prayed the moment ere she died:
Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!
That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
Sir Leoline!
And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
Her child and thine?

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swelled his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild,
Dishonored thus in his old age;
Dishonored by his only child,
And all his hospitality
To the insulted daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy
Brought thus to a disgraceful end—
He rolled his eye with stern regard
Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
And said in tones abrupt, austere—
"Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
I bade thee hence!" The bard obeyed;
And turning from his own sweet maid,
The aged knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine!

The Conclusion to Part II

A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
That always finds, and never seeks,
Makes such a vision to the sight,
As fills a father's eyes with light;
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
Upon his heart, that he at last
Must needs express his love's excess
With words of unmeant bitterness.
Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm.
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what, if in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks as it's most used to do.

(written 1797-1800)

France: An Ode

This autobiographical ode was first published in the *Morning Post* of April 16, 1798 under the title *The Recantation*. Coleridge, whose early sympathies for the French Revolution had been cooling for some time, was outraged by the Napoleonic invasion of Switzerland in February. "It is very satisfactory," said the editors, "to find so zealous an advocate for Freedom as Mr. Coleridge concur with us in condemning the conduct of France." Coleridge wrote to his brother George in the same month: ". . . I have snapped my squeaking baby-trumpet of sedition, and the fragments lie scattered in the lumber-room of penitence." For Wordsworth's later reaction to the same historical event, see *Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland,* page 177.

Ye Clouds! that far above me float and pause,
Whose pathless march no mortal may control!
Ye Ocean-Waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,
Yield homage only to eternal laws!
Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds singing,
Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
Save when your own imperious branches swinging,
Have made a solemn music of the wind!
Where, like a man beloved of God,
Through glooms, which never woodman trod,
How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!
O ye loud Waves! and O ye Forests high!
And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!
Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky!
Yea, every thing that is and will be free!
Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest Liberty.

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,
And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,
Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!
With what a joy my lofty gratulation
Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band:
And when to whelm the disenchanted nation,
Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
The Monarchs marched in evil day,
And Britain joined the dire array;[1]
Though dear her shores and circling ocean,
Though many friendships, many youthful loves
Had swoln the patriot emotion
And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves;
Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat
To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,
And shame too long delayed and vain retreat!
For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim
I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame;
But blessed the paeans of delivered France,
And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

"And what," I said, "though Blasphemy's loud scream[2]
With that sweet music of deliverance strove!
Though all the fierce and drunken passions wove
A dance more wild than e'er was maniac's dream!
Ye storms, that round the dawning East assembled,
The Sun was rising, though ye hid his light!"
And when, to soothe my soul, that hoped and trembled,
The dissonance ceased, and all seemed calm and bright;
When France her front deep-scarred and gory
Concealed with clustering wreaths of glory;
When, insupportably advancing,
Her arm made mockery of the warrior's ramp;[3]
While timid looks of fury glancing,
Domestic treason, crushed beneath her fatal stamp,
Writhed like a wounded dragon in his gore;
Then I reproached my fears that would not flee;
"And soon," I said, "shall Wisdom teach her lore
In the low huts of them that toil and groan!
And, conquering by her happiness alone,
Shall France compel the nations to be free,
Till Love and Joy look round, and call the Earth their own."

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,
From bleak Helvetia's[4] icy caverns sent—
I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams!
Heroes, that for your peaceful country perished,

[1] France declared war on England in February, 1793. She was already at war with Prussia and Austria.
[2] The Goddess of Reason was worshipped in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris, in November 1793.
[3] advance.
[4] Switzerland.

And ye that, fleeing, spot your mountain-snows
With bleeding wounds; forgive me, that I cherished
One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes!
To scatter rage, and traitorous guilt,
Where Peace her jealous home had built;
A patriot-race to disinherit
Of all that made their stormy wilds so dear;
And with inexpiable spirit
To taint the bloodless freedom of the mountaineer—
O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
And patriot only in pernicious toils!
Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?
To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,
Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
They burst their manacles and wear the name
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!
O Liberty! with profitless endeavor
Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour;
But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor ever
Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.
Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee,
(Nor prayer, nor boastful names delays thee)
Alike from Priestcraft's harpy minions,
And factious Blasphemy's obscener slaves,
Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,
The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the waves!
And there I felt thee!—on that sea-cliff's verge,
Whose pines, scarce traveled by the breeze above,
Had made one murmur with the distant surge!
Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,
And shot my being through earth, sea, and air,
Possessing all things with intensest love,
O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there.

(1798)

Dejection: An Ode

WRITTEN APRIL 4, 1802

Though intended by Coleridge to celebrate Wordsworth's marriage, this ode is "no prothalamion, but an epitaph, the last word on his own death as a poet." When it appeared in print, the poet withheld the references to Wordsworth by substituting Otway's name in the seventh stanza and the phrase "Dear Lady!" in the eighth.

> Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
> With the old Moon in her arms;
> And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
> We shall have a deadly storm.
> *Ballad of* SIR PATRICK SPENCE

1

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mold yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Æolian lute
Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

2

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle wooed,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

3

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavor,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

4

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

5

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which, wedding Nature to us, gives in dower
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colors a suffusion from that light.

6

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For Hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

7

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed.
What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lure sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devil's yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's[1] self had framed the tender lay,
'Tis of a little child[2]
Upon a lonesome wild,

[1] Thomas Otway (1652-1685), author of *Venice Preserved*.
[2] Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray*

Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

8

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

Youth and Age

Verse, a breeze amid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—
Both were mine! Life went a-maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
When I was young!
When I was young?—Ah, woeful When!
Ah! for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,
How lightly *then* it flashed along—
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide!
Nought cared this body for wind or weather
When Youth and I lived in 't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
Friendship is a sheltering tree;
O! the joys, that came down shower-like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? Ah, woeful Ere,
Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!
O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known, that Thou and I were one,
I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be that Thou art gone!
Thy vesper-bell hath not yet tolled:—
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on,
To *make believe*, that thou art gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:
But Spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are house-mates still.

Dew-drops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,
When we are old:
That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismissed;
Yet hath outstayed his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile.

(written 1823-32)

Work without Hope

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—
And Winter slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow,
Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may.
For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll;
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And Hope without an object cannot live.

(written 1825)

Sir Walter Scott

(1771-1832)

Scott enjoyed great esteem as a teller of tales in verse until he decided to yield place to Byron as his superior in that art. His poetry now is largely neglected. But since no one any longer reads those tales of Byron to which he gracefully yielded the palm, we need not be surprised that Scott's verse is unread. What is a matter for greater wonder is that his novels, once thought beyond compare, are also gradually losing their public, and are being slowly relegated to the realm of "juvenile fiction."

This loss of prestige is as explicable as his success, and stems from its very cause. Of all aspects of romanticism it was the one most easily realized that he expressed: the love of the glamorous past. With the passing of time, as the true values of the Romantic Movement came to be perceived in just perspective, it was inevitable that what had seemed radiant in Scott's work should appear rather like superficial glitter when compared with the deeper romanticism of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, or with the profounder contributions of novelists like Dickens, Thackeray, and Meredith. It would be, none the less, a pity if, because the nineteenth century had many poets greater than he, Scott's excellent verse should be forgotten. For the volume of his poetry contains much that is stimulating in its manly, free, and vigorous lines.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh on August 15, 1771, the son of an attorney of old Scottish lineage. Destined to follow in his father's profession, he was admitted to the bar in 1792 and later held several legal offices. But law was never his prime interest. Almost from the cradle his love of romance was nurtured, and his "lullabies were Jacobite songs." At twelve he began a manuscript collection of old ballads. He became familiar at school with Spenser and Ossian, committing to memory "whole duans of the one and cantos of the other." Spenser, in particular, enthralled him, and he professed a willingness to read him "forever." "I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense, and God only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such company." As a young man, despite a lameness contracted through a childhood disease, he made many expeditions in the Cheviots and Highlands of Scotland. These rambles brought him close to Scotland's romantic past, and his own grandfather was able to make more real for him the gallant struggles of the preceding century to restore the house of Stuart to the English throne.

In 1797 Scott married a daughter of a French émigré. In 1804 he moved from his cottage at Lasswade, near Edinburgh, to Ashestiel, in the county of Selkirkshire, where he had been made sheriff. The success of his poetry enabled him to purchase the estate of Abbotsford, where he built a quasi-medieval castle and surrounded himself with the appurtenances of a feudal baron. It is with Abbotsford that Scott's name is most associated, for it was here that he attempted to arrange his life according to the feudal felicities he loved. As Henry A. Beers well observes: "The key to Scott's romanticism is his intense local feeling. . . . Scott had struck his roots deep into his native soil. His absorption in the past and reverence for everything that was old, his conservative prejudices and aristocratic ambitions, all had their source in this feeling." He was a Tory in politics not because, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, he was a disillusioned radical, but because of his love of Scotland's heroic and imaginative past. Fundamentally a kind, modest man, he was proud of his heritage, his line, and his country.

He served a literary apprenticeship by making translations of German ballads and Goethe's romantic play, *Götz von Berlichingen*. His collection of ballads was published

in three volumes under the title of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03). He was thirty-four, however, before he appeared before the public as an original poet with *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), which achieved instant popularity, and which shows clearly an indebtedness to Coleridge's *Christabel*. *Marmion* (1808) and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) followed, and established him as the leading narrative poet of his time. The swing of these poems was strongly marked, the diction fresh, the descriptions were bright and the characterizations picturesque. To a public jaded with Pope's imitators but not yet ready to appreciate the splendors of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Scott's poetry seemed invigorating and brilliant. Its success was responsible for the victory of the Romantic Movement over the layman. The public was now ready for the tales of a greater poet, Byron, who between 1812 and 1814 poured out a series of stories that took it by storm. Scott saw at once that he was destined to be superseded, and wisely withdrew from the field.

In the meantime Scott had become a secret partner in the publishing firm of the Brothers Ballantyne. His elaborate mode of life at Abbotsford made his additional income from this financial venture highly necessary. He turned from poetry, therefore, and finished a novel he had begun some years earlier, issuing it anonymously under the title of *Waverley* (1814). This, the first of a long series of his novels which were read all over the world, opened for him a career in which his fame became even wider. Their author was soon recognized and his anonymity abandoned. Despite his international success, the Ballantynes failed, and Scott, who need have shouldered none of the responsibility, undertook the colossal burden of paying off with his future works the entire debt of £117,000. The rest of his life is a story of endless labor to make good this obligation. In addition to writing his many novels, he wrote a history of Scotland and a nine-volume life of Napoleon, and edited the works of Dryden and Swift. Even in failing health and the decline of his mental powers, he dictated his works from a bed of pain in the hope of diminishing the debt. There can be no doubt that this constant pressure broke his health and brought on his death. In the end he had discharged half of the sum, and the sale of his copyrights liquidated the rest. This devotion to a matter of honor was typical of the man, and has caused his memory to be revered by his compatriots.

The novels written immediately after *Waverley* dealt with materials drawn from Scottish life of the eighteenth century: *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *The Antiquary* (1816). *Old Mortality* (1816) is placed in the reign of Charles II; *The Abbot* (1820) and *The Monastery* (1820) treat of Mary Queen of Scots. His later historical novels, with the exception of *Redgauntlet* (1824), go out of Scotland for their background: *Ivanhoe* (1820) is the story of Richard I and his return to England; *Kenilworth* (1821) is concerned with Queen Elizabeth's court; *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822) is laid in the time of James I; *Quentin Durward* (1823) takes place in the France of Louis XI; and *The Talisman* (1825) tells of the struggle between Richard I and Saladin. Besides these, Scott's novels include a group in which the chief interest attaches to portraiture of local Scottish types of character: *Rob Roy* (1818), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), and *A Legend of Montrose* (1819). Even this list, however, is far from a complete indication of the number of novels which he wrote in rapid succession.

The speed with which he composed naturally resulted in considerable unevenness in these books. Passages of eloquence are varied with dull or falsely elegant pages. Scott, moreover, was particularly deficient in a quality most essential to a great novelist: the power to portray human beings. In all these many novels there are few real people among the crowd of beautiful ladies and aristocratic men; such success as he had with his characters is to be found among the few humble Scottish rustics whom he drew. Yet in his own day—so necessary is the objectivity of distance!—he was often compared, most ineptly, with Shakespeare! The illusion of grandeur in his work was probably the result of his crowded canvases and of the pomp of history which forms the background to most of his

novels. But he painted with a bold brush, careless of subtlety or any inner magnificence. In the field of the historical novel many of Scott's successors have done so much better that his works seem more like a colorful pageant than a representation of real life. It should be remembered, however, that he showed the way to Dickens, Thackeray, Kingsley, George Eliot, Bulwer-Lytton, and Charles Reade. And it is likely that his novels will continue to stir the imagination of adolescent minds, just as they stirred the imagination of adults when Romanticism was young.

It may be, after all, that final judgment will send readers back to Scott's spirited poetry. Even in the novels some of the happiest pages are those interspersed with his characteristically fine lyrics.

Rosabelle

From *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*

This ballad is sung by Harold, minstrel of the house of St. Clair, after the marriage of the hero, Lord Cranstoun, and the heroine, Margaret of Buccleuch.

O listen, listen, ladies gay!
No haughty feat of arms I tell;
Soft is the note, and sad the lay,
That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.

"Moor, moor the barge, ye gallant crew!
And, gentle ladye, deign to stay!
Rest thee in Castle Ravensheuch,
Nor tempt the stormy firth to-day.

"The blackening wave is edged with white;
To inch[1] and rock the sea-mews fly;
The fishers have heard the Water-Sprite,
Whose screams forebode that wreck is nigh.

"Last night the gifted Seer did view
A wet shroud swathed round ladye gay;
Then stay thee, Fair, in Ravensheuch:
Why cross the gloomy firth to-day?"—

" 'Tis not because Lord Lindesay's heir
To-night at Roslin[2] leads the ball,
But that my ladye-mother there
Sits lonely in her castle-hall.

" 'Tis not because the ring they ride,
And Lindesay at the ring rides well,
But that my sire the wine will chide,
If 'tis not fill'd by Rosabelle.—"

O'er Roslin all that dreary night,
A wondrous blaze was seen to gleam;
'Twas broader than the watch-fire's light,
And redder than the bright moonbeam.

It glared on Roslin's castled rock,
It ruddied all the copse-wood glen;
'Twas seen from Dryden's groves of oak,
And seen from cavern'd Hawthornden.

Seem'd all on fire that chapel proud,
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffin'd lie,
Each Baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply.

Seem'd all on fire within, around,
Deep sacristy and altar's pale;
Shone every pillar foliage-bound,
And glimmer'd all the dead men's mail.

Blazed battlement and pinnet high,
Blazed every rose-carved buttress fair—
So still they blaze, when fate is nigh
The lordly line of high St. Clair.

There are twenty of Roslin's barons bold
Lie buried within that proud chapelle;
Each one the holy vault doth hold—
But the sea holds lovely Rosabelle!

And each St. Clair was buried there,
With candle, with book, and with knell;
But the sea-caves rung, and the wild winds sung,
The dirge of lovely Rosabelle.

(1805)

[1] island.
[2] a village about seven miles south of Edinburgh, where the castle and chapel of Roslin are located

Lochinvar

From *Marmion*

This famous ballad is from *Marmion*, Canto V, lines 313-60. It is sung by Lady Heron, who has come to court to plead with King James of Scotland to release her imprisoned husband.

Oh! young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And save his good broadsword he weapons had none.
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stayed not for brake and he stopped not for stone,
He swam the Eske River where ford there was none,
But ere he alighted at Netherby gate
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love and a dastard in war
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby Hall,
Among bridesmen, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all:
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword—
For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word—
"Oh! come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?"

"I long wooed your daughter, my suit you denied;
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
And now am I come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar."

The bride kissed the goblet; the knight took it up,
He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand ere her mother could bar—
"Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a gallliard[1] did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride-maidens whispered, "'Twere better by far
To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

One touch to her hand and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
"She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;[2]
They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar.

There was mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran:
There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

(1808)

Hunting Song

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain dawns the day;
All the jolly chase is here
With hawk, and horse, and hunting-spear;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain gray,
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,

[1] a quick dance
[2] high rock.

Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chant our lay,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
To the green-wood haste away;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot, and tall of size;
We can show the marks he made,
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;
You shall see him brought to bay,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Louder, louder chant the lay,
Waken, lords and ladies gay!
Tell them youth, and mirth, and glee,
Run a course as well as we;
Time, stern huntsman! who can baulk,
Stanch as hound, and fleet as hawk;
Think of this, and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay.

(1808)

Harp of the North

From *The Lady of the Lake*

In this prologue to *The Lady of the Lake* Scott calls on the ancient Scottish minstrels, symbolized by their traditional musical instrument, to assist him in his task.

Harp of the North! that moldering long hast hung
On the witch-elm that shades Saint Fillan's spring,
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers[1] flung,
Till envious ivy did around thee cling,
Muffling with verdant ringlet every string—
O minstrel Harp, still must thine accents sleep?
'Mid rustling leaves and fountains murmuring,
Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence keep,
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to weep?

Not thus, in ancient days of Caledon,[2]
Was thy voice mute amid the festal crowd,
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,
Aroused the fearful, or subdued the proud.
At each according pause was heard aloud
Thine ardent symphony sublime and high!
Fair dames and crested chiefs attention bowed;
For still the burden of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's matchless eye.

O wake once more! how rude soe'er the hand
That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;
O wake once more! though scarce my skill command
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay;
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,
And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,
Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,
The wizard note has not been touched in vain.
Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!

Soldier, Rest! Thy Warfare O'er

From *The Lady of the Lake*

This song is sung by the heroine, Ellen, in welcoming the king, disguised as James Fitz-James, to the highland lair of Roderick Dhu.

Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking:
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more:
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armor's clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch[1] summon here
Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.
Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
At the daybreak from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here;
Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans, or squadrons stamping.

Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
While our slumbrous spells assail ye,

[1] poems.
[2] ancient name for Scotland.

[1] bagpipe.

Dream not, with the rising sun,
Bugles here shall sound reveille.
Sleep! the deer is in his den;
Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying;
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen
How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye,
Here no bugles sound reveille.

Boat Song

From *The Lady of the Lake*

This rousing song (*Lady of the Lake,* Canto II, lines 399-438) is sung by the boatmen of Roderick Dhu, suitor of the heroine, as they bring their chieftain ashore on Lake Katrine.

Hail to the Chief who in triumph advances!
Honored and blessed be the ever-green Pine!
Long may the tree, in his banner that glances,
Flourish, the shelter and grace of our line!
Heaven send it happy dew,
Earth lend it sap anew,
Gayly to bourgeon and broadly to grow,
While every Highland glen
Sends our shout back again,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine[1] dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Ours is no sapling, chance-sown by the fountain,
Blooming at Beltane,[2] in winter to fade;
When the whirlwind has stripped every leaf on the mountain,
The more shall Clan-Alpine exult in her shade.
Moored in the rifted rock,
Proof to the tempest's shock,
Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow;
Menteith and Breadalbane, then
Echo his praise again,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Proudly our pibroch has thrilled in Glen Fruin,
And Bannochar's groans to our slogan replied;
Glen-Luss and Ross-dhu, they are smoking in ruin,
And the best of Loch Lomond lie dead on her side.
Widow and Saxon maid
Long shall lament our raid,

[1] the name of Roderick's clan.
[2] May-day.

Think of Clan-Alpine with fear and with woe;
Lennox and Leven-glen
Shake when they hear again,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Row, vassals, row, for the pride of the Highlands!
Stretch to your oars for the ever-green Pine!
O that the rosebud that graces yon islands
Were wreathed in a garland around him to twine!
O that some seedling gem,
Worthy such noble stem,
Honored and blessed in their shadow might grow!
Loud should Clan-Alpine then
Ring from her deepmost glen,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Coronach[1]

This funeral lament (Canto III, lines 370-93) is sung by a group of village women over the body of Duncan, one of Roderick's fellow warriors.

He is gone on the mountain,
He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain,
When our need was the sorest.
The font, reappearing
From the raindrops shall borrow,
But to us comes no cheering,
To Duncan no morrow!

The hand of the reaper
Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
Wails manhood in glory.
The autumn winds rushing
Waft the leaves that are searest,
But our flower was in flushing,
When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the correi,[2]
Sage counsel in cumber,[3]
Red hand in the foray,
How sound is thy slumber!
Like the dew on the mountain,
Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain,
Thou art gone, and forever!

(1810)

[1] a Highland lament.
[2] hollow.
[3] trouble.

Edmund's Song

From *Rokeby*

This song is sung at a revel by a youth, Edmund of Winston, who has just dreamt of incidents in his childhood.

O, Brignall banks are wild and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there,
Would grace a summer queen.
And as I rode by Dalton-hall,
Beneath the turrets high,
A Maiden on the castle wall
Was singing merrily,—

Chorus

"O, Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green;
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
Than reign our English queen."—

"If, maiden, thou wouldst wend with me,
To leave both tower and town,
Thou first must guess what life lead we,
That dwell by dale and down?
And if thou canst that riddle read,
As read full well you may,
Then to the greenwood shalt thou speed,
As blithe as Queen of May."—

Chorus

Yet sung she, "Brignall banks are fair,
And Greta woods are green;
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
Than reign our English queen.

"I read[1] you, by your bugle-horn,
And by your palfrey good,
I read you for a Ranger sworn,
To keep the king's greenwood."—
"A Ranger, lady, winds his horn,
And 'tis at peep of light;
His blast is heard at merry morn,
And mine at dead of night."—

Chorus

Yet sung she, "Brignall banks are fair,
And Greta woods are gay;
I would I were with Edmund there,
To reign his Queen of May!

With burnish'd brand and musketoon,[2]
So gallantly you come,
I read you for a bold dragoon,
That lists the tuck of drum."—
"I list no more the tuck of drum,
No more the trumpet hear;
But when the beetle sounds his hum,
My comrades take the spear.

Chorus

"And, O! though Brignall banks be fair,
And Greta woods be gay,
Yet mickle must the maiden dare,
Would reign my Queen of May!

"Maiden! a nameless life I lead,
A nameless death I'll die;
The fiend, whose lantern lights the mead,
Were better mate than I!
And when I'm with my comrades met,
Beneath the greenwood bough,
What once we were we all forget,
Nor think what we are now.

Chorus

"Yet Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there
Would grace a summer queen."—

(1813)

[1] guess

Pibroch of Donald Dhu

According to Scott, this is a "very ancient" battle song of the Clan Macdonald, supposed to refer to an expedition of Donald Balloch in 1431.

Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,[1]
Pibroch of Donuil,
Wake thy wild voice anew,
Summon Clan Conuil.
Come away, come away,
Hark to the summons!
Come in your war array,
Gentles and commons.

Come from deep glen, and
From mountain so rocky,
The war-pipe and pennon
Are at Inverlochy.

[2] short musket

[1] Donald the Black

Come every hill-plaid and
True heart that wears one,
Come every steel blade and
Strong hand that bears one.

Leave untended the herd,
The flock without shelter;
Leave the corpse uninterred,
The bride at the altar;
Leave the deer, leave the steer,
Leave nets and barges:
Come with your fighting gear,
Broadswords and targes.

Come as the winds come, when
Forests are rended;
Come as the waves come, when
Navies are stranded:
Faster come, faster come,
Faster and faster,
Chief, vassal, page and groom,
Tenant and master.

Fast they come, fast they come;
See how they gather!
Wide waves the eagle plume,
Blended with heather.
Cast your plaids, draw your blades,
Forward each man set!
Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,
Knell for the onset!

(1816)

Harlaw

From *The Antiquary*

Now haud your tongue, baith wife and carle,[1]
And listen, great and sma',
And I will sing of Glenallan's Earl
That fought on the red Harlaw.

"The cronach's[2] cried on Bennachie,
And doun the Don and a',
And hieland and lawland may mournfu' be
For the sair field of Harlaw.—

"They saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
They hae bridled a hundred black,
With a chafron[3] of steel on each horse's head,
And a good knight upon his back."—

"They hadna ridden a mile, a mile,
A mile, but rarely ten,
When Donald came branking[4] down the brae
Wi' twenty thousand men.

"Their tartans they were waving wide,
Their glaives[5] were glancing clear,
Their pibrochs[6] rung frae side to side
Would deafen ye to hear.

"The great Earl in his stirrups stood
That Highland host to see:
Now here a knight that's stout and good
May prove a jeopardie:

"'What wouldst thou do, my squire so gay,
That rides beside my reyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl the day,
And I were Roland Cheyne?

"'To turn the rein were sin and shame,
To fight were wondrous peril,
What would ye do now, Roland Cheyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl?'

"'Were I Glenallan's Earl this tide,
And ye were Roland Cheyne,
The spur should be in my horse's side,
And the bridle upon his mane.

"'If they hae twenty thousand blades,
And we twice ten times ten,
Yet they hae but their tartan plaids,
And we are mail-clad men.

"'My horse shall ride through ranks sae rude,
As through the moorland fern,
Then ne'er let the gentle Norman blude
Grow cauld for Highland kerne.'"[7]

(1816)

Jock of Hazeldean

"Why weep ye by the tide, ladie?
Why weep ye by the tide?
I'll wed ye to my youngest son,
And ye sall be his bride;
And ye sall be his bride, ladie,
Sae comely to be seen"—
But aye she loot[1] the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

[1] man. [2] funeral dirge [3] chevron. [4] prancing. [5] swords. [6] bagpipes. [7] foot soldier.
[1] let.

"Now let this wilfu' grief be done,
And dry that cheek so pale;
Young Frank is chief of Errington,
And lord of Langley-dale;
His step is first in peaceful ha',
His sword in battle keen"—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

"A chain of gold ye sall not lack,
Nor braid to bind your hair;
Nor mettled hound, nor managed hawk,
Nor palfrey fresh and fair;
And you, the foremost o' them a',
Shall ride our forest queen."—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

The kirk[2] was decked at morning-tide,
The tapers glimmered fair;
The priest and bridegroom wait the bride,
And dame and knight are there.
They sought her baith by bower and ha';
The lady was not seen!
She's o'er the Border, and awa'
Wi' Jock of Hazeldean.

(1816)

Proud Maisie

From *The Heart of Midlothian*

This song is sung by mad Madge Wildfire on her deathbed.

Proud Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

"Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?"—
"When six braw[1] gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye."

"Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie, say truly?"—
"The gray-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.

"The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady.
The owl from the steeple sing,
'Welcome, proud lady.'"

(1818)

George Gordon, Lord Byron

(1788-1824)

Even among the romantics, who generally make literary capital of their own experiences and personalities, the biography of no poet is more intimately interwoven with his work than is Byron's. The interest attaching to his life has rarely, if ever, been dissociated from that pertaining to his writings. Already in his own day, Byron's life and writings stood in unity as the very incarnation of the Romantic Revolt. He was the hero of Goethe's *Werther* (see p. 1149) and Schiller's *The Robbers* (see p. 1153); he was the Rousseauistic worshiper of nature and lover of liberty—all combined in one. Although few Englishmen would now deny a higher place to Shelley and Keats, his reputation was universal while theirs was still unmade, and for half a century he continued to overshadow them. Today many Europeans think of him as the superior not only of these poets but of Wordsworth and Coleridge as well. Indeed, it may yet be some time before German, French, Russian, and Italian readers come to understand him in correct perspective; he has been too great a source of inspiration to their own literatures for them to see him quite clearly. Moreover, greater justice has been done Byron in translation than Shelley or Keats, for his poetic quintessence, being thinner, is more translatable. Finally, the difficulty of divorcing his brilliant career from what he wrote has impeded judgment on his actual literary accomplishment.

[1] fine.

[2] church.

His heritage was not one to presage a tranquil life. He described his father's family as "a line of cut-throat ancestors." His grand-uncle, "the wicked Lord Byron" of Newstead, was a man of evil repute who had killed his neighbor in a trivial quarrel. The poet's father, nicknamed "Mad Jack Byron," was an adventurer who had eloped with the Marchioness of Carmarthen, wife of the Lord Chamberlain, had quickly spent her fortune, and had lost her shortly after she gave birth to a daughter, Augusta. Penniless, he returned to Scotland to woo the heiress of Gight, whom he married when Augusta was fifteen months old. His second wife bore him a son, George, on January 22, 1788, in London. "Mad Jack Byron" ran through a second fortune and died, three years after the birth of his son, in France, whither he had fled to escape his creditors.

Byron was thus left to the care of his mother, a woman but ill fitted for the task. The lameness with which he had been born was in itself likely to distort the character of one so fiercely proud as he. But his mother's incapacity only deepened his sensitiveness concerning his infirmity. On some days she would fondle him with lavish demonstrations of affection; on others, when her ungovernable fits of temper robbed her of reason, she would hurl things at him, call him a "lame brat," and revile his father's family. The boy, in turn, would mock her foolish speech and clumsy gait, and laugh at her inability to aim her missiles correctly. Ugly as these scenes must have been, they were hardly less detestable to him than her moods of sentimental effusion. He grew up contemptuous of her, and by the time he was sent to Harrow (1801) he was well enough furnished with a sense of personal injury to be prepared to take his vengeance on the world. Three years earlier, when he was about ten years old, he had inherited the title through the death of his grand-uncle.

At Harrow, among his aristocratic schoolfellows, he worked furiously at all kinds of physical exercises, especially boxing and cricket, to assert his equality with others despite his lameness. But he was also an omnivorous reader. In 1805 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became notorious for his reckless, extravagant mode of life, his lessons in boxing taken from a professional boxer, and his sharp wit. With the aid of his good friend Hobhouse, he issued his first volume, *Fugitive Pieces* (1806). In 1807 it was revised and republished under the title *Hours of Idleness.*

The poems contained in it were highly imitative of the pre-romantic poets, and deserved little attention. But the preface which Byron wrote for it, intended to assuage harsh judgment, was pretty intolerable. "These productions," he said, "are the fruit of the lighter hours of a young man who has lately completed his nineteenth year. . . . To a few of my own age the contents may afford amusement; I trust they will, at least, be found harmless. It is highly improbable, from my situation [i.e. his being Lord Byron] and pursuits hereafter, that I should ever obtrude myself a second time upon the public. . . . The opinion of Dr. Johnson on the poems of a noble relative of mine, 'That when a man of rank appeared in the character of an author, he deserved to have his merit handsomely allowed,' can have little weight with verbal, and still less with periodical censors." Any lover of literature would have been vexed to find a nobleman thus condescending to poetry. But it is worthy of remark that, although Byron never presumed to take advantage of others because of his rank, it was one of the favorite poses of his life to insist that he was a poet only because his physical disability prevented his taking a more active part in human affairs.

However rhetorically meant, Byron's quotation of Johnson's stricture certainly had little weight with periodical censors. The critic of the *Edinburgh Review* counseled him "that he do forthwith abandon poetry"; and, after dissecting some of the verses, concluded: "But whatever judgment may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content; for they are the last we shall ever have from him. He is, at best, he says, but an intruder into the groves of Parnassus; he never lived in a garret, like thorough-bred poets. . . . What right have we poor devils to be nice? We are well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord's station, who does not live in a garret, but 'has the sway' of Newstead Abbey. Again we say, let us be thankful;

and with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver, nor look the gift horse in the mouth." Enraged, Byron answered with a cutting satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). It is not without point that Pope was one of his favorite poets, for Byron possessed an incomparable gift of malicious wit and adroit repartee. Perfect as his talents were to prove for the era in which he lived, it is also true that had he been an Augustan, Addison and Pope might have had to look to their laurels. The Romantic Movement put little premium upon wit, but in this satire and in *Don Juan* Byron was able to exercise a side of his genius more usually to find expression in his conversation and correspondence. In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* he seized the occasion to thrust out not only at his critic but also at all poets and writers, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, against whom he had harbored objections. Thereafter the reviewers, with excellent reason, were afraid of his scorn and so preferred to look on his work with favor.

In 1808, Byron took his M.A. and assumed his seat in the House of Lords. For a number of years he had spent much time on his ancestral estate at Newstead, in whose ruined Gothic building he had indulged in hours of morbid cogitation. Jilted in a love affair, he decided that all women were fickle. He sought relief, too, in building up for himself the legend of the bad blood he had inherited. At twenty-one he felt already old, like Werther, and decided that he would have to escape from the gloom of his heritage. "I am like Adam," he said, "the first convict sentenced to transportation, but I have no Eve, and have eaten no apple, but what was a sour crab;—and thus ends my first chapter." With Hobhouse, he set forth on his travels in the summer of 1809. His itinerary proved him the romantic. Shunning the well-known resorts of the Continent, he traveled through Portugal, Spain, the Mediterranean, Constantinople, Albania, Asia Minor, the Troad, and Greece. He thus visited peoples largely unknown to Englishmen, and had plenty of exciting experiences. Two years later he returned, his body hardened, his mind refreshed with all the wonder of Greece and the East. In 1812 he published two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the record of his travels.

The poem created a furor, and he became famous overnight. It was the first significant expression of that romantic egoism which had given Germany *Werther* and *The Robbers* and France Chateaubriand's *René*. The descriptions of nature, the melancholy, and the ecstatic tone were already familiar ingredients in romantic literature. But the hero was the chief focus of interest. Childe Harold was the first of many "Byronic heroes," all plainly meant as idealized self-portraits. These men are all disillusioned with human society, sated with pleasure, and living only to war against organized humanity. Creatures of intense pride, they scorn to express their innate tenderness and kindliness. Wrapped in a cloak of disdain, they nurse some deep-seated grief which they are too proud to disclose; but within their hearts is reverence for a gentle, loving woman. Such are the heroes of *The Giaour* (1813), *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), *The Corsair* (1814), *Lara* (1814), and *The Siege of Corinth* (1816), which Byron wrote in rapid succession. These Eastern tales were read avidly and lavishly praised by a public whose interest in the Oriental had already been keenly whetted (see p. 1123). Sir Walter Scott, deeply impressed, gracefully resigned to a greater poet the field of narrative verse in which he had himself formerly been pre-eminent.

In 1812, almost simultaneously with the appearance of *Childe Harold*, Byron made his first speech in the House of Lords, in defense of workingmen. The weavers, thrown out of employment by the invention of power looms, had revolted, destroying all machines they could lay hands upon. A bill was before the House to make this a capital offense. Byron, who could not have taken a more unpopular side in the Lords, opposed it in a stirring address. He was at once recognized as a dangerous radical. And, indeed, he remained throughout his life a friend of revolutionary causes. In Italy he is thought to have become a member of the Carbonari, and is known to have helped supply ammunition for a revolt against Austrian tyranny. And later he gave his life for the cause of Greek independence. But he was not, like Shelley, a man with a revolutionary faith. His radicalism, chiefly nega-

tive, is summed up in his creed: "I have simplified my politics with utter detestation of all existing governments."

The success of *Childe Harold* and of his maiden speech caused him to be caught up in the whirl of London society. His classic face and handsome form, rendered more appealing by his slight limp, his biting wit, his scornful pride, and his new acclaim made him irresistible, and women threw themselves at him. The truth about Byron's reputation as a philanderer is that in most of his many amours the woman was the aggressor. In the midst of a dizzying whirl of parties and love affairs, Byron continued to write, having to do much of his composing, as he ironically remarked, while dressing and undressing. But this kind of life brought him no happiness, and he began to think that only marriage could save him.

The one girl he had met whose character he could admire was Miss Annabella Milbanke. Admirable though she was, he could not have chosen a wife more unsuitable to him than this pretty moralist and lover of mathematics. From the moment when they left the wedding ceremony together in a carriage, on January 2, 1815, he managed to make her existence a kind of nightmare. He knew that he had been a fool to marry, and all the complicated sources of saturninity within him he loosed on her. By the end of the year she had borne him a daughter, and then, in a few weeks, had left him forever. At once all the latent enmity which his wit had accumulated for him, broke loose, and Byron's name was everywhere execrated. Loose gossip about his marriage was mixed with the scandalous rumor about an incestuous relationship with his half-sister Augusta. In April Byron and his wife were legally separated, and on the twenty-fifth of the month he sailed from England to remain in exile for the rest of his days. He never forgave his wife for leaving him.

He spent the summer in Switzerland with Shelley, Mary Shelley, and her stepsister, Jane Clairmont, with whom he had an affair. Here he wrote the third canto of *Childe Harold, The Prisoner of Chillon*, and part of his greatest poetic drama, *Manfred*. Later in the year he went to Venice, where Jane bore him a daughter, Allegra. The friendship with high-minded Shelley was fruitful for Byron. Listening to the other's talk, eloquent with selfless devotion to humanity, Byron recovered from some of his bitterness and learned to look outside himself in the interest of a struggling world. In 1819 he contracted a *liaison* with the Countess Guiccioli, apparently with the full consent and knowledge of her husband, and though she was a source of vexation and boredom to him, he did not break with her for the rest of his life. Living intermittently at Venice, Pisa, and Genoa, he was visited by Thomas Moore (see p. 328), Shelley, Leigh Hunt (see p. 330), and other English friends. These years witnessed the composition of most of his large bulk of poetry: many lyrics, *The Lament of Tasso* (1817), *Beppo* (1818), the final canto of *Childe Harold* (1818), *Manfred* (1819), *Marino Faliero* (1819), and *Sardanapalus* (1819). *Cain* (1819), a poetic drama like the last three named, is centered about the first murderer, a true Byronic hero who refuses to worship a God that permitted evil and allotted death to mankind. Much indebted to Milton's Satan, the study is one of Byron's finest, as well as highly characteristic of that dark heroism most associated with the poet. In 1819 he began to write *Don Juan*, on which he worked till the time of his death. All the qualities of his genius were brought together in his last major work; it is his most representative poem.

From the time when he had first seen Athens, Greece had been dear to him. The growing movement there for independence from Turkish oppression seized upon his imagination, and he determined to participate in it. Converting all his possessions into currency with which to purchase mercenaries and military equipment, Byron set out for Greece on July 14, 1823. Now, at last, that coveted life of action seemed to be within his grasp. He took pleasure in subsisting on the rations of a mere soldier. Even the grumbling of the troops, who were more interested in pay than in saving Greece, did not dishearten him. But the great battle he anticipated with enthusiasm was not to be. He was taken with a fever in the malarial swamps about Missolonghi, and on April 19, 1824, he died in true Byronic fashion, in a night of torrential rains and earthshaking thunderclaps.

It may very well be that, in the end, Byron will be longest admired for his lovely lyrics,

among the most fluent ever written. His longer works are too often marred by an oratorical rather than a true poetical style. The distinction between the two was imperfectly recognized in a period that still worshiped the oratorical apostrophes of Rousseau. Moreover, Byron wrote hastily, was impatient of revision. His greatest weakness was his amazing facility. It was so effortless a matter for him to pour out verse that the poetic content of much of what he wrote is diluted. But his dashing style of living and writing still captures the imagination of men, and there is no difficulty today in understanding why he streamed like the brightest of meteors on the horizon of his day. There is something perennially youthful about him, and his dazzling career, even when it seems somewhat amusing to a soberer age, will always partake of the heroic.

When We Two Parted

This poem is supposed to refer to Mary Ann Chaworth, to whom Byron was attached while he was a schoolboy at Harrow. She married a man named Musters in 1805.

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow—
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well:—
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met—
In silence I grieve
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?—
With silence and tears.

(written 1808)

From *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*

Written in the heat of indignation over the disdainful treatment of his *Hours of Idleness* in the *Edinburgh Review* (see pp. 219-20), Byron's youthful satire in imitation of Pope is remarkable for a young man of nineteen. When he grew older, he admitted the injustice of his attacks on Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
That mild apostate from poetic rule,
The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
As soft as evening in his favorite May,
Who warns his friend "to shake off toil and trouble,
And quit his books for fear of growing double";
Who, both by precept and example, shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;
Convincing all, by demonstration plain,
Poetic souls delight in prose insane;
And Christmas stories tortured into rime
Contain the essence of the true sublime.
Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,
The idiot mother of "an idiot boy";
A moon-struck, silly lad, who lost his way,
And, like his bard, confounded night with day;
So close on each pathetic part he dwells,
And each adventure so sublimely tells,
That all who view "the idiot in his glory"
Conceive the bard the hero of the story.

Shall gentle Coleridge pass unnoticed here,
To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear?
Though themes of innocence amuse him best,
Yet still obscurity's a welcome guest.
If Inspiration should her aid refuse
To him who takes a pixy for a muse,
Yet none in lofty numbers can surpass
The bard who soars to elegize an ass.[1]
So well the subject suits his noble mind,
He brays, the laureate of the long-eared kind.

(written 1807-09)

Maid of Athens, Ere We Part

These lines, written in Athens, probably refer to Theresa Macri, with whose mother Byron lodged on his first visit to the Greek metropolis.

Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh, give me back my heart!
Or, since that has left my breast,
Keep it now, and take the rest!
Hear my vow before I go,
Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.[1]

By those tresses unconfined,
Wooed by each Aegean wind;
By those lids whose jetty fringe
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge;
By those wild eyes like the roe,
Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.

By that lip I long to taste;
By that zone[2]-encircled waist;
By all the token-flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well;
By love's alternate joy and woe,
Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.

Maid of Athens! I am gone:
Think of me, sweet! when alone.
Though I fly to Istanbul,
Athens holds my heart and soul:
Can I cease to love thee? No!
Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.

(written 1810)

[1] See p. 185.

[1] My life, I love you (Greek). The pronunciation is "Zō-eé mu, sas aghapó.

[2] girdle.

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear, their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

(written 1814)

The Destruction of Sennacherib[1]

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

[1] King of Assyria (705-681 B.C.). For an account of this battle, see *II Kings*, chaps. 18 and 19.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur[2] are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;[3]
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

(written 1815)

Stanzas for Music

There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay;
'Tis not on youth's smooth cheek the blush alone, which fades so fast,
But the tender bloom of heart is gone ere youth itself be past.

Then the few whose spirits float above the wreck of happiness
Are driven o'er the shoals of guilt or ocean of excess:
The magnet of their course is gone, or only points in vain
The shore to which their shivered sail shall never stretch again.

Then the mortal coldness of the soul like death itself comes down;
It cannot feel for others' woes, it dare not dream its own;
That heavy chill has frozen o'er the fountain of our tears,
And though the eye may sparkle still, 'tis where the ice appears.

Though wit may flash from fluent lips, and mirth distract the breast,
Through midnight hours that yield no more their former hope of rest;
'Tis but as ivy-leaves around the ruined turret wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and gray beneath.

Oh, could I feel as I have felt,—or be what I have been,
Or weep as I could once have wept, o'er many a vanished scene;
As springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish though they be,
So, midst the wither'd waste of life, those tears would flow to me.

(written 1815)

Stanzas for Music

There be none of Beauty's daughters
With a magic like thee;
And like music on the waters
Is thy sweet voice to me:
When, as if its sound were causing
The charméd ocean's pausing,
The waves lie still and gleaming,
And the lulled winds seem dreaming.

And the midnight moon is weaving
Her bright chain o'er the deep;
Whose breast is gently heaving,
As an infant's asleep:
So the spirit bows before thee,
To listen and adore thee;
With a full but soft emotion,
Like the swell of Summer's ocean.

(1816)

From *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

Byron had kept a record of his travels through the novel device of a series of sketches in Spenserian stanzas strung together on a loose thread of narrative. The hero, of course, was an idealization of the darker side of his own character. On the insistence of his friends he published, in 1812, the first two cantos of this poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. It caused a sensation rarely paralleled in literary history. "I awoke one morning," he tells us, "and found myself famous." Thereafter Byron became a figure of national importance, a man whose deeds and observations were a matter of concern to everyone.

[2] Assyria.
[3] a god worshipped in Assyria and surrounding countries. He is usually identified with the sun.

By the time the third canto was ready for publication, Byron's ill-advised marriage had taken place, had failed, and had sent him into exile. It was Shelley who took back to England the manuscript of the new section, which was published in 1816. On its appearance Francis Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, said: "If the finest poetry be that which leaves the deepest impression on the minds of its readers . . . Lord Byron, we think, must be allowed to take precedence of all his distinguished contemporaries." Sir Walter Scott, in the *Quarterly Review*, was equally enthusiastic. But, with his characteristic kindliness, he was considerably perturbed by Byron's unhappiness, as revealed in the mental anguish of the hero. "Future ages," he said, "while our language is remembered, will demand . . . why Lord Byron was unhappy? . . . He does injustice to the world, if he imagines he has left it exclusively filled with those who rejoice in his sufferings. . . . Lord Byron may not have loved the world, but the world has loved him."

The third canto of *Childe Harold* is so completely superior to the earlier portions as to make them seem weak by comparison.

Canto the Third

Afin que cette application vous forçat à penser à autre chose. Il n'y a en vérité de remède que celui-là et le temps [1]

1

Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!
Ada![2] sole daughter of my house and heart?
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,
And then we parted,—not as now we part,
But with a hope.—
Awaking with a start,
The waters heave around me; and on high
The winds lift up their voices: I depart,
Whither I know not, but the hour's gone by,
When Albion's[3] lessening shores could grieve or glad mine eye.

2

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!
Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

[1] So that this application may force you to think of something else: there is indeed no remedy except that and time.—Lettre du Roi de Prusse à D'Alembert, Sept. 7, 1776.

[2] Lady Byron left her husband when Ada was only five weeks old. He never saw them again.

[3] England's.

3

In my youth's summer I did sing of One,[4]
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind;
Again I seize the theme, then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind
Bears the cloud onwards: in that Tale I find
The furrows of long thought, and dried-up tears,
Which, ebbing, leave a sterile track behind,
O'er which all heavily the journeying years
Plod the last sands of life,—where not a flower appears.

4

Since my young days of passion—joy or pain,
Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string—
And both may jar: it may be, that in vain
I would essay, as I have sung, to sing.
Yet, though a dreary strain, to this I cling;
So that it wean me from the weary dream
Of selfish grief or gladness—so it fling
Forgetfulness around me—it shall seem
To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme.

5

He, who grown aged in this world of woe,
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
So that no wonder waits Him—nor below
Can Love or Sorrow, Fame, Ambition, Strife,
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
Of silent, sharp endurance—he can tell
Why Thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife

[4] Byron himself in the first two cantos of this poem which had appeared when he was twenty-one

With airy images, and shapes which dwell
Still unimpaired, though old, in the Soul's haunted cell.

6

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now—
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mixed with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings' dearth.

7

Yet must I think less wildly:—I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what Time cannot abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate.

8

Something too much of this:—but now 'tis past,
And the spell closes with its silent seal:
Long absent HAROLD re-appears at last—
He of the breast which fain no more would feel,
Wrung with the wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal;
Yet Time, who changes all, had altered him
In soul and aspect as in age: years steal
Fire from the mind as vigor from the limb;
And Life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.

9

His had been quaffed too quickly, and he found
The dregs were wormwood; but he filled again,
And from a purer fount, on holier ground,
And deemed its spring perpetual—but in vain!
Still round him clung invisibly a chain
Which galled for ever, fettering though unseen,
And heavy though it clanked not; worn with pain,
Which pined although it spoke not, and grew keen,
Entering with every step he took through many a scene.

10

Secure in guarded coldness, he had mixed
Again in fancied safety with his kind,
And deemed his spirit now so firmly fixed
And sheathed with an invulnerable mind,
That, if no joy, no sorrow lurked behind;
And he, as one, might 'midst the many stand
Unheeded, searching through the crowd to find
Fit speculation; such as in strange land
He found in wonder-works of God and Nature's hand.

11

But who can view the ripened rose, nor seek
To wear it? who can curiously behold
The smoothness and the sheen of Beauty's cheek,
Nor feel the heart can never all grow old?
Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold
The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
Harold, once more within the vortex, rolled
On with the giddy circle, chasing Time,
Yet with a nobler aim than in his youth's fond prime.

12

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man, with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quelled
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompelled,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To Spirits against whom his own rebelled,
Proud though in desolation—which could find
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.

13

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home:
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends.
He had the passion and the power to roam:

The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tome
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake
For Nature's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake.

14

Like the Chaldean,[5] he could watch the stars,
Till he had peopled them with beings bright
As their own beams; and earth, and earthborn jars,
And human frailties, were forgotten quite:
Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy; but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts, as if to break the link
That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

15

But in Man's dwellings he became a thing
Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,
Drooped as a wild-born falcon with clipped wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home:
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barred-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage—so the heat
Of his impeded Soul would through his bosom eat.

16

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
With nought of Hope left, but with less of gloom;
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made Despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild,—as on the plundered wreck
When mariners would madly meet their doom
With draughts intemperate on the sinking deck,—
Did yet inspire a cheer, which he forbore to check.

[5] The Chaldeans were noted for their knowledge of the stars.

17

Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire's dust!
An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchered below!
Is the spot marked with no colossal bust?
Nor column trophied for triumphal show?
None; but *the moral's truth* tells simpler so.
As the ground was before, thus let it be;—
How that red rain hath made the harvest grow!
And is this all the world has gained by thee,
Thou first and last of Fields! king-making Victory?

18

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo![6]
How in an hour the Power which gave annuls
Its gifts, transferring fame as fleeting too!
In "pride of place"[7] here last the eagle[8] flew,
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain,
Pierced by the shaft of banded nations through;
Ambition's life and labors all were vain;
He wears the shattered links of the world's broken chain.

19

Fit retribution! Gaul[9] may champ the bit
And foam in fetters;—but is Earth more free?[10]
Did nations combat to make *One* submit?
Or league to teach all Kings true Sovereignty?
What! shall reviving Thraldom again be
The patched-up Idol of enlightened days?
Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
Pay the Wolf homage? proffering lowly gaze
And servile knees to Thrones? No; *prove* before ye praise!

20

If not, o'er one fallen Despot boast no more!
In vain fair cheeks were furrowed with hot tears
For Europe's flowers long rooted up before
The trampler of her vineyards; in vain, years

[6] The Battle of Waterloo, which closed the wars with Napoleon, was fought a few miles from Brussels in June, 1815.

[7] a term in falconry meaning the highest point of flight.

[8] Napoleon.

[9] France.

[10] The Battle of Waterloo was a victory for the enemies of liberalism.

Of death, depopulation, bondage, fears,
Have all been borne, and broken by the accord
Of roused-up millions; all that most endears
Glory, is when the myrtle wreathes a sword
Such as Harmodius[11] drew on Athens' tyrant lord.

21

There was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

22

Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the Wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
But hark—that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
And nearer—clearer—deadlier than before!
Arm! Arm! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar!

23

Within a windowed niche of that high hall
Sat Brunswick's fated chieftain;[12] he did hear
That sound the first amidst the festival,
And caught its tone with Death's prophetic ear;
And when they smiled because he deemed it near,
His heart more truly knew that peal too well
Which stretched his father[13] on a bloody bier,
And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell;
He rushed into the field, and, foremost fighting, fell.

[11] One of the conspirators who hid his sword under a myrtle branch before attacking the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus (514 B.C.)

[12] Frederick William, Duke of Brunswick.

[13] In the battle of Auerstädt in 1806.

24

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness;
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated; who could guess
If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise!

25

And there was mounting in hot haste—the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war—
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the Morning Star;
While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips—"The foe! they come! they come!"

26

And wild and high the "Cameron's gathering"[14] rose!
The war-note of Lochiel, which Albyn's[15] hills
Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes:—
How in the noon of night that pibroch[16] thrills,
Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With the fierce native daring which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years,
And Evan's—Donald's[17]—fame rings in each clansman's ears!

27

And Ardennes[18] waves above them her green leaves,

[14] the war song of the Cameron clan who come from Lochiel in northern Scotland.

[15] Scotland's.

[16] a kind of bagpipe.

[17] referring to Sir Evan Cameron (1629-1719) and Donald Cameron (1695?-1748), famous members of the clan.

[18] a large forest in France.

Dewy with Nature's tear-drops as they pass,
Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
Over the unreturning brave,—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
Which now beneath them, but *above* shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living Valor, rolling on the foe
And burning with high Hope shall molder cold and low.

28

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The Midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The Morn the marshaling in arms,—the Day
Battle's magnificently-stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse,—friend,—foe,—in one red burial blent!

29

Their praise is hymned by loftier harps than mine;
Yet one I would select from that proud throng,
Partly because they blend me with his line,
And partly that I did his Sire some wrong,
And partly that bright names will hallow song;
And his was of the bravest, and when showered
The death-bolts deadliest the thinned files along,
Even where the thickest of War's tempest lowered,
They reached no nobler breast than thine, young gallant Howard![19]

30

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing had I such to give;
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,
And saw around me the wide field revive
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Came forth her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turned from all she brought to those she could not bring.

31

I turned to thee, to thousands, of whom each
And one as all a ghastly gap did make
In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach
Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake;
The Archangel's trump, not Glory's, must awake
Those whom they thirst for; though the sound of Fame
May for a moment soothe, it cannot slake
The fever of vain longing, and the name
So honored but assumes a stronger, bitterer claim.

32

They mourn, but smile at length—and, smiling, mourn:
The tree will wither long before it fall;
The hull drives on, though mast and sail be torn;
The roof-tree sinks, but molders on the hall
In massy hoariness; the ruined wall
Stands when its wind-worn battlements are gone;
The bars survive the captive they enthrall;
The day drags through, though storms keep out the sun;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on:

33

Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
In every fragment multiplies—and makes
A thousand images of one that was
The same—and still the more, the more it breaks;
And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
Living in shattered guise; and still, and cold,
And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
Yet withers on till all without is old,
Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.

34

There is a very life in our despair,
Vitality of poison,—a quick root
Which feels these deadly branches; for it were
As nothing did we die; but Life will suit

[19] Byron had written an attack upon his father, the Earl of Carlisle, in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.*

Itself to Sorrow's most detested fruit,
Like to the apples on the Dead Sea's[20] shore,
All ashes to the taste: Did man compute
Existence by enjoyment, and count o'er
Such hours 'gainst years of life,—say, would he name threescore?

35

The Psalmist numbered out the years[21] of man:
They are enough; and if thy tale be *true*,
Thou, who didst grudge him even that fleeting span,
More than enough, thou fatal Waterloo!
Millions of tongues record thee, and anew
Their children's lips shall echo them, and say—
"Here, where the sword united nations drew,
Our countrymen were warring on that day!"
And this is much—and all—which will not pass away.

36

There sunk the greatest,[22] nor the worst of men,
Whose Spirit, antithetically mixed,
One moment of the mightiest, and again
On little objects with like firmness fixed;
Extreme in all things! hadst thou been betwixt,
Thy throne had still been thine, or never been;
For daring made thy rise as fall: thou seek'st
Even now to re-assume the imperial mien,
And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the scene!

37

Conqueror and Captive of the Earth art thou!
She trembles at thee still, and thy wild name
Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now
That thou art nothing, save the jest of Fame,
Who wooed thee once, thy Vassal, and became
The flatterer of thy fierceness, till thou wert
A god unto thyself; nor less the same
To the astounded kingdoms all inert,
Who deemed thee for a time whate'er thou didst assert.

[20] an attractive but inedible fruit, said to taste like ashes.
[21] three score years and ten.
[22] Napoleon.

38

Oh, more or less than man—in high or low—
Battling with nations, flying from the field;
Now making monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
More than thy meanest soldier taught to yield;
An Empire thou couldst crush, command, rebuild,
But govern not thy pettiest passion, nor,
However deeply in men's spirits skilled,
Look through thine own, nor curb the lust of War,
Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest Star.

39

Yet well thy soul hath brooked the turning tide
With that untaught innate philosophy,
Which, be it Wisdom, Coldness, or deep Pride,
Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.
When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast smiled
With a sedate and all-enduring eye;—
When Fortune fled her spoiled and favorite child,
He stood unbowed beneath the ills upon him piled.

40

Sager than in thy fortunes; for in them
Ambition steeled thee on too far to show
That just habitual scorn, which could contemn
Men and their thoughts; 'twas wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wert to use
Till they were turned unto thine overthrow:
'Tis but a worthless world to win or lose;
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who choose.

41

If, like a tower upon a headland rock,
Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone,
Such scorn of man had helped to brave the shock;
But men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne,
Their admiration thy best weapon shone;

The part of Philip's son[23] was thine, not then
(Unless aside thy Purple had been thrown)
Like stern Diogenes[24] to mock at men;
For sceptered Cynics Earth were far too wide a den.

42

But Quiet to quick bosoms is a Hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire
And motion of the Soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

43

This makes the madmen who have made men mad
By their contagion; Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach Mankind the lust to shine or rule:

44

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

45

He who ascends to mountain tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapped in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the Sun of Glory glow,
And far *beneath* the Earth and Ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

46

Away with these! true Wisdom's world will be
Within its own creation, or in thine,
Maternal Nature! for who teems like thee,
Thus on the banks of thy majestic Rhine?
There Harold gazes on a work divine,
A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,
And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells
From gray but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells.

47

And there they stand, as stands a lofty mind,
Worn, but unstooping to the baser crowd,
All tenantless, save to the crannying Wind,
Or holding dark communion with the Cloud.
There was a day when they were young and proud;
Banners on high, and battles passed below;
But they who fought are in a bloody shroud,
And those which waved are shredless dust ere now,
And the bleak battlements shall bear no future blow.

48

Beneath those battlements, within those walls,
Power dwelt amidst her passions; in proud state
Each robber chief upheld his armèd halls,
Doing his evil will, nor less elate
Than mightier heroes of a longer date.
What want these outlaws conquerors should have,
But History's purchased page to call them great?
A wider space—an ornamental grave?
Their hopes were not less warm, their souls were full as brave.

[23] Alexander the Great (356-323), conqueror of the ancient world.
[24] ancient Cynic philosopher (412-323 B.C.).

49

In their baronial feuds and single fields,
What deeds of prowess unrecorded died!
And Love, which lent a blazon to their shields,
With emblems well devised by amorous pride,
Through all the mail of iron hearts would glide;
But still their flame was fierceness, and drew on
Keen contest and destruction near allied,
And many a tower for some fair mischief won,
Saw the discolored Rhine beneath its ruin run.

50

But Thou, exulting and abounding river!
Making thy waves a blessing as they flow
Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever
Could man but leave thy bright creation so,
Nor its fair promise from the surface mow
With the sharp scythe of conflict,—then to see
Thy valley of sweet waters, were to know
Earth paved like Heaven—and to seem such to me,
Even now what wants thy stream?—that it should Lethe[25] be.

51

A thousand battles have assailed thy banks,
But these and half their fame have passed away,
And Slaughter heaped on high his weltering ranks:
Their very graves are gone, and what are they?
Thy tide washed down the blood of yesterday,
And all was stainless, and on thy clear stream
Glassed, with its dancing light, the sunny ray;
But o'er the blackened Memory's blighting dream
Thy waves would vainly roll, all sweeping as they seem.

52

Thus Harold inly said, and passed along,
Yet not insensible to all which here
Awoke the jocund birds to early song
In glens which might have made even exile dear:
Though on his brow were graven lines austere,
And tranquil sternness, which had ta'en the place
Of feelings fierier far but less severe—
Joy was not always absent from his face,
But o'er it in such scenes would steal with transient trace.

53

Nor was all Love shut from him, though his days
Of Passion had consumed themselves to dust.
It is in vain that we would coldly gaze
On such as smile upon us; the heart must
Leap kindly back to kindness, though Disgust
Hath weaned it from all worldings: thus he felt,
For there was soft Remembrance, and sweet Trust
In one fond breast,[26] to which his own would melt,
And in its tenderer hour on that his bosom dwelt.

54

And he had learned to love,—I know not why,
For this in such as him seems strange of mood,—
The helpless looks of blooming Infancy,
Even in its earliest nurture; what subdued,
To change like this, a mind so far imbued
With scorn of man, it little boots to know;
But thus it was; and though in solitude
Small power the nipped affections have to grow,
In him this glowed when all beside had ceased to glow.

55

And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
Than the church links withal; and, though unwed,
That love was pure—and, far above disguise,
Had stood the test of mortal enmities,
Still undivided, and cemented more
By peril, dreaded most in female eyes;
But this was firm, and from a foreign shore
Well to that heart might his these absent greetings pour!

I

The castled crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
Between the banks which bear the vine;

[25] the river of forgetfulness in the lower world.

[26] Byron's half-sister, Augusta, by his father's first marriage.

And hills all rich with blossomed trees,
And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scattered cities crowning these,
Whose far white walls along them shine,
Have strewed a scene, which I should see
With double joy wert *thou* with me.

II

And peasant girls, with deep blue eyes,
And hands which offer early flowers,
Walk smiling o'er this Paradise;
Above, the frequent feudal towers
Through green leaves lift their walls of gray;
And many a rock which steeply lowers,
And noble arch in proud decay,
Look o'er this vale of vintage-bowers;
But one thing want these banks of Rhine,—
Thy gentle hand to clasp in mine!

III

I send the lilies given to me—
Though long before thy hand they touch,
I know that they must withered be,
But yet reject them not as such;
For I have cherished them as dear,
Because they yet may meet thine eye,
And guide thy soul to mine even here—
When thou behold'st them drooping nigh,
And know'st them gathered by the Rhine,
And offered from my heart to thine!

IV

The river nobly foams and flows—
The charm of this enchanted ground,
And all its thousand turns disclose
Some fresher beauty varying round:
The haughtiest breast its wish might bound
Through life to dwell delighted here;
Nor could on earth a spot be found
To Nature and to me so dear—
Could thy dear eyes in following mine
Still sweeten more these banks of Rhine!

56

By Coblentz, on a rise of gentle ground,
There is a small and simple Pyramid,
Crowning the summit of the verdant mound;
Beneath its base are Heroes' ashes hid—
Our enemy's—but let not that forbid
Honor to Marceau![27] o'er whose early tomb
Tears, big tears, gushed from the rough soldier's lid,
Lamenting and yet envying such a doom,
Falling for France, whose rights he battled to resume.

57

Brief, brave, and glorious was his young career,—
His mourners were two hosts, his friends and foes;
And fitly may the stranger lingering here
Pray for his gallant Spirit's bright repose;
For he was Freedom's Champion, one of those
The few in number, who had not o'erstepped
The charter to chastise which she bestows
On such as wield her weapons; he had kept
The whiteness of his soul—and thus men o'er him wept.

58

Here Ehrenbreitstein,[28] with her shattered wall
Black with the miner's blast, upon her height
Yet shows of what she was, when shell and ball
Rebounding idly on her strength did light:
A Tower of Victory! from whence the flight
Of baffled foes was watched along the plain:
But Peace destroyed what War could never blight,
And laid those proud roofs bare to Summer's rain—
On which the iron shower for years had poured in vain.

59

Adieu to thee, fair Rhine! How long delighted
The stranger fain would linger on his way!
Thine is a scene alike where souls united,
Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray;
And could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey
On self-condemning bosoms, it were here,
Where Nature, nor too somber nor too gay,
Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere,
Is to the mellow Earth as Autumn to the year.

60

Adieu to thee again! a vain adieu!

[27] a general of the French Revolutionary Armies.
[28] a fortress across the Rhine from Coblenz

There can be no farewell to scene like thine;
The mind is colored by thy every hue;
And if reluctantly the eyes resign
Their cherished gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine!
'Tis with the thankful heart of parting praise;
More mighty spots may rise—more glaring shine,
But none unite in one attaching maze,
The brilliant, fair, and soft,—the glories of old days.

61

The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
Of coming ripeness, the white city's sheen,
The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
The forest's growth, and Gothic walls between,—
The wild rocks shaped, as they had turrets been,
In mockery of man's art; and these withal
A race of faces happy as the scene,
Whose fertile bounties here extend to all,
Still springing o'er thy banks, though Empires near them fall.

62

But these recede. Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold Sublimity, where forms and falls
The Avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appalls,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.

63

But ere these matchless heights I dare to scan,
There is a spot should not be passed in vain,—
Morat![29] the proud, the patriot field! where man
May gaze on ghastly trophies of the slain,
Nor blush for those who conquered on that plain;
Here Burgundy bequeathed his tombless host,
A bony heap, through ages to remain,
Themselves their monument;—the Stygian coast
Unsepulchered they roamed, and shrieked each wandering ghost.

[29] where the Swiss defeated Charles the Bold of Burgundy in 1476.

64

While Waterloo with Cannæ's[30] carnage vies,
Morat and Marathon[31] twin names shall stand;
They were true Glory's stainless victories,
Won by the unambitious heart and hand
Of a proud, brotherly, and civic band,
All unbought champions in no princely cause
Of vice-entailed Corruption; they no land
Doomed to bewail the blasphemy of laws
Making Kings' rights divine, by some Draconic[32] clause.

65

By a lone wall a lonelier column rears
A gray and grief-worn aspect of old days;
'Tis the last remnant of the wreck of years,
And looks as with the wild-bewildered gaze
Of one to stone converted by amaze,
Yet still with consciousness; and there it stands
Making a marvel that it not decays,
When the coeval pride of human hands,
Leveled Aventicum,[33] hath strewed her subject lands.

66

And there—oh! sweet and sacred be the name!
Julia[34]—the daughter—the devoted—gave
Her youth to Heaven; her heart, beneath a claim
Nearest to Heaven's, broke o'er a father's grave.
Justice is sworn 'gainst tears, and hers would crave
The life she lived in—but the judge was just—
And then she died on him she could not save.
Their tomb was simple, and without a bust,
And held within their urn one mind—one heart—one dust.

67

But these are deeds which should not pass away,

[30] the battle in which Hannibal defeated the Romans, 216 B.C

[31] the famous victory of the Greeks over the Persians in 490 B.C.

[32] This refers to the rigid and severe code of Draco, the first Athenian lawmaker.

[33] capital of Roman Switzerland.

[34] a young priestess of Aventicum who died in the attempt to save her father, who had been sentenced to death for treachery.

And names that must not wither, though the Earth
Forgets her empires with a just decay,
The enslavers and the enslaved—their death and birth;
The high, the mountain-majesty of Worth
Should be—and shall, survivor of its woe,
And from its immortality, look forth
In the Sun's face, like yonder Alpine snow,[35]
Imperishably pure beyond all things below.

68

Lake Leman[36] woos me with its crystal face,
The mirror where the stars and mountains view
The stillness of their aspect in each trace
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue:
There ~~is too much of Man here, to~~ look through
With a fit mind the might which I behold;
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew
Thoughts hid, but not less cherished than of old,
Ere mingling with the herd had penned me in their fold.

69

~~To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind~~:
All ~~are not fit with them to stir and toil~~,
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
Of our infection, till too late and long,
We may deplore and struggle with the coil,
In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

70

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years
In fatal penitence, and in the blight
Of our own Soul turn all our blood to tears,
And color things to come with hues of Night;
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
To those that walk in darkness: on the sea
The boldest steer but where their ports invite—
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity,
Whose bark drives on and on, and anchored ne'er shall be.

[35] Mont Blanc.
[36] Lake Geneva, Switzerland.

71

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,
Or the pure bosom of its nursing Lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake;—
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,
Than join the crushing crowd, doomed to inflict or bear?

72

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in Nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Classed among creatures, when the ~~soul can~~ flee,
And with the sky—the peak—the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle—and not in vain.

73

And thus I am absorbed, and ~~this is life~~:
I look upon the peopled desert past,
As on a place of agony and strife,
Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous as the Blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

74

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When Elements to Elements conform,
And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

75

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my Soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forgo
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turned below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?

76

But this is not my theme; and I return
To that which is immediate, and require
Those who find contemplation in the urn,
To look on One,[87] whose dust was once all fire,
A native of the land where I respire
The clear air for a while—a passing guest,
Where he became a being,—whose desire
Was to be glorious; 'twas a foolish quest,
The which to gain and keep, he sacrificed all rest.

77

Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of Affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over Passion, and from Woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew
The breath which made him wretched; yet he knew
How to make Madness beautiful, and cast
O'er erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they passed
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast.

78

His love was Passion's essence—as a tree
On fire by lightning; with ethereal flame
Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be
Thus, and enamored, were in him the same.
But his was not the love of living dame,
Nor of the dead who rise upon our dreams,
But of ideal Beauty, which became
In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
Along his burning page, distempered though it seems.

79

This breathed itself to life in Julie, *this*
Invested her with all that's wild and sweet;
This hallowed, too, the memorable kiss
Which every morn his fevered lip would greet,
From hers, who but with friendship his would meet;
But to that gentle touch through brain and breast
Flashed the thrilled Spirit's love-devouring heat;
In that absorbing sigh perchance more blessed
Than vulgar minds may be with all they seek possessed.

80

His life was one long war with self-sought foes,
Or friends by him self-banished; for his mind
Had grown Suspicion's sanctuary, and chose,
For its own cruel sacrifice, the kind,
'Gainst whom he raged with fury strange and blind.
But he was frenzied,—wherefore, who may know?
Since cause might be which Skill could never find;
But he was frenzied by disease or woe,
To that worst pitch of all, which wears a reasoning show.

81

For then he was inspired, and from him came,
As from the Pythian's[88] mystic cave of yore,
Those oracles which set the world in flame,
Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more:
Did he not this for France? which lay, before,
Bowed to the inborn tyranny of years?
Broken and trembling to the yoke she bore,
Till by the voice of him and his compeers
Roused up to too much wrath, which follows o'ergrown fears?

82

They made themselves a fearful monument!
The wreck of old opinions—things which grew,
Breathed from the birth of Time: the veil they rent,
And what behind it lay, all earth shall view;
But good with ill they also overthrew,

[87] Rousseau; see p. 1136.

[88] the priestess in charge of the Delphic oracle of Apollo.

Leaving but ruins, wherewith to rebuild
Upon the same foundation, and renew
Dungeons and thrones, which the same hour refilled,
As heretofore, because Ambition was self-willed.

83

But this will not endure, nor be endured!
Mankind have felt their strength, and made it felt.
They might have used it better, but, allured
By their new vigor, sternly have they dealt
On one another; Pity ceased to melt
With her once natural charities. But they,
Who in Oppression's darkness caved had dwelt,
They were not eagles, nourished with the day;
What marvel then, at times, if they mistook their prey?

84

What deep wounds ever closed without a scar?
The heart's bleed longest, and but heal to wear
That which disfigures it; and they who war
With their own hopes, and have been vanquished, bear
Silence, but not submission: in his lair
Fixed Passion holds his breath, until the hour
Which shall atone for years; none need despair:
It came—it cometh—and will come,—the power
To punish or forgive—in *one* we shall be slower.

85

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn Ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

86

It is the hush of night, and all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
Mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
Save darkened Jura, whose capped heights appear
Precipitously steep; and drawing near,
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more.

87

He is an evening reveler, who makes
His life an infancy, and sings his fill;
At intervals, some bird from out the brakes
Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
But that is fancy, for the Starlight dews
All silently their tears of Love instill,
Weeping themselves away, till they infuse
Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

88

Ye Stars! which are the poetry of Heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A Beauty and a Mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That Fortune, Fame, Power, Life, have named themselves a star.

89

All Heaven and Earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All Heaven and Earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lulled lake and mountain-coast,
All is concentered in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of Being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and Defense.

90

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are *least* alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt,
And purifies from self: it is a tone,

The soul and source of Music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,[89]
Binding all things with beauty;—'twould disarm
The specter Death, had he substantial power to harm.

91

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places, and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take
A fit and unwalled temple, there to seek
The Spirit, in whose honor shrines are weak,
Upreared of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings—Goth or Greek—
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air—
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer!

92

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh, Night,
And Storm, and Darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in Woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

93

And this is in the Night:—Most glorious Night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—
A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again 'tis black,—and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young Earthquake's birth.

94

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted:
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed:—
Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters,—war within themselves to wage:

95

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way,
The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:
For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunder-bolts from hand to hand,
Flashing and cast around: of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills hath forked
His lightnings,—as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as Desolation worked,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurked.

96

Sky, Mountains, River, Winds, Lake, Lightnings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a Soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.
But where of ye, O tempests! is the goal?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

97

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,

[89] the love-producing girdle of Venus.

Bear, know, feel—and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

98

The Morn is up again, the dewy Morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom—
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contained no tomb,—
And glowing into day: we may resume
The march of our existence: and thus I,
Still on thy shores, fair Leman! may find room
And food for meditation, nor pass by
Much, that may give us pause, if pondered fittingly.

99

Clarens![40] sweet Clarens, birthplace of deep Love!
Thine air is the young breath of passionate Thought;
Thy trees take root in Love; the snows above,
The very Glaciers have his colors caught,
And Sun-set into rose-hues sees them wrought
By rays which sleep there lovingly: the rocks,
The permanent crags, tell here of Love, who sought
In them a refuge from the worldly shocks,
Which stir and sting the Soul with Hope that woos, then mocks.

100

Clarens! by heavenly feet thy paths are trod,—
Undying Love's, who here ascends a throne
To which the steps are mountains; where the God
Is a pervading Life and Light,—so shown
Not on those summits solely, nor alone
In the still cave and forest; o'er the flower
His eye is sparkling, and his breath hath blown,
His soft and summer breath, whose tender power
Passes the strength of storms in their most desolate hour.

[40] a town on Lake Geneva frequently mentioned by Rousseau

101

All things are here of *him*; from the black pines,
Which are his shade on high, and the loud roar
Of torrents, where he listeneth, to the vines
Which slope his green path downward to the shore,
Where the bowed waters meet him, and adore,
Kissing his feet with murmurs; and the wood,
The covert of old trees, with trunks all hoar,
But light leaves, young as joy, stands where it stood,
Offering to him, and his, a populous solitude.

102

A populous solitude of bees and birds
And fairy-formed and many-colored things,
Who worship him with notes more sweet than words,
And innocently open their glad wings,
Fearless and full of life: the gush of springs,
And fall of lofty fountains, and the bend
Of stirring branches, and the bud which brings
The swiftest thought of Beauty, here extend
Mingling, and made by Love, unto one mighty end.

103

He who hath loved not, here would learn that lore,
And make his heart a spirit; he who knows
That tender mystery, will love the more;
For this is Love's recess, where vain men's woes
And the world's waste, have driven him far from those,
For 'tis his nature to advance or die;
He stands not still, but or decays, or grows
Into a boundless blessing, which may vie
With the immortal lights, in its eternity!

104

'Twas not for fiction chose Rousseau[41] this spot,
Peopling it with affections; but he found
It was the scene which Passion must allot
To the Mind's purified beings; 'twas the ground
Where early Love his Psyche's zone unbound,
And hallowed it with loveliness: 'tis lone,

[41] in his *The New Eloisa* See p 1143

And wonderful, and deep, and hath a sound,
And sense, and sight of sweetness; here the Rhone
Hath spread himself a couch, the Alps have reared a throne.

105

Lausanne! and Ferney! ye have been the abodes
Of Names[42] which unto you bequeathed a name;
Mortals, who sought and found, by dangerous roads,
A path to perpetuity of Fame:
They were gigantic minds, and their steep aim
Was, Titan-like, on daring doubts to pile
Thoughts which should call down thunder and the flame
Of Heaven again assailed—if Heaven the while
On man and man's research could deign do more than smile.

106

The one[43] was fire and fickleness, a child
Most mutable in wishes, but in mind
A wit as various,—gay, grave, sage, or wild,—
Historian, bard, philosopher, combined;
He multiplied himself among mankind,
The Proteus[44] of their talents: But his own
Breathed most in ridicule,—which, as the wind,
Blew where it listed, laying all things prone,—
Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.

107

The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer;
The lord of irony,—that master spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,
And doomed him to the zealot's ready Hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.

[42] Gibbon finished the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* at Lausanne. Voltaire lived at Ferney.

[43] Voltaire.

[44] the sea god who could change himself into many forms.

108

Yet, peace be with their ashes,—for by them,
If merited, the penalty is paid;
It is not ours to judge,—far less condemn;
The hour must come when such things shall be made
Known unto all,—or hope and dread allayed
By slumber, on one pillow, in the dust,
Which, thus much we are sure, must lie decayed;
And when it shall revive, as is our trust,
'Twill be to be forgiven—or suffer what is just.

109

But let me quit Man's works, again to read
His Maker's, spread around me, and suspend
This page, which from my reveries I feed,
Until it seems prolonging without end.
The clouds above me to the white Alps tend,
And I must pierce them, and survey whate'er
May be permitted, as my steps I bend
To their most great and growing region, where
The earth to her embrace compels the powers of air.

110

Italia! too, Italia! looking on thee,
Full flashes on the Soul the light of ages,
Since the fierce Carthaginian[45] almost won thee,
To the last halo of the Chiefs and Sages
Who glorify thy consecrated pages;
Thou wert the throne and grave of empires—still,
The fount at which the panting Mind assuages
Her thirst of knowledge, quaffing there her fill,
Flows from the eternal source of Rome's imperial hill.

111

Thus far have I proceeded in a theme
Renewed with no kind auspices:—to feel
We are not what we have been, and to deem
We are not what we should be,—and to steel
The heart against itself; and to conceal,
With a proud caution, love, or hate, or aught,—
Passion or feeling, purpose, grief, or zeal,
Which is the tyrant Spirit of our thought,
Is a stern task of soul:—No matter,—it is taught.

[45] Hannibal.

112

And for these words, thus woven into song,
It may be that they are a harmless wile,—
The coloring of the scenes which fleet along,
Which I would seize, in passing, to beguile
My breast, or that of others, for a while.
Fame is the thirst of youth,—but I am not
So young as to regard men's frown or smile,
As loss or guerdon of a glorious lot;—
I stood and stand alone,—remembered or forgot.

113

I have not loved the World, nor the World me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bowed
To its idolatries a patient knee,
Nor coined my cheek to smiles,—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo: in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such—I stood
Among them, but not of them—in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed[16] my mind, which thus itself subdued.

114

I have not loved the World, nor the World me,—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things,—hopes which will not deceive,
And Virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve—
That two, or one, are almost what they seem,—
That Goodness is no name—and Happiness no dream.

115

My daughter! with thy name this song begun!
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end!—
I see thee not—I hear thee not—but none
Can be so wrapped in thee; thou art the Friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never shouldst behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
And reach into thy heart,—when mine is cold,—
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

[16] defiled. The phrase is from *Macbeth*, III, i, 64.

116

To aid thy mind's development, to watch
Thy dawn of little joys, to sit and see
Almost thy very growth, to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects,—wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,—
This, it should seem, was not reserved for me—[17]
Yet this was in my nature: as it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

117

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me—though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation, and a broken claim:
Though the grave closed between us,—'twere the same,
I know that thou wilt love me—though to drain
My blood from out thy being were an aim,
And an attainment,—all would be in vain,—
Still thou wouldst love me, still that more than life retain.

118

The child of Love, though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in Convulsion. Of thy sire
These were the elements,—and thine no less.
As yet such are around thee,—but thy fire
Shall be more tempered, and thy hope far higher.
Sweet be thy cradled slumbers! O'er the sea
And from the mountains where I now respire,
Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,
As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me.

(1816)

Sonnet on Chillon[1]

Byron wrote this sonnet on his hero of *The Prisoner of Chillon* (see p. 242) to pay tribute to "a man worthy of the best age of ancient freedom."

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art:

[17] Byron never saw his daughter Ada after her babyhood

[1] The château of Chillon on the Lake of Geneva.

For there thy habitation is the heart—
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned—
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar—for 't was trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard!—May none those marks efface!
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

(1816)

The Prisoner of Chillon

While inclement weather kept Byron and Shelley at an inn near Lausanne, the poet wrote his first version of this poem in the space of two days.

François Bonnivard was born in 1496; he was prior of St. Victor, near Geneva. In his support of the cause of the Republic of Geneva against the Duke of Savoy he became a martyr to liberty. He was imprisoned in the dungeon of Chillon from 1530 to 1536. Taking liberties with history, Byron has invented two brothers to share his martyrdom.

1

My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears.
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are banned, and barred—forbidden fare;
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death;
That father perished at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place;
We were seven—who now are one,
Six in youth, and one in age,
Finished as they had begun,
Proud of Persecution's rage;
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have sealed,
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied;—
Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

2

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and gray,
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray,
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp:
And in each pillar there is a ring,
And in each ring there is a chain;
That iron is a cankering thing,
For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away,
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes,
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years—I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score
When my last brother drooped and died,
And I lay living by his side.

3

They chained us each to a column stone,
And we were three—yet, each alone;
We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together—yet apart,
Fettered in hand, but joined in heart,
'T was still some solace in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon stone,
A grating sound—not full and free
As they of yore were wont to be;
It might be fancy—but to me
They never sounded like our own.

4

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest
I ought to do—and did my best—
And each did well in his degree.
The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him—with eyes as blue as heaven—
For him my soul was sorely moved:
And truly might it be distressed
To see such bird in such a nest;
For he was beautiful as day—
(When day was beautiful to me
As to young eagles, being free)—
A polar day, which will not see
A sunset till its summer's gone,
Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun:
And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for naught but others' ills,
And then they flowed like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe
Which he abhorred to view below.

5

The other was as pure of mind,
But formed to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perished in the foremost rank
With joy:—but not in chains to pine:
His spirit withered with their clank,
I saw it silently decline—
And so perchance in sooth did mine:
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.
He was a hunter of the hills,
Had followed there the deer and wolf;
To him this dungeon was a gulf,
And fettered feet the worst of ills.

6

Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,
Which round about the wave inthrals:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave.
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay:
We heard it ripple night and day;
Sounding o'er our heads it knocked;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky;
And then the very rock hath rocked,
And I have felt it shake, unshocked,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

7

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food;
It was not that 't was coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare,
And for the like had little care:
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captive's tears
Have moistened many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den;
But what were these to us or him?
These wasted not his heart or limb;
My brother's soul was of that mould
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side;
But why delay the truth?—he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead,—
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died—and they unlocked his chain,
And scooped for him a shallow grave
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begged them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine—it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer—
They coldly laughed—and laid him there:
The flat and turfless earth above
The being we so much did love;

His empty chain above it leant,
Such Murder's fitting monument!

8

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherished since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be
Less wretched now, and one day free;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired—
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was withered on the stalk away.
Oh, God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood:—
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread:
But these were horrors—this was woe
Unmixed with such—but sure and slow:
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender—kind,
And grieved for those he left behind;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray;
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright;
And not a word of murmur—not
A groan o'er his untimely lot,—
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I was sunk in silence—lost
In this last loss, of all the most;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting Nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less:
I listened, but I could not hear—
I called, for I was wild with fear;
I knew 't was hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonishéd;
I called, and thought I heard a sound—
I burst my chain with one strong bound,
And rushed to him:—I found him not,
I only stirred in this black spot,
I only lived—*I* only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;
The last—the sole—the dearest link
Between me and the eternal brink,
Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath—
My brothers—both had ceased to breathe!
I took that hand which lay so still,
Alas! my own was full as chill;
I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive—
A frantic feeling, when we know
That what we love shall ne'er be so.
I know not why
I could not die,
I had no earthly hope—but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death.

9

What next befell me then and there
I know not well—I never knew—
First came the loss of light, and air,
And then of darkness too:
I had no thought, no feeling—none—
Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist;
For all was blank, and bleak, and gray;
It was not night—it was not day,
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness—without a place;
There were no stars—no earth—no time—
No check—no change—no good—no crime—
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless!

10

A light broke in upon my brain,—
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,

And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track;
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before,
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perched, as fond and tame,
And tamer than upon the tree;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all for me!
I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more:
It seemed like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in wingéd guise,
A visitant from Paradise;
For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile—
I sometimes deemed that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 't was mortal—well I knew,
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone,—
Lone—as the corse within its shroud,
Lone—as a solitary cloud,
A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

11

A kind of change came in my fate,
My keepers grew compassionate;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was:—my broken chain
With links unfastened did remain,
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part;
And round the pillars one by one,
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crushed heart fell blind and sick.

12

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all,
Who loved me in a human shape;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me:
No child—no sire—no kin had I,
No partner in my misery;
I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barred windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high,
The quiet of a loving eye.

13

I saw them—and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high—their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channelled rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-walled distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down;
And then there was a little isle,[2]
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle it seemed no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,

[2] Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island, the only one I could perceive in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference It contains a few trees (I think not above three), and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view.—Byron.

And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seemed joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seemed to fly;
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,—
And yet my glance, too much oppressed,
Had almost need of such a rest.

14

It might be months, or years, or days—
I kept no count—I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free;
I asked not why, and recked not where;
It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be,
I learned to love despair.
And thus when they appeared at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage—and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home:
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watched them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learned to dwell—
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:—even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh.

(1816)

To Thomas Moore

My boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea;
But, before I go, Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee!

Here's a sigh to those who love me,
And a smile to those who hate;
And, whatever sky's above me,
Here's a heart for every fate.

Though the ocean roar around me,
Yet it still shall bear me on;
Though a desert should surround me,
It hath springs that may be won.

Were't the last drop in the well,
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'Tis to thee that I would drink.

With that water, as this wine,
The libation I would pour
Should be—peace with thine and mine,
And a health to thee, Tom Moore.

(written 1816-17)

So We'll Go No More A Roving

So, we'll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.

(written 1817)

From *Don Juan*

Don Juan (Byron rhymes it with *new one*) was begun in Venice in 1818. By the next year Byron was fairly through with amatory adventuring. He had fallen in love with the Countess Guiccioli, to whom he remained, in his own peculiar manner, attached for the rest of his life, and was writing rapidly. Some of his best friends, having read the early cantos of this work, urged him not to publish it. Convinced that "it *is* poetry," Byron issued the first two cantos anonymously in 1819. By the time of his death five years later he had poured out sixteen cantos and was working on the seventeenth.

In England the poem naturally caused something of a panic because of its seemingly purposeful immorality. The reviewer of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* said of it that it contains "unquestionably a more thorough and intense infusion of genius and vice—power and profligacy—than any poem which has ever before been written in English, or indeed in any other modern language. . . . The moral strain of the whole poem is pitched in the lowest key—and if the genius of the author lifts him now and then out of his pollution, it seems as if he regretted the elevation, and made all haste to descend again. . . . Love—honor—patriotism—religion, are mentioned only to be scoffed at and derided, as if their sole resting-place were or ought to be, in the bosoms of fools. . . . impiously railing against his God—madly and meanly disloyal to his Sovereign and his country,—and brutally outraging all the best feelings of female honor, affection, and confidence—How small a part of chivalry is that which remains to the descendant of the Byrons—a gloomy vizor, and a deadly weapon!"

Posterity has reversed this shocked judgment. *Don Juan* is usually spoken of as Byron's most characteristic, if not his most remarkable, achievement. Certainly here at last he found fullest expression for the double side of his genius: the heroic and the satiric. In the adventures of his frank and spontaneous hero, who is an indirect literary descendant of the legendary Spanish lover, the Byron who loved Pope is to be read as plainly as the Byron who was a close kinsman of Werther and of the hero of *The Robbers*. The romantic mock-epic narrative, which follows Juan's amorous travels from Spain to England via Greece, Turkey, and Russia, is interrupted whenever the poet feels like indulging in a satiric digression. Sometimes the poem will rise to heights of poetic fervor and inspiration; and then, suddenly, Byron will mock the reader for having taken him seriously by cutting outrageous capers in the succeeding stanzas or by pointing his lines (and even his rhymes) with malice. It is, indeed, the nearest thing to a picture of Byron as he actually lived.

Although the stanza form, *ottava rima*, had been used in English literature since the middle of the sixteenth century, Byron employed it so brilliantly that it has become familiarly known as the "Don Juan stanza."

Dedication

Bob Southey! You're a poet—Poet-laureate,
And representative of all the race;
Although 'tis true that you turned out a Tory at
Last[1]—yours has lately been a common case;
And now, my Epic Renegade! what are ye at?
With all the Lakers,[2] in and out of place?
A nest of tuneful persons, to my eye
Like "four and twenty Blackbirds in a pye;

"Which pye being opened they began to sing"
(This old song and new simile holds good),
"A dainty dish to set before the King,"
Or Regent,[3] who admires such kind of food;—
And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,
But like a hawk encumbered with his hood—
Explaining metaphysics to the nation—
I wish he would explain his Explanation.

You, Bob! are rather insolent, you know,
At being disappointed in your wish

[1] Southey, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, had long ago abandoned his youthful republicanism.

[2] the Lake poets.

[3] Prince of Wales, later George IV.

To supersede all warblers here below,
And be the only Blackbird in the dish;
And then you overstrain yourself, or so,
And tumble downward like the flying fish
Gasping on deck, because you soar too high, Bob,
And fall for lack of moisture quite a-dry, Bob!

And Wordsworth, in a rather long "Excursion"
(I think the quarto holds five hundred pages),
Has given a sample from the vasty version
Of his new system to perplex the sages;
'Tis poetry—at least by his assertion,
And may appear so when the dog-star rages—
And he who understands it would be able
To add a story to the Tower of Babel.

You—Gentlemen! by dint of long seclusion
From better company, have kept your own
At Keswick,[4] and through still continued fusion
Of one another's minds, at last have grown
To deem as a most logical conclusion,
That poesy has wreaths for you alone;
There is a narrowness in such a notion,
Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for ocean.

I would not imitate the petty thought,
Nor coin my self-love to so base a vice,
For all the glory your conversion brought,
Since gold alone should not have been its price,
You have your salary; was't for that you wrought?
And Wordsworth has his place in the Excise.[5]
You're shabby fellows—true—but poets still,
And duly seated on the immortal hill.

Your bays[6] may hide the baldness of your brows—
Perhaps some virtuous blushes;—let them go—
To you I envy neither fruit nor boughs—
And for the fame you would engross below,
The field is universal, and allows
Scope to all such as feel the inherent glow;
Scott, Rogers,[7] Campbell,[8] Moore, and Crabbe will try
'Gainst you the question with posterity.

For me, who, wandering with pedestrian Muses,
Contend not with you on the wingéd steed,[9]
I wish your fate may yield ye, when she chooses,
The fame you envy, and the skill you need;
And recollect a poet nothing loses
In giving to his brethren their full meed
Of merit, and complaint of present days
Is not the certain path to future praise.

He that reserves his laurels for posterity
(Who does not often claim the bright reversion)
Has generally no great crop to spare it, he
Being only injured by his own assertion;
And although here and there some glorious rarity
Arise like Titan[10] from the sea's immersion,
The major part of such appellants go
To—God knows where—for no one else can know.

If, fallen in evil days on evil tongues,[11]
Milton appealed to the Avenger, Time,
If Time, the Avenger, execrates his wrongs,
And makes the word *"Miltonic"* mean *"sublime,"*
He deigned not to belie his soul in songs,
Nor turn his very talent to a crime;
He did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,[12]
But closed the tyrant-hater he began.

Think'st thou, could he—the blind Old man—arise,
Like Samuel[13] from the grave, to freeze once more
The blood of monarchs with his prophecies,
Or be alive again—again all hoar
With time and trials, and those helpless eyes,
And heartless daughters—worn—and pale—and poor;
Would *he* adore a sultan? *he* obey
The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh?[14]

Cold-blooded, smooth-faced, placid miscreant!
Dabbling its sleek young hands in Erin's gore

[4] in the Lake Country.
[5] Wordsworth had been appointed Distributor of stamps for Westmoreland (1813).
[6] wreaths of laurel.
[7] Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), minor poet.
[8] Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), a poet much overrated in the nineteenth century.
[9] Pegasus (i.e. poetic inspiration).
[10] the race of giants who warred against the gods.
[11] *Paradise Lost* 7, 26.
[12] In his youth Southey had hated the tyrannical George III.
[13] *1 Samuel*, 28.
[14] Foreign Secretary, cruel to the Irish rebels

And thus for wider carnage taught to pant,
  Transferred to gorge upon a sister shore,
The vulgarest tool that Tyranny could want,
  With just enough of talent, and no more,
To lengthen fetters by another fixed,
And offer poison long already mixed.

An orator of such set trash of phrase
  Ineffably—legitimately vile,
That even its grossest flatterers dare not praise,
  Nor foes—all nations—condescend to smile;
Not even a sprightly blunder's spark can blaze
  From that Ixion[15] grindstone's ceaseless toil,
That turns and turns to give the world a notion
Of endless torments and perpetual motion.

A bungler even in its disgusting trade,
  And botching, patching, leaving still behind
Something of which its masters are afraid,
  States to be curbed, and thoughts to be confined,
Conspiracy or Congress to be made—
  Cobbling at manacles for all mankind—
A tinkering slave-maker, who mends old chains,
With God and man's abhorrence for its gains.

If we may judge of matter by the mind,
  Emasculated to the marrow, *It*
Hath but two objects, how to serve, and bind,
  Deeming the chain it wears even men may fit,
Eutropius[16] of its many masters—blind
  To worth as freedom, wisdom as to wit.
Fearless—because *no* feeling dwells in ice,
Its very courage stagnates to a vice.

Where shall I turn me not to *view* its bonds,
  For I will never *feel* them?—Italy!
Thy late reviving Roman soul desponds
  Beneath the lie this State-thing breathed o'er thee—
Thy clanking chain, and Erin's yet green wounds,
  Have voices—tongues to cry aloud for me.
Europe has slaves, allies, kings, armies still,
And Southey lives to sing them very ill.

[15] who boasted of Juno's favors, and in punishment was bound to a revolving wheel in Hades.
[16] Chamberlain to the Eastern Emperor (395 A.D.).

Meantime, Sir Laureate, I proceed to dedicate,
  In honest simple verse, this song to you.
And, if in flattering strains I do not predicate,
  'Tis that I still retain my "buff and blue";[17]
My politics as yet are all to educate:
  Apostasy's so fashionable, too,
To keep *one* creed's a task grown quite Herculean:
Is it not so, my Tory, Ultra-Julian?[18]

From *Canto the Third*

85

Thus, usually, when *he* was asked to sing,
  He gave the different nations something national;
'Twas all the same to him—"God save the king,"[1]
  Or *"Ça ira,"*[2] according to the fashion all:
His muse made increment of any thing,
  From the high lyric down to the low rational:
If Pindar[3] sang horse-races, what should hinder
Himself from being as pliable as Pindar?

86

In France, for instance, he would write a chanson;
  In England a six canto quarto tale;
In Spain, he'd make a ballad or romance on
  The last war—much the same in Portugal;
In Germany, the Pegasus[4] he'd prance on
  Would be old Goethe's (see what says De Staël);[5]
In Italy he'd ape the "Trecentisti;"[6]
In Greece, he'd sing some sort of hymn like this t' ye:

[17] Colors of the Whig Club.
[18] a reference to Julian the Apostate, Emperor of Rome (361-363)
[1] the British national hymn.
[2] a song used during the French Revolution.
[3] See p. 1133.
[4] the winged horse of the Muses.
[5] Madame de Stael (1766-1817), celebrated French writer who had met Goethe in Germany
[6] Italian artists of the 14th century.

I

The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece!
  Where burning Sappho[7] loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
  Where Delos[8] rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

II

The Scian[9] and the Teian[10] muse,
  The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse;
  Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest."[11]

III

The mountains look on Marathon—[12]
  And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
  I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

IV

A king[13] sate on the rocky brow
  Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;[18]
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
  And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set where were they?

V

And where are they? and where art thou,
  My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
  The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

VI

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
  Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
  Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

VII

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?
  Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
  A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylæ![14]

VIII

What, silent still? and silent all?
  Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
  And answer, "Let one living head,
But one arise,—we come, we come!"
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

IX

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;
  Fill high the cup with Samian[15] wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
  And shed the blood of Scio's vine![16]
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal![17]

[7] See I, p. 1090
[8] supposed to be the birthplace of Phœbus Apollo.
[9] Homer, supposed by some to have been born at Scio.
[10] Anacreon.
[11] the happy otherworld frequently referred to in Greek literature.
[12] where the Persians were defeated by the Athenians in 490 B.C.
[13] Xerxes, who saw his fleet defeated at Salamis in 480 B.C.
[14] In 480 B.C. Xerxes and his host were halted by three hundred Spartans who were defending the pass at Thermopylae.
[15] famous wine from the island of Samos
[16] a wine-growing island off the coast of Asia Minor.
[17] those who celebrate the festival of Bacchus, the god of wine.

X

You have the Pyrrhic dance[18] as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus[19] gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?

XI

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's[20] song divine:
He served—but served Polycrates—
A tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.

XII

The tyrant of the Chersonese[21]
Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades![22]
Oh! that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

XIII

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,[23]
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric[24] mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood[25] might own.

XIV

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells:
In native swords, and native ranks,
The only hope of courage dwells;
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,
Would break your shield, however broad.

XV

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

XVI

Place me on Sunium's[26] marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

87

Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus[27] quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in these times he might have done much worse:
His strain displayed some feeling—right or wrong;
And feeling, in a poet, is the source
Of others' feeling; but they are such liars,
And take all colors—like the hands of dyers.

88

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces
Frail man, when paper—even a rag like this,
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his.

89

And when his bones are dust, his grave a blank,
His station, generation, even his nation,
Become a thing, or nothing, save to rank
In chronological commemoration,

[18] an ancient Greek dance practiced by armed soldiers.
[19] According to tradition, Cadmus invented the alphabet
[20] See I, p. 559.
[21] land lying along the European side of the Hellespont.
[22] the victorious general at Marathon.
[23] Turkish fortresses in Epirus.
[24] belonging to that branch of the Greek race settled in southern Greece.
[25] descended from Hercules
[26] the promontory between the Ægean and the Gulf of Ægina.
[27] the mythical musician.

Some dull MS.[28] Oblivion long has sank,
Or graven stone found in a barrack's station
In digging the foundation of a closet,
May turn his name up, as a rare deposit.

90

And Glory long has made the sages smile;
'Tis something, nothing, words, illusion, wind—
Depending more upon the historian's style
Than on the name a person leaves behind:
Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle:[29]
The present century was growing blind
To the great Marlborough's[30] skill in giving knocks,
Until his late Life by Archdeacon Coxe.

91

Milton 's the Prince of Poets—so we say;
A little heavy, but no less divine:
An independent being in his day—
Learned, pious, temperate in love and wine;
But, his life falling into Johnson's[31] way,
We're told this great High Priest of all the Nine[32]
Was whipt at college—a harsh sire—odd spouse,
For the first Mrs. Milton left his house.

92

All these are, *certes,* entertaining facts,
Like Shakespeare's stealing deer, Lord Bacon's bribes;
Like Titus' youth, and Cæsar's earliest acts;
Like Burns (whom Doctor Currie well describes);
Like Cromwell's pranks;—but although Truth exacts
These amiable descriptions from the scribes,
As most essential to their hero's story,
They do not much contribute to his glory.

93

All are not moralists, like Southey, when
He prated to the world of "Pantisocracy;"[33]
Or Wordsworth unexcised, unhired,[34] who then
Seasoned his pedlar poems with Democracy;
Or Coleridge, long before his flighty pen
Let to the *Morning Post* its aristocracy;
When he and Southey, following the same path,
Espoused two partners[35] (milliners of Bath).

94

Such names at present cut a convict figure,
The very Botany Bay[36] in moral geography;
Their loyal treason, renegado rigor,
Are good manure for their more bare biography.
Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger
Than any since the birthday of typography;
A drowsy frowzy poem, called the *"Excursion,"*
Writ in a manner which is my aversion.

95

He there builds up a formidable dyke
Between his own and others' intellect;
But Wordsworth's poem, and his followers, like
Joanna Southcote's[37] Shiloh, and her sect,
Are things which in this century don't strike
The public mind,—so few are the elect;
And the new births of both their stale virginities
Have proved but dropsies, taken for divinities.

96

But let me to my story: I must own,
If I have any fault, it is digression—
Leaving my people to proceed alone,
While I soliloquize beyond expression;
But these are my addresses from the throne,
Which put off business to the ensuing session:
Forgetting each omission is a loss to
The world, not quite so great as Ariosto.[38]

[28] manuscript.
[29] Edmund Hoyle (1672-1769), authority on whist.
[30] John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722), famous English general and statesman.
[31] Dr. Samuel Johnson; see I, p. 908 ff.
[32] the nine Muses.
[33] the name of a scheme for an ideal community which Southey, Coleridge, and others planned to establish in America.
[34] a reference to Wordsworth's appointment in 1813 as Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland. Byron implies that Wordsworth had changed from his earlier democratic ideas.
[35] Coleridge and Southey married sisters, the Misses Fricker, who used to take their vacations at Bath.
[36] a convict station on the east coast of Australia.
[37] Miss Southcote prophesied that on October 19, 1814, she would give birth to a second Shiloh, or Messiah. When the date arrived she fell into a trance and died within ten days.
[38] See I, p. 1073.

97

I know that what our neighbors call *"longueurs"*[39]
(We've not so good a *word*, but have the *thing*,
In that complete perfection which insures
An epic from Bob Southey every spring),
Form not the true temptation which allures
The reader; but 'twould not be hard to bring
Some fine examples of the *epopée*,[40]
To prove its grand ingredient is *ennui*.

98

We learn from Horace,[41] "Homer sometimes sleeps;"
We feel without him,—Wordsworth sometimes wakes,—
To show with what complacency he creeps,
With his dear *"Wagoners,"* around his lakes.
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps—
Of Ocean?—No, of air; and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
And drivels seas to set it well afloat.

99

If he must fain sweep o'er the ethereal plain,
And Pegasus runs restive in his "Wagon,"
Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?[42]
Or pray Medea[43] for a single dragon?
Or if, too classic for his vulgar brain,
He feared his neck to venture such a nag on,
And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

100

"Pedlars," and "Boats," and "Wagons!" Oh! ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss
Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades[44]
Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—
The "little boatman" and his "Peter Bell"
Can sneer at him who drew "Achitophel"![45]

[39] tediousness.
[40] epic.
[41] See *The Art of Poetry*, I, p. 1124.
[42] a name for the constellation of the Great Bear.
[43] at the end of the play of *Medea*, Euripides has his heroine escape in a dragon-drawn chariot.
[44] Cade was the leader of a rebellion in Kent in 1450.
[45] Dryden; see I, p. 681 ff.

101

T' our tale.—The feast was over, the slaves gone,
The dwarfs and dancing girls had all retired;
The Arab lore and Poet's song were done,
And every sound of revelry expired;
The lady and her lover, left alone,
The rosy flood of Twilight's sky admired;—
Ave Maria! o'er the earth and sea,
That heavenliest hour of Heaven is worthiest thee!

102

Ave Maria! blessèd be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft,
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

103

Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of Love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove—
What though 'tis but a pictured image?—strike—
That painting is no idol,—'tis too like.

104

Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,
In nameless print—that I have no devotion;
But set those persons down with me to pray,
And you shall see who has the properest notion
Of getting into Heaven the shortest way;
My altars are the mountains and the Ocean,
Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the Soul.

105

Sweet Hour of Twilight!—in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's[46] immemorial wood,

[46] a city in northern Italy, the last capital of the Roman emperors of the West.

Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,
To where the last Cæsarean fortress stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay[47] made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee!

106

The shrill cicalas, people of the pine,
Making their summer lives one ceaseless song,
Were the sole echoes, save my steed's and mine,
And Vesper bell's that rose the boughs along;
The spectre huntsman[48] of Onesti's line,
His hell-dogs, and their chase, and the fair throng
Which learned from this example not to fly
From a true lover,—shadowed my mind's eye.

107

Oh, Hesperus! thou bringest all good things—
Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
To the young bird the parent's brooding wings,
The welcome stall to the o'erlabored steer;[49]
Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
Are gathered round us by thy look of rest;
Thou bring'st the child, too, to the mother's breast.

108

Soft Hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
As the far bell of Vesper makes him start,
Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;
Is this a fancy which our reason scorns?
Ah! surely Nothing dies but Something mourns!

109

When Nero perished by the justest doom
Which ever the Destroyer yet destroyed,
Amidst the roar of liberated Rome,
Of nations freed, and the world overjoyed,
Some hands unseen strewed flowers upon his tomb:
Perhaps the weakness of a heart not void
Of feeling for some kindness done, when Power
Had left the wretch an uncorrupted hour.

110

But I'm digressing; what on earth has Nero,
Or any such like sovereign buffoons,
To do with the transactions of my hero,
More than such madmen's fellow man—the moon's?
Sure my invention must be down at zero,
And I grown one of many "wooden spoons"
Of verse (the name with which we Cantabs[50] please
To dub the last of honors in degrees).

111

I feel this tediousness will never do—
'Tis being *too* epic, and I must cut down
(In copying) this long canto into two;
They'll never find it out, unless I own
The fact, excepting some experienced few;
And then as an improvement 'twill be shown:
I'll prove that such the opinion of the critic is
From Aristotle *passim*.—See Ποιητικης.[51]

(written 1818-20)

When a Man Hath No Freedom

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
Let him combat for that of his neighbors;
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,
And get knocked on the head for his labors.

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,
And is always as nobly requited;
Then battle for freedom wherever you can,
And, if not shot or hanged, you'll get knighted.

(written 1820)

[47] Dryden's poem, *Theodore and Honoria*, based on a story in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

[48] a reference to Boccaccio's story.

[49] This passage is a close paraphrase of one of the poems of Sappho, see I, p. 1090.

[50] students of Cambridge.

[51] *The Poetics*

Stanzas Written on the Road between Florence and Pisa

Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story;
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty
Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty.

What are garlands and crowns to the brow that is wrinkled?
'Tis but as a dead-flower with May-dew besprinkled.
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary!
What care I for the wreaths that can *only* give glory!

Oh Fame! if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover,
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

There chiefly I sought thee, *there* only I found thee;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;
When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story,
I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory.

(written 1821)

On This Day I Complete My Thirty-sixth Year

Missolonghi, January 22, 1824

This, Byron's last poem, was written three months before his death, in Greece, where he was assisting the cause of the Greek patriots.

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move;
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

But 'tis not *thus*—and 'tis not *here*—
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,
Where glory decks the hero's bier,
Or binds his brow.

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

Awake! (not Greece—she *is* awake!)
Awake, my spirit! Think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy manhood!—unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live*?
The land of honorable death
Is here:—up to the field, and give
Away thy breath!

Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

(1792-1822)

Textbooks frequently refer to the period of the Romantic Movement as the Age of Wordsworth, but it is likely that the most beloved poet of that era is Shelley. Often called, like Spenser, "the poet's poet," he possessed a genius of the first order. Wordsworth was a greater innovator, Coleridge had a more profoundly philosophic mind, Byron's career was more spectacular, Keats has exerted a wider influence; but Shelley was, of all of them, most perfectly the poet. (His great creations—and they are many)—are beyond praise. Similar in no other respect, perhaps, to those of Shakespeare, they are like them in this: they possess an ultimate, untranslatable, indescribable perfection that is completely inimitable.)

(One of the tragedies of literary history is that the narrow codes of his time caused him to be anathematized. Even when his poetry was virtually unknown, his name was a subject of public abhorrence because of his connection with a sensational scandal. Yet few men of purer soul and greater integrity than he have ever lived. His life, which he conducted consistently on the highest ethical plane, was judged by the straitest criteria of respectability. "There is another man gone," wrote Byron to Moore after Shelley's death, "about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken." And to Murray he wrote: "You were all brutally mistaken about Shelley who was without exception the *best* and least selfish man I ever knew." Byron's cynicism, it should be remembered, led him to lavish such words on no one; but of Shelley he never tired of asserting that he was "the *best* man" of his acquaintance. It is testimony to a frustrated vein of goodness in Byron's nature that he should have been able to do Shelley this justice. For two men more unlike would be hard to name. Byron was self-consciously ribald, malicious, and flippant. Shelley was tense, sincere, modest, not quite of this world.

Shelley was born August 4, 1792, at Field Place, in Sussex. His father, Timothy Shelley, was a wealthy country squire, conservative and conventional, to whom his son was ever a complete mystery. His unavailing efforts to make the poet subscribe to his canons of behavior and politics resulted in friction that increased with the years, until the elder Shelley came to personify for his son all that he detested in the world. After a dreamlike boyhood spent in the company of his sisters, Shelley was sent to Eton, where he soon was disgracing himself because of his inability to conform to the traditional studies and sports of the place. By preference he wandered off over the countryside, sailed pieces of driftwood or paper down rapid streams, or in private performed dangerous experiments with chemicals.

His great discovery at Eton, however, was the *Political Justice* of William Godwin (see p. 100). This analysis of the woes of mankind and program for their cures, long discredited since its brief influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge, fired the imagination of the boy and made him a disciple at once. "I burn with impatience for the moment of the dissolution of Intolerance," he wrote to his friend Hogg in 1811. "On one subject I am cool," he continued, "toleration; yet that coolness alone possesses me that I may with more certainty guide the spear to the breast of my adversary, with more certainty ensanguine it with the heart's blood of Intolerance,—hated name! Adieu. Down with Bigotry! Down with Intolerance!"

In 1810 Shelley entered University College, Oxford. Again he was little inclined to accept the routine of college life and made few friendships besides the lasting, close one with Thomas Jefferson Hogg (who later wrote an important biography of him). His stay at Oxford was short. Having devoured the writings of the French skeptical philosophers, particularly D'Holbach, he published and circulated at the university a tract which he himself had written on *The Necessity of Atheism*. When he was forthwith summoned to account, Hogg loyally managed to be involved in the case, and both lads were expelled from Oxford in March 1811. Timothy Shelley, horrified, stipulated that his son break off his friendship with Hogg. The boy refused, and was thereupon denied admission to Field Place.

Shelley, aided by his sister's pocket-money, took lodgings in London, where he became acquainted with Harriet Westbrook, who fell in love with him. To him she was an interesting disciple, like his friends and sisters, to whom he could propound the wonderful doctrines of Godwin which, by his own admission, had made him "a wiser and a better man." Was he not himself exerting his powers to the full in the cause of justice? When an Irish journalist was sentenced to prison for an attack on Lord Castlereagh, Minister of War, Shelley wrote his *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (1811). When Leigh Hunt was acquitted after a trial resulting from his charges of brutality against the army, Shelley wrote him a letter of self-introduction, proposing a society to propagate freedom of speech (1811). To members of the clergy he sent copies of *The Necessity of Atheism*. Harriet listened with attention to her new tutor. And with matrimony clearly in mind, she represented to him that she was being persecuted at home and at school. In order to save her, Shelley eloped with her to Scotland, and, although matrimony was against his Godwinian philosophy, married her in August 1811, when she was sixteen and he nineteen.

Together they went to deliver the Irish people from tyranny. From the balcony of their hotel, he and Harriet showered down copies of *An Address to the Irish People*, *Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists*, and the *Declaration of Rights*—pamphlets composed by Shelley and published at his expense (1812). But, as the Irish people showed a distressing reluctance to save themselves, Shelley left. Besides, Godwin, to whom he had sent texts, thoroughly disapproved of this attempt to hasten the slow process of human perfectibility. "When you reprove me," Shelley humbly acknowledged, "reason speaks and I acquiesce." He satisfied himself with adding that he would "look for events . . . ages after I have mouldered in the dust."

At college he had published some verse and two extravagant prose romances. In 1813 he finished his first important poem, *Queen Mab*, under the influence of Volney's *Ruins of Empires* (see p. 1158). Although inferior to his later works, it exhibits one salient characteristic of all his poetry. Shelley wrote because he was convinced that by so doing he was helping to prepare the way for a better society. The social message is the motivating ingredient in all his major works, and in many of his shorter pieces. Even a superb nature poem, like the *Ode to the West Wind*, owes its inspiration to Shelley's dream of a better world. Common though it is to think of him as one of our supreme poets of nature pure "nature poems" like *The Cloud* are not frequently to be found in his works. *Queen Mab* is significant, therefore, as his earliest extended revolutionary poem, presenting, as it does, a vision of Godwinian society. In the copious notes he furnished for it, he reveals himself as a rebel against institutions and government, which he found responsible for all the ills of society.

After two years of marriage, Harriet began to tire of their nomadic life and of the revolutionary fervor that prompted it. She was tiring, too, of sharing her young husband's vast schemes, and she resented his friends. Her thoughts turned more and more toward the settled life to which she felt that the wife of Timothy Shelley's heir was entitled. In this mode of thinking she was abetted by her ever-present sister, Eliza, whom Shelley came to dislike, with good reason. Meanwhile, Godwin, with whom Shelley had become per-

sonally acquainted, had presented his financial difficulties (as he was to do for many years) to the poet, and in his desire to aid his master Shelley called frequently at the Godwin home. There he met Mary Godwin, daughter of the philosopher and a wonderful mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Their ideas, their sympathies seemed perfectly attuned, and Shelley felt that he had met his destined mate. Unwilling to live with any subterfuge, Shelley informed Harriet that it was immoral for them to live longer together, since they had nothing in common. "Our connection was not one of passion and impulse," he told her, but only of friendship. She refused, however, to agree to his living with Mary. At his wits' end to find a solution agreeable to all, he made a proposal that only he could have made: why should not all three live together, Mary as his wife, and Harriet as his friend? Naturally, Harriet rejected the idea. In despair, for even the nobly iconoclastic Godwin stopped short of consenting to an illegal union for his daughter, Shelley took laudanum. The dose did not prove fatal. In July 1814, casting discretion to the winds, he eloped with Mary to the Continent. Two years later Harriet drowned herself, and made Shelley's name synonymous with that of scoundrel for the rest of his days. Nor did he ever acquit himself of the responsibility for her death, even though he had acted throughout on principle. Over his short life there always hovered the cloud of that catastrophe; the anguish it cost him can be read in *Adonais*.

In the meantime, Mary and Shelley returned to England. There, after a summer spent in Windsor Forest, he composed his beautiful *Alastor; or the Spirit of Solitude* (1816), the first work in his true poetic vein. A masterpiece of rhythmic design, it is an expression of one of his favorite themes: ideal love. In 1816 Mary and he, accompanied by her half-sister, Jane Clairmont, went to Switzerland, where they met Byron, with whom they became good friends. When they came back to England in the autumn, a double shock soon stunned them: first the suicide of Mary's sister Fanny, and then Harriet's suicide. Broken in health by these disasters, and further shattered by a losing suit to gain custody of the two children Harriet had borne him, Shelley nevertheless engaged himself on several ambitious tasks. To this year (1817) belongs the composition of *Prince Athanase, Rosalind and Helen*, and *The Revolt of Islam*. This last is a kind of supplement to *Queen Mab*, and deals with the temporarily successful revolt of a people against their tyrants. A poetic commentary on the French Revolution, it accounts for the failure of the enterprise on the grounds that the people were not ready for liberty. Thus Shelley alone, of the romantic poets, refused to consider the French Revolution as a complete cause of despair or of reversion to conservatism. The "people have seen a type of peace," he said, and eventual triumph of freedom was assured.

Everywhere met with loathing, hounded as a villain (his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* a few years later reads: "We ought as justly to regret the decease of the devil"), but conscious of having lived according to the purest of systems, Shelley found dwelling any longer in England impossible. In March 1818 he left it forever with Mary (now legally his wife), Jane Clairmont, and the latter's child. The remaining four years of his life were spent in Italy, under whose beneficent skies his genius flowered in magnificence. Although he still had troubles enough, his life was now comparatively tranquil. He had leisure to study and write and to enjoy, when he could free himself of his heavy depression, the manifold beauties about him. His visit to Byron in Venice (1818) is commemorated in his interesting portraits of himself and his friend in *Julian and Maddalo*. In the Euganean Hills, while staying at Byron's villa, he began working on his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound*.

The year 1819 proved to be *annus mirabilis* for Shelley—and for English poetry—for in it he achieved complete maturity in his art. In this "wonderful year" he composed: *The Cenci*, one of the noblest poetic tragedies since the Elizabethans; the *Ode to the West Wind*, one of the most inspired pieces of lyrical utterance ever conceived; *Peter Bell the Third*, a satire on renegades from liberalism, such as he conceived Wordsworth and Coleridge to be; and the republican *Mask of Anarchy*. In this year, too, he completed

Prometheus Unbound, his triumphant prophecy of the liberation of humanity from tyranny and oppression.

In the winter of this year the Shelleys moved from Florence to Pisa. There a circle of friends accumulated about them—Medwin, the Williamses, the Greek patriot Prince Mavrocordato, the adventurer Trelawny, Byron, and, later, Leigh Hunt with his wife and six children. Some of Shelley's finest lyrics were written during these last two and one-half years: *To a Skylark*, *To Night*, and the final *Chorus* to his drama *Hellas*. *Epipsychidion*—a longer work—and the unfinished *Triumph of Life*, as well as the prose *Defense of Poetry* (see p. 356) were all written at this time. But the most important of these latest creations was his marvelous elegy on Keats, *Adonais*, comparable only to Milton's *Lycidas* among English threnodies.

On July 8, 1822, Shelley and his friend Williams set out from Leghorn on a trip aboard his cherished sailboat *Ariel*. Some leagues out from shore, they were caught in a terrific squall. Ten days later their bodies were washed ashore. Byron, Hunt, and Trelawny were present at the cremation of Shelley's body on the beach. His ashes and his heart, which, according to Trelawny, would not burn, were buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, near the grave of Keats.

There are several recurrent motives in Shelley's poetry. The basic one is love, through which he believed mankind would become regenerated; to the theme of ideal love he devoted *Alastor*, the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, *The Sensitive Plant*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and various lyrical poems. This part of his work derives from his profound admiration of Plato's treatment of the subject in his dialogues. His other chief subject, which he fused with his conception of ideal love, was the establishment of a more perfect society; in *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam*, and *Prometheus Unbound* (which form an ideological trilogy), and in such lyrics as in the *Ode to the West Wind* and *To a Skylark* this concern is uppermost. There is another theme, characteristic of an age that admired Goethe's *Werther* (see p. 1149), often found in his lyrics: a desire for death—but this is as attributable to the twisted circumstances of his life as to any literary trend.

The greatness of Shelley consists in more than the nobility of his thought and ideals. The passionate sincerity of his convictions lends an inner fire to his song. It is one of the most amazing phenomena in literature that the cold dogmas of Godwin could have inspired such burning rapture as Shelley's. But it is as an artist that Shelley is supreme. Subtler than Wordsworth, his genius penetrated closer to the mystic wonder of nature, and he has caught her in her most evanescent moods. It is out of the most immaterial, intangible aspects of nature that he builds up his most marvelous images. What he says of Keats is far truer of his own poetry:

> *He is made one with Nature: there is heard*
> *His voice in all her music, from the moan*
> *Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;*
> *He is a presence to be felt and known*
> *In darkness and in light.*

For it is when he speaks of light and dark, of sunrise and sunset, of clouds and vapors, of clear skies and starry heavens that Shelley is most himself. And with all this, he was a master of an ethereal enchantment that passes "into the panting heart beneath, With lightning and with music."

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

Mary Shelley tells us that "the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* was conceived during his voyage round the lake [i.e. Lake Geneva] with Lord Byron. He occupied himself during this voyage by reading the *Nouvelle Heloise* for the first time. . . . There was something in the character of Saint-Preux [see p. 1143], in his complete abnegation of self, and in the worship he paid to Love, that coincided with Shelley's own disposition; and, though differing in many of the views and shocked by others, yet the effect of the whole was fascinating and delightful."

This poem exhibits Shelley's acceptance of the Platonic conception of Beauty.

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen amongst us—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread—
Like memory of music fled—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not forever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given—
Therefore the names of Dæmon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavor,
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night wind sent,
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

Love, Hope, and Self-Esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
I was not heard—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at the sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming—
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave; they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful Loveliness,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a luster in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

(written 1816)

Alastor,[1] *or The Spirit of Solitude*

Shelley wrote *Alastor* when he was only 23 years old—an amazing if not unique performance for so young a poet. With its publication he came at once into his own as a poet of the first rank. "None of Shelley's poems," wrote Mrs. Shelley, "is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspects of the visible universe inspire with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts—give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near he here represented in such colors as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace."

The poem opens with fifty lines of introduction, containing an invocation to Nature and the poet's boast that his search for her essence has been untiring. He then launches into his subject, the story of a dead poet who wandered through wilderness and ruin in pursuit of Truth. Ignoring the proffered love of an Arabian maid (line 129), the poet pursues his solitary quest. In the Vale of Cashmire he has a vision of ideal beauty, an idealization of his own highest dream, in the form of a woman. With this vision he has a brief union. When he awakes from his trance (line 192) and finds her gone, he pursues her to the Caspian Sea. Crossing it by boat in a storm (line 272), he is borne into a subterranean river in the Caucasus. The boat passes (line 369) into a canyon, past a whirlpool, and then to a placid stream leading to a beautiful valley. Here the poet continues on foot (line 469) and at last has a glimpse of a beckoning spirit, this time disembodied—a vision not of ideal beauty but of himself, of his own immortality. His faculties are declining. He wanders on (line 492) to a mountain, where, wearied and exhausted, he reclines and dies, the tragic victim of his own aloofness from the world. The poem concludes (line 672) with a lament that so rare a spirit as the poet's should have proved so ineffectual.

Alastor is not, as some readers have supposed, the hero's name, but the Greek word for "avenger." It signifies the evil spirit of solitude.

PREFACE

The poem entitled *Alastor* may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius, led forth, by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sings profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous and tranquil and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened, and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own

[1] "The Avenging Genius." (Greek)

imaginations unites all of wonderful or wise or beautiful which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover, could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the Furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tenderhearted perish, through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

Earth, Ocean, Air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother[2] has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And Winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs—
If Spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses—have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast,
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred—then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!

Mother of this unfathomable world,
Favour my solemn song! for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black Death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee;
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love; until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmèd night
To render up thy charge. And, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless (as a long forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane)
I wait thy breath, Great Parent; that my strain[3]
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

* * *

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hand with pious reverence reared.
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid

[2] Nature.

[3] The image is drawn from the Aeolian harp.

Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness.
A lovely youth, no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers or votive cypress wreath
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle, and brave, and generous, no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sang, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes;
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips: and all of great
Or good or lovely which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home,
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wild waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano over-canopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke; or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge; or where the secret caves,
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent[4] with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder. He would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home;
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks—

[4] crowded.

And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake,[5] suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.
His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange,
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble dæmons watch
The zodiac's brazen mystery,[6] and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth; through the long burning day,
Gazed on those speechless shapes; nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps:
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose. Then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.
The Poet, wandering on, through Arabie,
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aerial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine

[5] thicket.

[6] figures arranged on walls in the designs of the Zodiac (Egyptian architecture).

Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veilèd maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge, and truth, and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Himself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire. Wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen. At the sound he turned,
And saw, by the warm light of their own life,
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind; her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sank and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom—she drew back awhile;
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance,
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon,
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? the sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The Spirit of sweet Human Love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dreams that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost
In the wide pathless desert of dim Sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of Death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth—
While Death's blue vault with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart:
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.
While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates,
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aery wilderness: thus, driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moonlight snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos, seen from Petra's steep,
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs

Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust,[7] wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone,
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of Wind,
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In his career. The infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after times. But youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight—"Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For Sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge; and silent Death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as Sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around:
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark,
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste,
For well he knew that mighty shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny: sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leapt in the boat; he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat. A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge,
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm, and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave running on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on;
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;

[7] at Arbela in Assyria.

Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreathes her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of Day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave:
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass,
That fell, convulsing ocean—safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form
Had been an elemental god.
At midnight
The moon arose: and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves,
Bursting and eddying irresistibly,
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—
The boat fled on—the boiling torrent drove—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea;
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Engulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. "Vision and Love!"
The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and Death
Shall not divide us long."
The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow.
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose;
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering. Shall it sink
Down the abyss? shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail;
And lo! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails; and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay,
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair;
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry. It hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.
. The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of those aery rocks,
Mocking its moans respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as, led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,

Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar, overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within; and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang,
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks; and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make network of the dark-blue light of day
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose twined with jasmine
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades
Like vaporous shapes half-seen. Beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.
Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves; the grass that sprung
Startled, and glanced, and trembled, even to feel
An unaccustomed presence: and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;
But—undulating woods, and silent well,
And rippling rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming—
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was. Only—when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness—two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.
Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell. The rivulet,
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss, with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced: like childhood, laughing as it went:
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhang its quietness.—"O stream,
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course,
Have each their type in me. And the wide sky
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers, my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!"
Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet not (like him)
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.

Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook; tall spires of windlestrae[8]
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope;
And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines,
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and, where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs; so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell, and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks which in unimaginable forms
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice,
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs, and yawning caves
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems with its accumulated crags
To overhang the world: for wide expand,
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon,
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracks and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response at each pause,
In most familiar cadence—with the howl,
The thunder, and the hiss, of homeless streams,
Mingling its solemn song; whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine
And torrent were not all—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotting roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower, with leaves forever green
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore
In wanton sport those bright leaves whose decay—
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale—
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould.
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.
The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness: not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very Winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O storm of Death,
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night!
And thou, colossal Skeleton,[9] that, still
Guiding its irresistible career,
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world! from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee! Ruin calls
His brother Death! A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;

[8] a grass stalk used for making ropes.

[9] Death.

Glutted with which, thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept: no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose; the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling. His last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests; and still, as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still.
And, when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But, when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour, fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicèd waves (a dream
Of youth which night and time have quenched for ever),
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

Oh for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which, wheresoe'er it fell, made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! Oh that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice[10]
Which but one living man[11] has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! Oh that the dream[12]
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world!—But thou art fled,
Like some frail exhalation which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius! Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty earth,
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice: but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not! Upon those pallid lips,
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this feeble strain,
Let not high verse mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe,
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.

[10] of immortality.
[11] the Wandering Jew.
[12] (of immortal youth).

It is a woe "too deep for tears" when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope—
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

(written 1815)

Ozymandias

I met a traveler from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

(written 1817)

Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples

"Our winter was spent at Naples. . . . At this time Shelley suffered greatly in health. . . . Constant and poignant physical suffering exhausted him; and though he preserved the appearance of cheerfulness, and often greatly enjoyed our wanderings in the environs of Naples, and our excursions on its sunny sea, yet many hours were passed when his thoughts, shadowed by illness, became gloomy,—and then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, which he hid from fear of wounding me, poured forth morbid but too natural bursts of discontent and sadness."—*Mary Shelley.*

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might;
The breath of the moist earth is light
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds', the birds', the ocean-floods',
The City's voice itself is soft like Solitude's.

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple sea-weeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore
Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown;
I sit upon the sands alone—
The lightning of the noon-tide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content, surpassing wealth,
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne, and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

(written 1818)

Song to the Men of England

Despite the victory at Waterloo, England was in dire straits in 1819. A mad king was lingering out the last of his sixty years on the throne. A reactionary minister, Lord Castlereagh, supersensitive to mumblings of revolution, had reduced free speech to a mockery. Wealth and political power were concentrated in the hands of an unfeeling aristocracy. On August 16 a meeting of radical reformers at St. Peter's Fields in Manchester was dispersed by the cavalry with the loss of several lives. Shelley, although far away in Florence, reacted to the Manchester Massacre with a number of bitter journalistic poems. *Song to the Men of England* and *England in 1819* reveal the poet as an outspoken revolutionist.

Men of England, wherefore plow
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth—let no impostor heap;
Weave robes—let not the idle wear;
Forge arms—in your defense to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plow and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulcher.

(written 1819)

England in 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king[1]—
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn—mud from a muddy spring—
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow—
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field—
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield—
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion, Christless, Godless—a book sealed;
A Senate—Time's worst statute[2] unrepealed—
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom[3] may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

(written 1819)

Ode to the West Wind

This is certainly one of the most amazing lyrical poems in our literature, matchless in its perfection. If the verse has the rush and sweep of spontaneity, that is because great art has so contrived it. The marvelous orchestration of the music—like the music of the wind itself—was possible only to a poet who had mastered his technique. Some idea of Shelley's artistry may be obtained by noting his skillful use of Dante's *terza rima* (see I, p. 1040), here modified to form a stanza (*aba bcb cdc ded ee*). Admirable, too, is the growth of the central idea as the poem progresses. The first stanza describes the wind in the forest, the second the wind in the sky, and the third the wind on the sea; the fourth unites these pictures; and the last is devoted to the invocation containing the poet's message.

"This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapors which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that

[1] George III (d. 1820) had been insane since 1810
[2] the law limiting the rights of Catholics
[3] freedom

magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions. The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it."—*Shelley.*

1

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver; hear; oh hear!

2

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning! there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad[1] even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst: Oh hear!

[1] a priestess or female worshipper of Bacchus, the god of wine.

3

Thou who didst waken from his summer-dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's[2] bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear
And tremble and despoil themselves: Oh hear!

4

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than Thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skyey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.

5

Make me thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

[2] a seaport near Naples

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous ~~one~~!

~~Drive~~ my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind,
If Winter comes, can ~~Spring be~~ far behind?

(written 1819)

The Indian Serenade

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright;
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The Champak[1] odors fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart—
As I must die on thine,
O! beloved as thou art!

Oh, lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast—
Oh, press it close to thine again,
Where it must break at last!

(written 1819)

Love's Philosophy

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high Heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What are all these kissings worth
If thou kiss not me?

(written 1819)

From *Prometheus Unbound*

Shelley has told us how he was inspired to write the great lyrical drama which he called "the most perfect of my productions". "This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama." He was also inspired by his reading in Greek literature. Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), first of

[1] an Indian tree of the magnolia family.

the great Greek tragedians, wrote three plays on the theme: *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus the Fire-bringer*, and *Prometheus Unbound*. This trilogy, of which only the first play has survived, apparently told the entire story of how Prometheus sinned against Zeus by stealing fire for men from the chariot of the sun; how he was chained by the angry god on Mount Caucasus, where during the daytime a vulture fed on his liver, which was restored each succeeding night; and how he was finally rescued by Hercules. While following the general pattern of Aeschylean tragedy, Shelley adapted the story to his own purposes, spurning the traditional reconciliation between Prometheus and Zeus, and interweaving his own allegory. Convinced that if only mankind willed it, evil could be abolished from the world, he portrayed Prometheus as the champion of mankind, endowed with "the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature" and impelled by love; and he pictured Zeus as the usurping spirit of Evil and Hate. Demogorgon, who drives Zeus from his throne, is the Primal Power of the world, or Fate. Hercules, who releases the hero, is Strength. Panthea and Ione are respectively the spirits of Faith and Hope. The main action of the drama takes place in the first three acts. Act IV is a magnificent chorus of rejoicing over the victory of Prometheus, the lyrical expression of Shelley's dream of a universe liberated from evil and regenerated by love.

ACT IV

SCENE.—*A Part of the Forest near the Cave of* PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA *and* IONE *are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

Voice of SPIRITS

The pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A Train of dark FORMS *and* SHADOWS *passes by confusedly, singing*

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancelled year!
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

IONE

What dark forms were they?

PANTHEA

The past Hours weak and gray,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE

Have they passed?

PANTHEA

They have passed;

They outspeeded the blast,
While 'tis said, they are fled:

IONE

Whither, oh, whither?

PANTHEA

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen SPIRITS

Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

IONE. What charioteers are these?
PANTHEA. Where are their chariots?

Semichorus of HOURS

~~The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth~~
~~Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep~~
Which covered our being and darkened our birth
~~In the deep.~~

A VOICE

In the deep?

SEMICHORUS II

Oh, below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I

An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept,
Found the truth—

SEMICHORUS II

Worse than his visions were!

SEMICHORUS I

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

SEMICHORUS II

As the billows leap in the morning beams!

CHORUS

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of Night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A VOICE

Unite!

PANTHEA. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

Chorus of SPIRITS

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along,
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

Chorus of HOURS

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,

For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veilèd not?

Chorus of SPIRITS

We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind,
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skyey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews his Dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of SPIRITS *and* HOURS

Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth.

Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendor and harmony!

Chorus of SPIRITS

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize:
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

Chorus of HOURS

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain.

SEMICHORUS I

We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

SEMICHORUS II

Us the enchantments of earth retain:

SEMICHORUS I

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be;

SEMICHORUS II

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light;

SEMICHORUS I

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

SEMICHORUS II

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of HOURS *and* SPIRITS

Break the dance, and scatter the song,
Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

PANTHEA. Ha! they are gone!
IONE. Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?
PANTHEA. As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!
IONE. Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?
PANTHEA. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.
IONE. Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.
PANTHEA. But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air.
IONE. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the Mother of the Months is borne
By ebbing light into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams;
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusk aery veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunderstorm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jaggèd clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.
PANTHEA. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,

Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light;
And the wild odor of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

IONE. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

PANTHEA. And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;
Infinite mines of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapors clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious shapes
Huddled in gray annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
The jaggèd alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried,
'Be not!' And like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And beats me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

THE MOON

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odor, and deep melody
Through me, through me!

THE EARTH

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunderstones,

And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending,—

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire;
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire:

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

The Moon

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move:
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!

The Earth

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move:

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is poured;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labor, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of color his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;

Language is a perpetual Orphic[1] song,
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on!
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

THE MOON

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a winged mist,
And wanders ~~up~~ the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the moon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

THE EARTH

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

[1] referring to the mythical musician, Orpheus

THE MOON

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full!

~~Thou art speeding round the sun~~
~~Brightest world of many a one;~~
~~Green and azure sphere which shinest~~
~~With a light which is divinest~~
Among all the lamps of Heaven
~~To whom~~ life and light is given;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
~~Magnet-like, of lovers'~~ eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a gray and watery mist
Glows like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow—

THE EARTH

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light

Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

PANTHEA. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.
IONE. Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.
PANTHEA. Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.
IONE. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.
PANTHEA. An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

DEMOGORGON

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies:

THE EARTH

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee;
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

THE MOON

I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

DEMOGORGON

Ye Kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,
Æthereal Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A VOICE *from above*

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

DEMOGORGON

Ye happy Dead, whose beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colors to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE *from beneath*

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

DEMOGORGON

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A confused VOICE

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON

Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:—

A VOICE

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

DEMOGORGON

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

ALL

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with its length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

(written 1818-19)

The Cloud

The music of this poem is now buoyant, now swift, as the picture changes. Scientific fact is elevated to the level of the highest poetic imagination, as the poet traces the "life history of a cloud." Nothing is more characteristic of its author than his ecstatic images made of the very elements—light, rain, hail, thunder, snow, lightning, sunset, and moonlight.

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skyey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder;
It struggles and howls at fits.
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead,
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardors of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden, with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight-breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-colored bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colors wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when, with never a stain,
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

(written 1820)

To a Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not;

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower;

Like a glowworm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view;

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine:

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be—
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound—
Better than all treasures
That in books are found—
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

(written 1820)

From *Epipsychidion*[1]

Shelley was introduced late in 1820 to Emilia Viviani. He was told concerning her that her father, on his second marriage, had shut up his daughter in a convent until she should be ready for marriage herself. At once Shelley felt called upon to rescue her from what he conceived to be a prison. Pity, when he saw how beautiful she was, soon turned to love. ("Would we two had been twins of the same mother!" he cries in *Epipsychidion*.) By the end of December 1820, he had written this hymn of Platonic love in which a sublimated earthly passion is nevertheless plainly to be read. Within a few weeks, however, Emilia was delivered by a man who married her. When Shelley sent *Epipsychidion* to Ollier in February 1821, he had no longer any desire to be connected with the poem: "It is a production of a portion of me already dead."

Epipsychidion is allied to other poems of Shelley (*Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, *The Sensitive Plant*, and *Prometheus Unbound*) which deal with love and the relation of the individual to it. In all of these the concept is akin to Plato's. Dante's *Vita Nuova* (see I, p. 1040) also strongly influenced him in this work.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
Paved her light steps;—on an imagined shore.
Under the gray beak of some promontory

[1] The soul out of my soul. See line 238.

She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
And from the fountains, and the odors deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of *her* to the enamored air;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,
And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer-birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance,—in form,
Sound, color—in whatever checks that Storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.—

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
And towards the lodestar of my one desire,
I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's[2] setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.—
But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
Passed, like a God throned on a winged planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the dreary cone of our life's shade;
And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between
Yawned like a gulph whose spectres are unseen:
When a voice said:—"O Thou of hearts the weakest,
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."
Then I—"Where?" the world's echo answered "Where!"
And in that silence, and in my despair,
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul;
And murmured names and spells which have control
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her; nor uncreate
That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her:
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life;
And struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I passed
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There,—One, whose voice was venomed melody,
Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison,—flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown grey
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair—but beauty dies away:
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray:
And One was true—oh! why not true to me?
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting; the cold day
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain.
When, like a noon-day dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed,
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun;
The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
From its own darkness, until all was bright
Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face

[2] the evening star

Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.[3]
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me;
And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed:
Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead:—
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried "Away, he is not of our crew."
I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep.

(written 1820)

To Night

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out;
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And moon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—and I replied,
No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon;
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night,—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

(written 1821)

[3] The moon-goddess, Diana, fell in love with the mortal Endymion; see Keats's *Endymion*, p. 303.

To ——

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odors, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

(written 1821)

A Lament

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

(written 1821)

Time

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality,
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

(written 1821)

Adonais

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS, AUTHOR OF ENDYMION, HYPERION, ETC.

Shelley and Keats were merely acquaintances and during the latter's lifetime had no great esteem for each other's work. Shelley found Keats too deficient in intellectual import to satisfy his tastes, and Keats considered Shelley insufficiently devoted to the art of poetry. But when Shelley learned from friends that Keats's health was in a desperate state, with characteristic generosity he wrote to him, inviting him to be his guest at Pisa. The knowledge of Keats's sufferings was enough to make Shelley revise his opinions of Keats's poetry. "This consumption is a disease particularly fond of people who can write such good verses as you have done," he said, and added that he had been rereading Keats's *Endymion* "ever with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains."

Keats's pride would not allow him to accept the kind invitation. When, within a year, Keats was dead—killed, as Shelley erroneously believed, by harsh critics—it was no task for the high-minded Shelley to become convinced that the younger man had been a great poet. His keen sensitiveness to injustice made him furious with Keats's detractors, and he wrote *Adonais* with the double purpose of celebrating Keats's memory and lashing his critic-murderers.

Adonais is one of Shelley's greatest creations. Like its companion piece, Milton's *Lycidas*, it follows in the pastoral traditions of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, and particularly in the style of Moschus's *A Lament for Bion* (see p. 1161). Like *Lycidas*, too, it turns aside from pastoralism to digress into harsh, but stirring, invective.

Pastoralism and invective, however, are harmoniously combined and elevated by the splendor of Shelley's music and imagery. Rarely has the Spenserian stanza been handled with such magnificence. Many engrossing aspects of this poem are to be noted—among others, the incomparable beauty of Shelley's personifications, his noble exposition of the Platonic view of the world, the autobiographical passages, and his generosity to fellow poets. The last stanza is breath-taking in its unconsciously precise prophecy of the manner of his own death, which was to be not distant.

PREFACE

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modeled prove, at least, that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption in his twenty-fourth year, and on the ——— of ———[1] 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now moldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might made one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where canker-worms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgements from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calum-

[1] twenty-third of February.

niator. As to *Endymion*, was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated, with various degress of complacency and panegyric, *Paris* and *Woman* and a *Syrian Tale* and Mrs. Lefanu and Mr. Barrett and Mr. Howard Payne and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men who in their venal good nature presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman[2] and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, "almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend." Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from "such stuff as dreams are made of." His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name.—*Shelley.*

I

I weep for Adonais[3]—he is dead!
Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!"

2

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania[4]
When Adonais died? With veilèd eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sat, while one, with soft enamored breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

3

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone where all things wise and fair
Descend.—Oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

4

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
Who was the sire[5] of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth, the third[6] among the sons of light.

5

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,

[2] Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), English clergyman and professor of poetry at Oxford.

[3] This name is apparently suggested by the *Elegy on Adonis* of the Greek poet Bion.

[4] Urania literally means "pertaining to heaven,"—i.e. the Muse of Astronomy, but Shelley here probably uses it in the sense of the spirit of heavenly love.

[5] Milton.

[6] The three are: Homer, Dante, and Milton.

Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

6

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals, nipped before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

7

To that high Capital,[7] where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

8

He will awake no more, oh, never more!—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

9

Oh, weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

10

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

11

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs, as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,[8]
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her willful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

12

Another Splendor on his mouth alit,
That mouth whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music; the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapor, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

[7] Rome.

[8] a garland.

13

And others came—Desires and Adorations,
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendors, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Fantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

14

All he had loved, and molded into thought
From shape, and hue, and odor, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aërial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

15

Lost Echo[9] sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds:—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

16

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth[10] so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus,[11] as to both
Thou, Adonais; wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odor, to sighing ruth.

17

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion[12] wails for thee: the curse of Cain[13]
Light on his head who[14] pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

18

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Season's bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;[15]
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

19

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst,
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;

[9] the nymph who was condemned never to speak first and never to be silent when others spoke. She pined away for love of Narcissus, so that she became only a voice

[10] a beautiful youth, beloved of Apollo.

[11] the youth who fell in love with his own image in the water.

[12] England.

[13] Cain was the first murderer.

[14] a reference to the reviewer whose criticism severely affected Keats.

[15] briar

All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewèd might.

20

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendor
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath.
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning,—the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

21

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

22

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried, "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendor sprung.

23

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

24

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her airy tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell;
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

25

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!" cried Urania; her distress
Roused Death; Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

26

"Stay yet awhile; speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

27

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men

Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

28

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian[16] of the age one arrow sped
And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

29

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

30

Thus ceased she; and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity,[17] whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne[18] sent
The sweetest lyrist[19] of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue

[16] Byron.
[17] Byron.
[18] Ireland.
[19] Thomas Moore.

31

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,[20]
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like,[21] and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

32

A pardlike[22] Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked;—A Power
Girt round with weakness;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

33

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

34

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: "Who art thou?"

[20] Shelley himself.
[21] Because he had seen Diana bathing, Actaeon was turned into a stag and torn to pieces by his own hounds
[22] leopardlike

He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh! that it should be so!

35

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He,[23] who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honored the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

36

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown;
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

37

Live thou,[24] whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow;
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

38

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

39

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

40

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

41

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendor, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and mountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

42

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;

[23] Leigh Hunt.
[24] the reviewer

He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

43

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely; he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

44

The splendors of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not:
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

45

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton[25]
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney,[26] as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan,[27] by his death approved;
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

[25] See p. 58.
[26] See I, p. 320.
[27] Roman poet (39-65 A.D.).

46

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry;
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of song.
Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper[28] of our throng!"

47

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a center, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference; then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

48

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy; 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

49

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead

[28] evening star.

Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

50

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory,[29] doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

51

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

52

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

53

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before; from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near;
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

54

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

55

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

(written 1821)

The Final Chorus from Hellas[1]

SEMICHORUS I

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,
Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!
I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay
In visions of the dawning undelight.

[29] the pyramid of Cestius, an ancient tomb in the Protestant burial-ground at Rome.

[1] This fragmentary poem refers to the Greek revolt against the Turks which was going on at the time of its composition (1821).

Who shall impede her flight?
Who rob her of her prey?

Voice without. Victory! Victory! Russia's famished eagles
Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light.
Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

SEMICHORUS II

Thou voice which art
The herald of the ill in splendor hid!
Thou echo of the hollow heart
Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode
When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed:
Oh, bear me to those isles of jagged cloud
Which float like mountains on the earthquake, mid
The momentary oceans of the lightning,
Or to some toppling promontory proud
Of solid tempest, whose black pyramid,
Riven, overhangs the founts intensely bright'ning
Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
Before their waves expire,
When heaven and earth are light, and only light
In the thunder-night!

Voice without. Victory! Victory! Austria, Russia, England,
And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs speak.
Ho, there! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes,
These chains are light, fitter for slaves and prisoners
Than Greeks. Kill! plunder! burn! let none remain.

SEMICHORUS I

Alas! for Liberty!
If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
Or fate, can quell the free!
Alas for Virtue! when
Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
Of erring judging men
Can break the heart where it abides!
Alas! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world splendid,
Can change with its false times and tides,
Like hope and terror,—
Alas for Love!
And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror
Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
Alas for thee! Image of the Above!

SEMICHORUS II

Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
Through many an hostile Anarchy!
At length they wept aloud, and cried, "The Sea! the Sea!"[2]
Through exile, persecution, and despair,
Rome was, and young Atlantis[3] shall become
The wonder, or the terror, of the tomb
Of all whose step wakes Power lulled in her savage lair.
But Greece was as a hermit-child
Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
To woman's growth, by dreams so mild,
She knew not pain or guilt;
And now, O Victory, blush! and Empire, tremble,
When ye desert the free—
If Greece must be
A wreck, yet shall its fragments reassemble,
And build themselves again impregnably
In a diviner clime,
To Amphionic[4] music on some Cape sublime
Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

SEMICHORUS I

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made;
Let the free possess the Paradise they claim;
Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
With our ruin, our resistance, and our name!

SEMICHORUS II

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
Our survivors be the shadow of their pride,
Our adversity a dream to pass away—
Their dishonor a remembrance to abide!

Voice without. Victory! Victory! The bought Briton sends
The keys of ocean to the Islamite.[5]—
Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,

[2] a reference to Xenophon's account of the march of ten thousand soldiers from the center of a hostile Persia. He describes their joyful exclamations when they again saw the sea.
[3] America.
[4] Amphion's music caused the walls of Troy to rise

And British skill, directing Othman[5] might,
Thunder-strike rebel victory. Oh, keep holy
This jubilee of unrevengèd blood!
Kill! crush! despoil! Let not a Greek escape!

SEMICHORUS I

Darkness has dawned in the East
On the noon of time;
The death-birds descend to their feast
From the hungry clime.
Let Freedom and Peace flee far
To a sunnier strand,
And follow Love's folding-star
To the Evening land!

SEMICHORUS II

The young moon has fed
Her exhausted horn
With the sunset's fire;
The weak day is dead,
But the night is not born;
And, like loveliness panting with wild desire,
While it trembles with fear and delight,
Hesperus flies from awakening night,
And pants in its beauty and speed with light
Fast-flashing, soft, and bright.
Thou beacon of love! thou lamp of the free!
Guide us far, far away,
To climes where now, veiled by the ardor of day,
Thou art hidden
From waves on which weary Noon
Faints in her summer swoon,
Between kingless continents, sinless as Eden,
Around mountains and islands inviolably
Pranked on the sapphire sea.

SEMICHORUS I

Through the sunset of hope,
Like the shapes of a dream,
What Paradise islands of glory gleam!
Beneath Heaven's cope,
Their shadows more clear float by;
The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,
The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe
Burst, like morning on dream, or like Heaven on death,
Through the walls of our prison;
And Greece, which was dead, is arisen!

[5] Mohammedan.

CHORUS

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snakè renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus[6] rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes[7] bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads[8] on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo[9] cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus[10] sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso[11] for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll, must be!
Nor mix with Laian[12] rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free;
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendor of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued;
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

[6] a river in Greece.
[7] a valley in Greece.
[8] a group of Grecian islands.
[9] the ship on which Jason sailed to seek the Golden Fleece.
[10] the mythical musician who went to Hades and played his harp to recover his dead wife Eurydice.
[11] the nymph who detained Ulysses on her island.
[12] referring to the story of Oedipus, son and murderer of Laius, who solved the riddle of the Sphinx

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

(written 1821)

To ——

1

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

2

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

(written 1821)

Mutability

1

The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay,
Tempts and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

2

Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship, how rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy and all
Which ours we call.

3

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

(written 1821)

Lines: When the Lamp Is Shattered

1

When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead;
When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

2

As music and splendor
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

3

When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

4

Its passions will rock thee,
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

(written 1822)

A Dirge

Rough wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main,—
Wail, for the world's wrong!

(written 1822)

John Keats

(1795-1821)

Shelley's Adonais, John Keats, was born in London on October 29, 1795, over his father's livery stable. Well to do, his parents soon moved to better quarters. When he was seven the boy was sent with his younger brother George to Mr. Clarke's school at Enfield. There he became a friend of the headmaster's son, Charles Cowden Clarke, and was early noted for his willingness to "fight any one—morning, noon, and night." This pugnacity was born less of a love of battle than of a readiness to take sides in a worthy cause. Keats is so often represented as a delicate blossom that it is worth noting this persistent strain of strength and courage in his character. He is correctly to be thought of as the apostle of beauty; but slight though he was of physique, his character was entirely virile and sturdy.

His boyhood was so normal that he demonstrated little interest in books until his last year at school, when his attention was turned to them by his friendship for young Clarke. Keats did nothing halfheartedly, and before long he had exhausted the resources of the school library. His father having died in 1804 and his mother in 1810, Keats's guardians removed him from school in 1811 and apprenticed him to a surgeon at Edmonton. For the stipulated five years the lad studied surgery without any visible objection, and he passed his examinations creditably. But often he would walk from Edmonton to Enfield to see his friend Clarke. On one of these occasions Keats discovered Spenser among Clarke's books. Borrowing the volume, he read through it enthralled. After that experience, he knew that poetry would play a part in his life. One of his earliest pieces is the *Imitation of Spenser* (1812-13?), his first attempt in the stanza that he was to employ masterfully in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

In 1815 he persuaded his guardians and his employer to allow him to pursue his medical studies at the London hospitals. At first he worked hard at medicine in the metropolis, but poetry was drawing him further and further away from the profession chosen for him. In the spring of 1816 occurred a decisive event in his life. Clarke had shown Leigh Hunt (see p. 330) some of his friend's verses, and on May 5 Hunt printed in his weekly, *The Examiner*, Keats's *Sonnet to Solitude*. Soon Keats made the personal acquaintance of Hunt, and the course of his life was set. By autumn he was the favorite disciple of the

circle surrounding Hunt, who was then, despite the hostility of the critics, enjoying considerable popularity as a poet and persecuted radical. Although Keats now had his license to practice as an apothecary, he decided to devote himself to poetry. To his guardian's astonished question as to whether he had gone insane, Keats quietly replied: "I know that I possess abilities greater than most men, and therefore I am determined to gain my living by exercising them."

This year, 1816, was a period of joy for the poet who had just found himself. He was conscious of his powers and exhilarated over the possibilities of the future. Fully aware that he had much to learn, he gave all the more enthusiasm to his tasks as a poet. In October Clarke introduced him to Chapman's translation of Homer (see I, p. 399), and this memorable experience he recorded in his famous sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*. His friends were delighted with the poem, and it was published by Hunt in December. By April 1817, he was writing to a friend: "I find I cannot exist without Poetry—without eternal Poetry—half the day will not do—the whole of it—I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan."

In 1817, with the financial assistance of Shelley, whom he had met at Hunt's, Keats published his first slender volume of *Poems*. It passed almost unnoticed. Unperturbed, he began the composition of *Endymion*. "It will be a test," he wrote, "a trial of my Powers of Imagination, and chiefly of my invention, which is a rare thing indeed—by which I must make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance, and fill them with poetry." When the poem appeared (1818) it was brutally attacked, even though Keats had fully admitted its shortcomings in his preface. The cruelty and stupidity of the critics were sufficiently appalling, but the motive for their abuse was unpardonable. Eager to injure Hunt, whom they had already attacked as the founder of the "Cockney School" of poetry, they now struck at him through his friend and disciple. The reviewer in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* said of Keats's Endymion that "he is merely a young Cockney rhymester," not a Greek shepherd. "Mr. Keats," he continued, "has adopted the loose, nerveless versification, and Cockney rhymes of the poet of Rimini (i.e. Hunt); but in fairness to that gentleman, we must add, that the defects of the system are tenfold more conspicuous in his disciple's work than in his own. Mr. Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man. Mr. Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a boy of pretty abilities. . . . We venture to make one small prophecy, that his bookseller will not a second time venture £50 upon anything he can write. It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr. John, back to 'plasters, pills, and ointment boxes,' &c. But for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry."

For a long time it was thought by Byron, Shelley, and readers of *Adonais* that this attack and the one in the *Quarterly Review* were responsible by their savagery for Keats's early death. Even Wordsworth dismissed *Endymion* as a "pretty piece of paganism." But it is an error to suppose that the young poet was crushed by this universal hostility. Shortly after the publication of the ill-starred poem, he was himself writing to his publisher: "I know nothing—I have read nothing—and I mean to follow Solomon's directions, 'get wisdom—get understanding.'" On May 3, 1818, he wrote to his friend Reynolds: "I compare human life to a large mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me." In October he wrote to Hessey: "My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict. . . ." In short, there were no valid objections any critic could raise to Keats's work that he himself did not fully know. He was undeterred in his intention to perfect himself, even though he had thus far no public encouragement.

The influence of Hunt upon him had at first been invaluable. The older man's taste for the best in English literature had been contagious. Moreover, he had given courage and hope to Keats by publishing the early sonnets in *The Examiner*. But Hunt, the poet,

was a versifier who could not rise above mere prettiness, and Keats, though not ungrateful for benefits received, began to realize the necessity of growing beyond what Hunt had to teach him. A deeper understanding of humanity and a greater mastery over the technique of verse were still lacking to Keats, and he applied himself to supplying these deficiencies.

It was during his composition of *Endymion* that Keats first experienced the symptoms of tuberculosis, which had afflicted many members of his family. He made a brief excursion to the English Lakes and to Scotland during a vacation. On his return to Hampstead in the fall of 1818 he met Fanny Brawne, with whom he fell deeply in love. Incapable of anything but complete surrender to his passion, Keats was soon involved in a tragic situation. The first months of their acquaintance were blighted by his incessant worry over his beloved brother Tom. No sooner had Keats come back from his vacation than he knew his brother was doomed to die from the disease that had decimated the family. Ill himself, attacked by the critics, and distressed over his love for Fanny, Keats nursed his brother from August until December 1818. If his love for the girl proved disastrous, it was not the fault of Fanny Brawne, who fully returned his affection. He was too proud to propose marriage to his uncomprehending sweetheart, for he was unable to support her. Moreover, the tuberculosis to which he himself was now a victim presented an even more formidable obstacle. She was the one being he desired in the world, and he was convinced that he could not accept her love. In the fierce struggle which racked his breast, he broke his health and peace, and hastened his end.

Distracted by love and disease, Keats for release turned to poetry with greater industry than ever. After his brother's death, he poured forth between January and May 1819 a series of amazing masterpieces: *The Eve of St. Agnes, The Eve of St. Mark, La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the *Ode to a Nightingale*, and the *Ode on Melancholy*. These appeared in July 1820 together with *To Autumn, Isabella* (a tale taken from Boccaccio's *Decameron*), and *Lamia*, in his last volume, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. When it was issued, too late the *Edinburgh Review* came to his defense. In five short months Keats had produced enough to place him among the major English poets.

He had been working on the wonderful fragment *Hyperion*, and had collaborated with his friend Brown on a tragedy, *Otho the Great*, in the hope of making some money. The failure of his expectations at last deprived him of hope. On February 3, 1820, he coughed up a drop of blood on his pillow. It was then that he was forced to recognize the nature of his disease. "That drop of blood," he told Brown, "is my death-warrant;—I must die." For a year he battled against his fate. Half of it he spent in the same house with Fanny Brawne and her mother; he would stare out the windows at Fanny in the garden, while he lived his "posthumous life" indoors. In September he sailed for Italy, with not much faith that he would find life there. It was a final bitterness that an accident should have prevented his dear friend Brown from seeing him before he left. Accompanied by the young painter, Joseph Severn, he went to Rome, where he died on February 23, 1821. He was buried in the Protestant cemetery there. His epitaph (the words are his own) reads: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

Surely English poetry never suffered a greater loss than at Keats's premature death. For he had, since 1819, been growing steadily in mastery and deepening in insight. Almost all his great work was done within a period of two years. Yet this youth of twenty-five erred in supposing that he would leave no mark upon literature. For no poet of his era more influenced the future course of English poetry. A whole movement, that of the Pre-Raphaelites, was to acknowledge its discipleship to him, and he was a formative influence in the work of great successors like Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, and poets of our own century. For, unlike Shelley, Keats has proved to be not inimitable. The science of his triumphs has been learned by other writers to their great advantage.

Indeed, no ~~two poets are less like each other than Shelley and Keats. Keats did not~~ share and had small sympathy for Shelley's revolutionary idealism and love of ethereal

beauty. Poetry was not the medium, Keats felt, for advancing political doctrine. The beauty he worshiped was not impalpable as was the object of Shelley's adoration. Keats was closer to the "pure" artist. He cultivated the senses, and felt that the experience of beauty was an end in itself. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," is the firm statement of his faith. And that beauty was of the most concrete variety—to be found in line, color, shape, sweet odors, and tastes. Shelley has expressed in *Adonais* Keats's accomplishment when he speaks of

> *"All he had loved, and molded into thought,*
> *From shape, and hue, and odor, and sweet sound."*

To Keats beauty was the only source of true joy. And this joy was made all the keener by the knowledge that all mortal things are transitory. In his poetry we often find that melancholy, typified in Goethe's *Werther* (see p. 1149), which comes from the knowledge that earth is a place "where but to think is to be full of sorrow." Since mortality is so uncertain, Keats fastened on beauty with all the intensity of his being. Constantly we find the note of ecstasy so acute that death seems the only possible end of such experience. ("Now more than ever seems it rich to die.") He is the exemplification in poetry of the poet as fine artist.

Some recent critics, following Matthew Arnold's lead, interpret Keats's cult of beauty as "an intellectual passion," rather than as a sensuous one. The absence of an intellectual depth of ideas in Keats's lines, however, leaves such an interpretation open to question.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer[1]

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez[2] when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.[3]

(written 1816)

[1] For the exact passage which inspired Keats to write this poem, see I, p. 400.

[2] Actually, of course, the Pacific was discovered by Balboa

[3] Panama.

To My Brothers

Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals,
And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep
Like whispers of the household gods that keep
A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles,
Your eyes are fixed, as in poetic sleep,
Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
That aye at fall of night our care condoles.
This is your birth-day Tom,[1] and I rejoice
That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.
Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise
May we together pass, and calmly try
What are this world's true joys,—ere the great voice,
From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly.

(written 1816)

[1] Keats's brother Tom died in December, 1818.

On the Grasshopper and Cricket

Leigh Hunt's warm friendship for Keats, not always poetically beneficent, sheds a pleasant light on this sonnet. In friendly competition they both wrote poems on this subject (see p. 331). The results are ample proof of the difference in their abilities.

The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never;
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

(written 1816)

To One Who Has Been Long in City Pent

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,[1]—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

(written 1816)

From *Endymion*

When Keats's first volume was published in March 1817, it was practically ignored. He set to work with greater determination than ever, in consequence, on *Endymion*, a long, rather over-decorated story of the love of the Moon-Goddess for a mortal. The narrative is an allegory of the soul's search for perfect beauty.

Despite the poet's preface, which admitted that the reader would find in his work "great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished," the poem was viciously attacked. John Wilson Croker, in the *Quarterly Review*, mercilessly dissected the first book, and professed to have abandoned the rest "in despair."

BOOK I

PROEM

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth.
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.

[1] the nightingale.

The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own valleys: so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finished: but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all unto me when I make an end.
And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness:
There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

(written 1817)

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles[1]

My spirit is too weak—mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.
Yet 't is a gentle luxury to weep
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceivèd glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main—
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

(written 1817)

[1] The bulk of the surviving friezes from the Parthenon at Athens were brought to England in 1801-03 by Lord Elgin. Most of these were executed under the direction of Phidias, the greatest of the Greek sculptors, about 440 B.C.

When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high piléd books, in charactry,[1]
Hold like rich garners the full-ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love!—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

(written 1817)

Robin Hood[1]

TO A FRIEND[2]

No! those days are gone away,
And their hours are old and gray,
And their minutes buried all
Under the down-trodden pall
Of the leaves of many years:
Many times have Winter's shears,
Frozen North, and chilling East,
Sounded tempests to the feast
Of the forest's whispering fleeces,
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,
And the twanging bow no more;
Silent is the ivy shrill
Past the heath and up the hill;
There is no mid-forest laugh,
Where lone Echo gives the half
To some wight, amazed to hear
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
You may go, with sun or moon,
Or the seven stars[3] to light you,

[1] letters.

[1] See I, p. 222

[2] John Hamilton Reynolds, who had written a series of Robin Hood Sonnets.

[3] the Pleiades

Or the polar ray[4] to right you;
But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold;
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile
To fair hostess Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent;
For he left the merry tale,
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;[5]
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
Idling in the "grenè shawe";[6]
All are gone away and past!
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfed grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze:
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fall'n beneath the dock-yard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her—strange! that honey
Can't be got without hard money!

So it is; yet let us sing
Honor to the old bow-string!
Honor to the bugle horn!
Honor to the woods unshorn!
Honor to the Lincoln green!
Honor to the archer keen!
Honor to tight Little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honor to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honor to Maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood clan!
Though their days have hurried by,
Let us two a burden[7] try.

(written 1818)

[4] the North Star.
[5] a poem formerly supposed to be by Chaucer. Its description of life in the woods forms the basis of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*
[6] green woods, quoted from Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*
[7] an accompaniment, probably here merely a song

Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?[1]
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse[2] from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign-board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw you in your glory,
Underneath a new-old sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

(written 1818)

[1] the chief gathering-place of the Elizabethan poets
[2] drink

Fancy

Ever let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming;
Autumn's red-lipped fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting: What do then?

Sit thee by the ingle,[1] when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overawed,
Fancy, high-commissioned:—send her!
She has vassals to attend her:
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth has lost;
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth:
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it:—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reaped corn;
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment—hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White-plumed lilies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Every thing is spoilt by use;
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gazed at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary? Where's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind:
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter[2]
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's,[3] when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash;
Quickly break her prison-string,
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home.

(written 1818)

[1] fireplace.

To Sleep

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
Our gloom-pleased eyes, embowered from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—
Save me from curious Conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed Casket of my Soul.

(written 1819)

[2] Proserpine, before she was carried away by Pluto to the underworld

[3] the cupbearer of the gods.

The Eve of St. Agnes

Nowhere does Keats seem to have himself followed more completely his advice to Shelley, to "load every rift of your subject with ore," than in this masterpiece of romance, for which he employed the Spenserian stanza. The story is based upon the old legend that if a maid went fasting to bed on St. Agnes's Eve, she would dream of her future husband. When one considers how easy it might have been to allow his tale to lapse from the radiant moonlit mood which the poet set, one can only wonder at the perfection with which the art is maintained. The succession of glowing pictures rivals the pigment of the painter. Indeed, it is not difficult to understand why the later Pre-Raphaelite poet-painters should have deemed this work incomparable and found in it subjects for their canvases.

1

St. Agnes' Eve[1]—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told[2]
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

2

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails:[3]
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,[4]
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

3

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flattered to tears this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his death-bell rung:
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

4

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on their breasts.

5

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting faerily
The brain, new-stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

[1] January 20.
[2] numbered the beads on his rosary as he said his "Hail Mary's."
[3] garments.
[4] small chapels for prayer.

6

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

7

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired; not cooled by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere;
She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

8

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
The hallowed hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwinked with faery fancy; all amort,[5]
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs[6] unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

9

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

10

He ventures in: let no buzzed whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

11

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

12

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip[7] dear,
We're safe enough; here in this armchair sit,
And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

13

He followed through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;
And as she muttered "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,

[5] dead.
[6] formerly on St. Agnes Day the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) was chanted and two lambs were sacrificed, their wool to be later woven by the nuns
[7] literally, godmother; loosely used for "friend"

"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving, piously."

14

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle[8] time to grieve."

15

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook[9]
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

16

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go! I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

17

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fanged than wolves and bears."

18

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening
Were never missed." Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

19

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legioned faeries paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon[10] all the monstrous debt.

20

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates[11] and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambor frame[12]
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

[8] much
[9] Keats meant "restrain"
[10] "The monstrous debt was Merlin's monstrous existence which he owed to a demon and repaid when he died, or disappeared, through the working of one of his own spells by Viviane."—Forman.
[11] delicacies
[12] an embroidery frame shaped like a drum.

21

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed;
The Dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.[13]
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

22

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting.[14] Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove frayed[15] and fled.

23

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled in her dell.

24

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,[16]
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

25

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules[17] on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

26

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

27

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray;[18]
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

28

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,

[13] exceedingly
[14] straw carpet
[15] frightened.
[16] representations of coat of arms.
[17] red (the term used in descriptions of coat of arms)
[18] closed like a Christian prayer-book when black pagans (who have no use for prayer-books) pray.

Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hushed carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

29

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean[19] amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

30

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother[20] than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez;[21] and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand[22] to cedared Lebanon.[23]

31

These delicates he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
"And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:[24]
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

32

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mused awhile, entoiled in woofed phantasies.

33

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence called "La belle dame sans mercy:"[25]
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

34

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

35

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

36

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,

[19] sleep-inducing.
[20] softer, more soothing.
[21] a city in northern Morocco.
[22] a city in central Asia important for the medieval trade in Chinese silks.
[23] a mountain range in southern Syria famous for its cedars.
[24] hermit: here, devoted lover

[25] See p. 316

Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odor with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

37

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown[26] sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

38

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil[27] dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

39

"Hark! 'tis an elfin storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand: —
The bloated wassailers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drowned all in Rhenish[28] and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

40

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

41

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

42

And they are gone: aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

(written 1819)

[26] gust-blown
[27] vermilion.
[28] Rhine wine.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon;
With the noise of fountains wond'rous
And the parle[1] of voices thund'rous;
With the whisper of heaven's trees
And one another, in soft ease
Seated on Elysian lawns
Browsed by none but Dian's[2] fawns;
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,

[1] talk. [2] Diana's

And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumbered, never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week;
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new!

(written 1819)

Ode on a Grecian Urn

This beautiful ode shows the ultimate meaninglessness of such arbitrary classifications as "romantic" and "classical." Surely Keats has here managed to reproduce in poetic terms the chaste "classical" elegance of a Greek urn; but he also expresses emotions "romantic" in the extreme. The concluding lines, which express something of his artistic credo, are thought by some critics to be allied to the ethical convictions of Matthew Arnold in the Victorian era. But that cult of beauty which was formulated by the esthetes toward the end of the century, on the other hand, is believed by others to be closer to Keats's meaning.

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady[1]?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone;
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
Forever piping songs forever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
Forever panting, and forever young,
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic[2] shape! Fair attitude! with brede[3]
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral![4]
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

[1] Tempe and Arcady were a valley and a mountain region respectively in Greece
[2] referring to Attica, one of the principal states of Greece
[3] embroidery
[4] A pastoral in marble.

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.
(written 1819)

Ode to a Nightingale

Many lovers of poetry have indulged in the pleasant, if futile, controversy as to whether this or Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* is the most wonderful of English romantic lyrical poems. Perhaps in no other poem has Keats transmitted more perfectly his ecstatic apprehension of beauty—an experience with him so keen and intense that the very borderlines of pain and joy became confused.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards[1] had sunk.
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness—
That thou, light wingèd Dryad[2] of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

Oh, for a draught of vintage that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora[3] and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal[4] song, and sun-burnt mirth!
Oh, for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,[5]
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainèd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim—

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,[6]
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a musèd rime,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

[1] toward Lethe, the river of forgetfulness
[2] tree nymph.
[3] goddess of flowers.
[4] The music of the troubadours flourished in Provence in southern France.
[5] a fountain sacred to the Muses. Keats apparently thought it a wine.
[6] leopards, which drew the car of Bacchus, god of wine

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth,[7] when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that ofttimes hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hillside; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music—do I wake or sleep?

(written 1819)

Ode on Melancholy

No, no, go not to Lethe,[1] neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;[2]
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche,[3] nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

(written 1819)

To Autumn

It is doubtful whether words can make a more palpable appeal to the senses than those here employed by Keats. The artist in him is in full evidence. It is in painting, rather than in poetry, that we normally find beauty so tangible. But the poet has the advantage over the painter in the added magic of sound, so that sound and meaning are in this poem perfectly interfused into an amazing unity of sensuous experience.

Season of mist and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

[7] See I, p. 408
[1] the river of forgetfulness.
[2] Queen of the lower world.
[3] the soul, symbolized by the butterfly. The same Greek word is used for both.

Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

(written 1819)

La Belle Dame Sans Merci[1]

This is one of the finest of all literary ballads, wonderful in its economy and celerity. The central idea will inevitably remind one of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. The allegory may be taken as a presentation of the vain pursuit of ideal beauty or, more simply, as a record of disillusionment.

"Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

"Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

"I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too."

"I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

"I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

"I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

"She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna-dew;
And sure in language strange she said,
'I love thee true.'

"She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gazed and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild, sad eyes—
So kissed to sleep.

"And there we slumbered on the moss,
And there I dreamed—ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill side.

"I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all:
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

"I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.

"And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing."

(written 1819)

[1] The beautiful lady without pity.

Lamia

"Philostratus, in his fourth book *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece." (Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 3. Sect. 2. Memb. 1. Subs. 1.)

Part I

Upon a time, before the faery broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr[1] from the prosperous woods,
Before king Oberon's[2] bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasped with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads[3] and the Fauns[4]
From rushes green, and brakes, and cow-slipped lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes[5] empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons[6] poured
Pearls, while on land they withered and adored.
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlocked to choose.
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blushed into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepared her secret bed:
In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake!
When move in a sweet body fit for life,
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!"
The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant[7] in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian[8] shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed

[1] Woodland deity frequently depicted with the tail of a horse or goat, and sometimes with short horns on the forehead.
[2] King of the fairies.
[3] Tree nymphs.
[4] Rural deities, half goat and half man.
[5] Hermes, messenger of the gods, is represented as continually in love.
[6] Deities of the sea.
[7] lying coiled.
[8] intricate.

Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,
She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:[9]
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.[10]
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stooped falcon ere he takes his prey.

"Fair Hermes, crowned with feathers, fluttering light,
I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
The soft, lute-fingered Muses chaunting clear,
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moan.
I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean[11] dart,
Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?"
Whereat the star of Lethe[12] not delayed
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:
"Thou smooth-lipped serpent, surely high inspired!
Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
Where she doth breathe!" "Bright planet, thou hast said,"
Returned the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"
"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
From weary tendrils, and bowed branches green,
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
And by my power is her beauty veiled
To keep it unaffronted, unassailed
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
Of Satyrs, Fauns, and bleared Silenus' sighs.
Pale grew her immortality, for woe
Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
I took compassion on her, bade her steep
Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
Her loveliness invisible, yet free
To wander as she loves, in liberty.
Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.[13]
Ravished, she lifted her Circean[14] head,
Blushed a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
"I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now."
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breathed upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
It was no dream; or say a dream it was.
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flushed moment, hovering, it might seem
Dashed by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burned;
Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turned
To the swooned serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lithe Caducean[15] charm.

[9] the seven stars into which Ariadne was transformed after her marriage with Bacchus. Keats is thinking of a picture by Titian wherein the circlet of stars is placed above Ariadne's head as a symbol of her coming transfiguration

[10] Proserpine was carried off by Pluto from her home in Sicily.

[11] belonging to Apollo.

[12] Hermes, so-called because it was his duty to lead the souls of the dead to Hades

[13] referring to the style of the Psalms.

[14] She is a magician, like Circe in the Odyssey

[15] Hermes carried the caduceus, an elaborate staff symbolizing his office as messenger of the gods.

So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,
Faded before him, cowered, nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour:
But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids opened bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloomed, and gave up her honey to the lees.
Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foamed, and the grass, therewith besprent,[16]
Withered at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fixed, and anguish drear,
Hot, glazed, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flashed phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colors all inflamed throughout her train,
She writhed about, convulsed with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclipsed her crescents, and licked up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown; that vanished, also she
Melted and disappeared as suddenly;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, "Lycius! gentle Lycius!"—Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
These words dissolved: Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas shore;
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,

[16] sprinkled.

Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned
To see herself escaped from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sighed, or blushed, or on spring-flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy:
A virgin purest lipped, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of sciential[17] brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbor pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counter-change;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,[18]
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so faerily
By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list, strange or magnificent:
How, ever, where she willed, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium, or where
Down through trees-lifting waves the Nereids fair
Wind into Thetis'[19] bower by many a pearly stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretched out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine[20]
Mulciber's[21] columns gleam in far piazzian line.
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow

[17] full of knowledge.
[18] without blame.
[19] the sea-nymph who was mother of Achilles.
[20] palatial.
[21] belonging to Vulcan, blacksmith of the gods.

In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchored; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
Jove heard his vows, and bettered his desire;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calmed twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbored to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he passed, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapped like his mantle, while her eyes
Followed his steps, and her neck regal white
Turned—syllabling thus, "Ah, Lycius bright,
And will you leave me on the hills alone?
Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown."
He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;[22]
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seemed he had loved them a whole summer long:
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure:
"Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
For pity do not this sad heart belie—
Even as thou vanishest so shall I die.
Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
Alone they can drink up the morning rain:
Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
Thy spheres,[23] and as thy silver proxy shine?
So sweetly to these ravished ears of mine
Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
Thy memory will waste me to a shade:—
For pity do not melt!"—"If I should stay,"
Said Lamia, "here, upon this floor of clay,
And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough.
What canst thou say or do of charm enough
To dull the nice remembrance of my home?
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
Empty of immortality and bliss!
Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
That finer spirits cannot breathe below
In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,
What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
My essence? What serener palaces,
Where I may all my many senses please,
And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?
It cannot be—Adieu!" So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swooned, murmuring of love, and pale with pain
The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favorite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh:
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting fires.
And then she whispered in such trembling tone
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguished days,
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wondered how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retired, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she passed him by,
Where 'gainst a column he lent thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heaped
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reaped
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before

[22] Orpheus, who went to the lower world to recover his wife, Eurydice, is thought of as the typical faithful lover.
[23] This refers to the "music of the spheres," described by the ancient astronomers

The Adonian feast;[24] whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?
Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays:
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well;
And every word she spake enticed him on
To unperplexed delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's[25] pebbles or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judged, and judged aright,
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh;
And last, pointing to Corinth, asked her sweet,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised.[26]
They passed the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Muttered, like tempest in the distance brewed,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companioned or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them clustered in the corniced shade
Of some arched temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he pressed hard, as one came near
With curled gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,
Slow-stepped, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he,
"Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?
Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"—
"I'm wearied," said fair Lamia: "tell me who
Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you blind
Yourself from his quick eyes?" Lycius replied,
"'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams."

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillared porch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
Mild as a star in water; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble's hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touched there. Sounds Æolian[27]
Breathed from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone,
And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets: none knew where
They could inhabit; the most curious
Were foiled, who watched to trace them to their house:
And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
'Twould humor many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

Part II

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:—
That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycius lived to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,

[24] the annual celebration of the return of Adonis from the lower world.

[25] an allusion to the story of the repeopling of the world after the flood by Deucalion and Pyrrha, who cast stones behind them which became men.

[26] engrossed.

[27] produced by the wind.

Or clenched it quite: but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft
voice hiss.
Beside, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hovered and buzzed his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the
floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveiled the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tithe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost
slept;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harbored in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit passed beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
~~That but a moment's thought is passion's passing~~
~~bell.~~
"Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whispered he:
"Why do you think?" returned she tenderly:
"You have deserted me;—where am I now?
Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
No, no, you have dismissed me; and I go
From your breast houseless: aye, it must be so."
He answered, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirrored small in paradise,
"My silver planet, both of eve and morn!
Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?
Aye, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abashed withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
While through the thronged streets your bridal
car
Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's
cheek
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she loved the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
"Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my
truth,
I have not asked it, ever thinking thee
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
Or friends or kinsfolk on the cited earth,
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?"
"I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one;
My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
Even as you list invite your many guests;
But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
With any pleasure on me, do not bid
Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid."
Lycius, perplexed at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betrayed.

It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veiled, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone,
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honor of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branched one to one
All down the aisled place; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
So canopied, lay an untasted feast
Teeming with odors. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Missioned her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendor of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper panncls; then, anon, there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hushed and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appeared, and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloistered hours,
And show to common eyes these secret bowers?
The herd approached; each guest, with busy brain,
Arriving at the portal, gazed amain,
And entered marveling: for they knew the street,
Remembered it from childhood all complete
Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne;[28]
So in they hurried all, mazed, curious and keen:
Save one, who looked thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walked in austere;
'Twas Apollonius: something too he laugued,
As though some knotty problem, that had daft
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt:—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. "'Tis no common rule,
Lycius," said he, "for uninvited guest
To force himself upon you, and infest
With an unbidden presence the bright throng
Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong,
And you forgive me." Lycius blushed, and led
The old man through the inner doors broad-spread;
With reconciling words and courteous mien
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Filled with pervading brilliance and perfume:
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerved upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimicked as they rose
Along the mirrored walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast reared
On libbard's[29] paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn[30] and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antechamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure pressed,
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Poured on his hair, they all moved to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring.

[28] domain.
[29] leopard's.
[30] the plentiful horn of Ceres, goddess of grain.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a voweled undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
But when the happy vintage touched their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments:—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendor of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
Flushed were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright:
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflowered, or forest-trees branch-rent,
In baskets of bright osiered gold were brought
High as the handles heaped, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillowed at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
What for the sage, old Apollonius?
Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;[31]
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyrsus,[32] that his watching eyes may swim
Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,
Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-personed Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimmed, and opposite sent forth a look
'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
Had fixed his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.
Lycius then pressed her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins.
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
"Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?
Know'st thou that man?" Poor Lamia answered not.
He gazed into her eyes, and not a jot
Owned they the lovelorn piteous appeal:
More, more he gazed: his human senses reel:
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
There was no recognition in those orbs.
"Lamia!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
The myrtle sickened in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seemed a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
"Lamia!" he shrieked; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
"Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
Wandered on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illume
The deep-recessed vision:—all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
"Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man!
Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with a thorn
Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
Of conscience, for their long offended might,
For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
Corinthians! look upon that grey-beard wretch!
Mark how, possessed, his lashless eyelids stretch
Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!

[31] a kind of fern
[32] a staff surmounted by a pine cone or by ivy leaves with grapes

My sweet bride withers at their potency."
"Fool!" said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
From Lycius answered, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor moved; "from every ill
Of life have I preserved thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"
Then Lamia breathed death breath; the sophist's eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motioned him to be silent; vainly so,
He looked and looked again a level—No!
"A serpent!" echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

(written 1819)

Bright Star! Would I Were Steadfast as Thou Art

When Keats was aboard the ship that was to bear him to Italy—and death—he copied this sonnet onto a fly-leaf of a volume of Shakespeare's poems. He was leaving England with small hope of recovery or of ever returning. These circumstances lend a particular pathos to the lines.

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,[1]
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

(written 1819)

Walter Savage Landor

(1775-1864)

Landor's long life covered a period of rich and varied productivity in English literature. He was born only five years after Wordsworth; was in his forties when Byron, Shelley, and Keats were writing their great poetry; outlived them and his aged contemporary Wordsworth; and lived to witness many of the best creations of Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Swinburne, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Newman. He still had years of mental alertness ahead of him when Darwin's cataclysmic theory was given to the world. Thus his career traverses the entire Romantic Movement. But he was never wholly of it. By preference, he had closer affinities to the classicism of the eighteenth century. Though he did become partisan in political matters, espoused the rights of peoples to liberty and justice, and thus shared the warm sympathies of Shelley's generation, he was never aggressively a liberal. He was too much enamored of form, too indifferent to popular success, and too scrupulous an artist to accept in full the liberating principles of the romantics. Like the composer Mendelssohn, he was a classicist living and writing in a romantic era. He thus remains a transitional figure between the eighteenth-century love of order and neatness and the nineteenth-century imaginative warmth; and his works, in consequence, possess a peculiarly ingratiating tone of mellowness and refined taste.

He was born at Warwick in 1775, the son of a well-known physician, and was educated

[1] hermit, here, devotee.

at Rugby and later at Trinity College, Cambridge. There was a curious disparity between Landor the restrained artist and Landor the man. The former could truthfully say, "I strove with none," but the latter fought with everyone. At school his strong partisanship for the French and American republics was soon widely known. A fit of temper which resulted in his shooting into a neighbor's shutter caused his suspension from Cambridge. His political views estranged him from his father, and for a time he lived in Wales, reading and writing verse. All his life Landor was pleased to delude himself with an idealization of himself as a lover of retirement. Actually his burly figure was but the outward sign of a boyishness of spirit which he never lost. His was a thoroughly impractical and generous disposition. His tenderness to children, animals, and even flowers is one of the most recurrent notes in his biography. A less pleasant one is his incessant wrangling over lawsuits, for which he nursed something like an eccentric affection.

In 1805 his father's death brought Landor a large fortune, which gave him freedom to live as he pleased. Three years later he enlisted as a volunteer in Spain to aid the uprising against Napoleon. Back in England, he purchased Llanthony Abbey, and showed small discretion in choosing the woman he now took to wife, for his marriage with her was but a long series of interminable quarrels and misunderstandings. In 1814 he went to Italy to live, chiefly in a villa at Fiesole, the scene of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Twenty years later he made another visit to England, but returned to Florence. There he was a close friend of the Brownings, and there, nearly ninety years of age, he died in 1864.

In 1795 he published a volume of poems, and in 1798 his Oriental tale on the Moorish invasion of Spain, *Gebir*. The latter, though entirely in the extravagant spirit common to the early days of romanticism, was, as ever with Landor, chastened in style. Before long he began to display his profound love for Greek and Roman literature and history, publishing a Latin translation of *Gebir* (1813), several other volumes of Latin verse, and an essay urging the use of that language for literary composition.

From 1824 to 1853 he issued five volumes of his masterpiece, the *Imaginary Conversations* (see p. 384), the fruit of his wide reading and interest in the past. These form some one hundred and fifty fragments of historical drama—psychological dialogues between historical persons, they might be called, and forecasts of Browning's virile "monologues." Taking a set of dramatic or historically significant characters, Landor presents in each *Conversation* a situation in which these men and women reveal themselves and their times. He was not concerned, however, in individualizing their styles of speech or in achieving historical objectivity. Frankly he put his sentiments or his interpretations of history into their mouths. But the drama is often intense, and always intellectually stimulating. The variety and range of his subjects are admirable. Among the host of characters we find: Diogenes and Plato, Aesop and Rhodope, Lucullus and Caesar, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Bossuet and the Duchess de Fontanges, Rousseau and Malesherbes, General Lacy and Cura Merino, and Marcus Tullius and Quinctus Cicero. The most ambitious work Landor wrote in this style was *The Pentameron* (see p. 387), a five-day series of discussions between Petrarch and Boccaccio. The same method is employed in the letters of *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836), which mirror Athenian life in its days of glory. The prose of these pieces ranks Landor high among stylists. He was master of that music which is authentic to great prose, a music noble, sensitive to all degrees of emotion, and often inspired.

In 1846 appeared the *Hellenics*, a translation into English of the heroic idyls which he had originally written in Latin. These are among the most genuinely classical poems in our language. They seem distant from the neoclassicism of Pope and all its witty elegance. Such a poem as *Iphigenia and Agamemnon* captures far more of the Hellenic spirit than any Augustan could think of realizing, as a comparison with our selection from the play of Euripides (see p. 1164) on the same subject will prove. Such short lyrics as *Rose Aylmer*, *One Year Ago*, and "I strove with none" reveal the same union of restrained sentiment and chiseled form.

Iphigeneia and Agamemnon

This "heroic idyl" from the *Hellenics* is based on a part of the story of the Trojan War. *En route* to Troy the Greek fleet was becalmed at Aulis, on the east coast of Greece, where the commander, Agamemnon, had to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to appease Artemis, whose favorite stag he had killed. Compare the selection from Euripides, p. 1164.

Iphigeneia, when she heard her doom
At Aulis, and when all beside the King
Had gone away, took his right hand, and said,
"O father! I am young and very happy.
I do not think the pious Calchas[1] heard
Distinctly what the goddess spake. Old age
Obscures the senses. If my nurse, who knew
My voice so well, sometimes misunderstood
While I was resting on her knee both arms
And hitting it to make her mind my words,
And looking in her face, and she in mine,
Might he not also hear one word amiss,
Spoken from so far off, even from Olympus?"
The father placed his cheek upon her head,
And tears dropped down it, but the king of men
Replied not. Then the maiden spake once more.
"O father! sayst thou nothing? Hear'st thou not
Me, whom thou ever hast, until this hour,
Listened to fondly, and awakened me
To hear my voice amid the voice of birds,
When it was inarticulate as theirs,
And the down deadened it within the nest?"
He moved her gently from him, silent still,
And this, and this alone, brought tears from her,
Although she saw fate nearer: then with sighs,
"I thought to have laid down my hair before
Benignant Artemis,[2] and not have dimmed
Her polished altar with my virgin blood;
I thought to have selected the white flowers
To please the Nymphs, and to have asked of each
By name, and with no sorrowful regret,
Whether, since both my parents willed the change,
I might at Hymen's[3] feet bend my clipped brow;
And (after those who mind us girls the most)
Adore our own Athena, that she would
Regard me mildly with her azure eyes.
But father! to see you no more, and see
Your love, O father! go ere I am gone—"
Gently he moved her off, and drew her back,
Bending his lofty head far over hers,
And the dark depths of nature heaved and burst.
He turned away; not far, but silent still.
She now first shuddered; for in him, so nigh,
So long a silence seemed the approach of death,
And like it. Once again she raised her voice.
"O father! if the ships are now detained,
And all your vows move not the Gods above,
When the Knife strikes me there will be one prayer
The less to them: and purer can there be
Any, or more fervent than the daughter's prayer
For her dear father's safety and success?"
A groan that shook him shook not his resolve.
An aged man now entered, and without
One word, stepped slowly on, and took the wrist
Of the pale maiden. She looked up and saw
The fillet of the priest and calm cold eyes.
Then turned she where her parent stood and cried
"O father! grieve no more: the ships can sail."

(1846)

[1] the priest who delivered the oracle that Iphigenia must be sacrificed

[2] the goddess of virginity to whom Iphigenia expects to sacrifice at marriage. But Artemis is now demanding her as a sacrifice.

[3] the god of marriage

Rose Aylmer

Ah what avails the sceptred race,
Ah what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.

(1846)

One Year Ago

One year ago my path was green,
My footstep light, my brow serene;
Alas! and could it have been so
One year ago?

There is a love that is to last
When the hot days of youth are past:
Such love did a sweet maid bestow
One year ago.

I took a leaflet from her braid
And gave it to another maid.
Love! broken should have been thy bow
One year ago.

(1846)

Yes; I Write Verses

Yes; I write verses now and then,
But blunt and flaccid is my pen,
No longer talkt of by young men
As rather clever:
In the last quarter are my eyes,
You see it by their form and size;
Is it not time then to be wise?
Or now or never.
Fairest that ever sprang from Eve!
While Time allows the short reprieve,
Just look at me! would you believe
'Twas once a lover?
I cannot clear the five-bar gate
But, trying first its timber's state,
Climb stiffly up, take breath, and wait
To trundle over.
Thro' gallopade I cannot swing
The entangling blooms of Beauty's spring:
I cannot say the tender thing,
Be't true or false,
And am beginning to opine
Those girls are only half-divine
Whose waists yon wicked boys entwine
In giddy waltz.
I fear that arm above that shoulder,
I wish them wiser, graver, older,
Sedater, and no harm if colder
And panting less.
Ah! people were not half so wild
In former days, when starchly mild,
Upon her high-heel'd Essex smiled
The Brave Queen Bess.

(1846)

To Robert Browning

There is delight in singing, tho' none hear
Beside the singer; and there is delight
In praising, tho' the praiser sit alone
And see the prais'd far off him, far above.
Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,
Therefore on him no speech! and brief for thee,
Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man hath walkt along our roads with step
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse. But warmer climes[1]
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing: the breeze
Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song.

(1846)

Introduction to *The Last Fruit Off an Old Tree*

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of Life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

(1853)

Thomas Moore

(1779-1852)

Tom Moore was born in Dublin, took his degree at Trinity College there, and occupied for a time a government post in Bermuda. His first series of *Irish Melodies* (1808) took Ireland and England by storm, and he continued to issue further volumes of them until 1834. It is for these facile, undisguisedly emotional lyrics that Moore has always been best liked. Lovers and sentimental folk have in vast numbers responded to the heart-warming phrases of his amatory poems and to tunes which he himself composed for them. Irish patriots have, on the other hand, loved

[1] Both Browning and Landor spent many years in Italy.

him for being, as Shelley put it, Ireland's "sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong."

But Moore's output indicates an amazing versatility: his virile translations into verse of Anacreon (1800), his novel, *The Epicurean* (1827), and his biographies of Sheridan (1825) and Byron (1830), whose *Works* and *Letters and Journals* he edited (1832-33), are all interesting contributions to literature. Moore, indeed, led a highly successful life as a man of letters. In addition to what we have named, he wrote several clever political satires, and an Oriental romance in verse, *Lalla Rookh* (1817), in the style popularized by Scott and Byron.

Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,
Which I gaze on so fondly today,
Were to change by tomorrow, and fleet in my arms,
Like fairy-gifts fading away,
Thou wouldst still be adored, as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will,
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,
And thy cheeks unprofaned by a tear,
That the fervor and faith of a soul can be known,
To which time will but make thee more dear;
No, the heart that has truly loved never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sun-flower turns on her god, when he sets,
The same look which she turned when he rose.

(1808)

'Tis the Last Rose of Summer

'Tis the last rose of summer
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flower of her kindred,
No rosebud, is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes,
To give sigh for sigh.

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie scentless and dead.

So soon may I follow
When friendships decay,
And from Love's shining circle
The gems drop away!
When true hearts lie wither'd,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?

(1808)

The Time I've Lost in Wooing

The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light that lies
In woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing.
Though Wisdom oft has sought me,
I scorned the lore she brought me,
My only books
Were woman's looks,
And folly's all they've taught me.

Her smile when Beauty granted,
I hung with gaze enchanted,
Like him the Sprite,
Whom maids by night
Oft meet in glen that's haunted.
Like him, too, Beauty won me,
But while her eyes were on me;
If once their ray
Was turned away,
Oh, winds could not outrun me.

And are those follies going?
And is my proud heart growing
Too cold or wise
For brilliant eyes
Again to set it glowing?
No, vain, alas! th' endeavor
From bonds so sweet to sever;
Poor Wisdom's chance
Against a glance
Is now as weak as ever.

(1808)

The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls

The harp that once through Tara's[1] halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls
As if that soul were fled.
So sleeps the pride of former days,
So glory's thrill is o'er,
And hearts that once beat high for praise
Now feel that pulse no more!

No more to chiefs and ladies bright
The harp of Tara swells;
The chord alone that breaks at night
Its tale of ruin tells.
Thus Freedom now so seldom wakes,
The only throb she gives
Is when some heart indignant breaks,
To show that still she lives.

(1808)

Oh, Breathe Not His Name!

ROBERT EMMET[1]

Oh, breathe not his name! let it sleep in the shade,
Where cold and unhonored his relics are laid;
Sad, silent, and dark be the tears that we shed,
As the night-dew that falls on the grass o'er his head.

But the night-dew that falls, though in silence it weeps,
Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps;
And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls,
Shall long keep his memory green in our souls.

(1808)

James Henry Leigh Hunt

(1784-1859)

Born in Middlesex and educated at Christ's Hospital, Leigh Hunt entered the field of journalism while still in his teens. The responsibilities of marriage and a large family kept him at it for the rest of his life. Always an enemy of tyranny and falsehood, he exerted considerable influence through his radical journal, *The Examiner*. His criticism of the Prince Regent resulted in his being imprisoned for two years (1813-15). But his captivity was in itself a triumph, for to his prison came Byron, Moore, and many other friends to pay homage to his courage.

It is to Hunt's great credit that he recognized genius in Shelley and Keats, whose early work he published. Hunt, unfortunately, thought of himself as something of a major poet; and, indeed, he had among young ladies a vogue which might have given force to such an opinion. The best known of his poetical undertakings is *The Story of Rimini* (1816), which provided the occasion for the attack on the "Cockney School" of poetry (of which he was the acknowledged leader). He is better remembered, however, for a series of pretty lyrics and a group of excellent familiar essays. As a poet he had more grace than genius. His prose is more stimulating, and contains much interesting literary gossip. His *Autobiography* (1850) is a valuable record of the times.

[1] an ancient palace and assembly place in Ireland, twenty-one miles northwest of Dublin.

[1] Irish patriot and revoltuionist (1778-1803), executed in 1803 for organizing a rebellion in Dublin

To the Grasshopper and the Cricket[1]

Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass:[2]
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts; and both seem giv'n to earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song—
In doors and out, summer and winter, Mirth.

(written 1816)

Abou Ben Adhem

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?"—The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And, lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

(written 1834)

Jenny Kiss'd Me[1]

Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have miss'd me.
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kiss'd me.

(written 1838)

Thomas Hood

(1799-1845)

Hood was born in London, the son of a bookseller Gifted with genuine talent, he led a life of much suffering and disappointment which finally extinguished the light of poetry within him. His verse, mostly in the light vein, shows his fine sense of humor and his sensitive nature.

He first gained public notice by a volume of humorous prose and verse, *Whims and Oddities* (1826). In the same style are *The Comic Annual* (1830-42), *Up the Rhine* (1839), and *Whimsicalities* (1843). Late in life he edited *Hood's Magazine*, a humorous periodical. That a man who was a lifelong victim of poverty and illness should have chosen to be a humorist is one of the strange aspects of his career. But occasionally he found relief from his professional clowning in writing poems of deep feeling and humanitarian vision. *The Bridge of Sighs* and the *Song of the Shirt* have become, by reason of their powerful sincerity, among the best known of English poems.

[1] See Keats's poem on the same subject, p. 303 These two poems were written simultaneously as a sort of poetic contest

[2] Brass is beaten to summon bees.

[1] The heroine of this rondeau is supposed to have been Jane Welsh Carlyle

Silence

There is a silence where hath been no sound,
  There is a silence where no sound may be,
  In the cold grave—under the deep, deep sea,
Or in wide desert where no life is found,
Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound;
  No voice is hushed—no life treads silently,
  But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,
That never spoke, over the idle ground:
But in green ruins, in the desolate walls
  Of antique palaces, where man hath been,
Though the dun fox, or wild hyena, calls,
  And owls, that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,
There the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

(1823)

I Remember, I Remember

I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day,
But now, I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away!

I remember, I remember,
The roses, red and white,
The violets, and the lily-cups,
Those flowers made of light!
The lilacs where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday,—
The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember,
Where I was used to swing,
And thought the air must rush as fresh
To swallows on the wing;
My spirit flew in feathers then,
That is so heavy now,
And summer pools could hardly cool
The fever on my brow!

I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy.

(1827)

The Song of the Shirt

This famous attack on the sweatshop was based on an incident typical of conditions in England during the "hungry forties." At the trial of a needlewoman charged with stealing from her employer it was disclosed that she had been trying to support herself and two fatherless children by making trousers for seven shillings a week. The poem appeared in the Christmas issue of *Punch* in 1843, the year of Mrs. Browning's *Cry of the Children* (see p. 547) and Dickens' *Christmas Carol*.

With fingers weary and worn,
  With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
  Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
  In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
  She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

"Work! work! work!
  While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
  Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's Oh! to be a slave
  Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
  If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work,
  Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work,
  Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
  Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
  And sew them on in a dream!

"Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
Oh, Men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear its terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
My labor never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shatter'd roof—this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work,
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet;
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal.

"Oh! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessèd leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,—
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!—
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!" (1843)

The Bridge of Sighs

One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements;
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing;
Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.

Touch her not scornfully;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
  Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonor,
Death has left on her
  Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
  One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
  Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
  Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
  Where was her home?

Who was her father?
  Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
  Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
  Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
  Under the sun!
O, it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
  Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
  Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
  Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
  With many a light
From window to casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood with amazement,
  Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
  Made her tremble and shiver;
But not the dark arch,
  Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
  Swift to be hurl'd—
Anywhere, anywhere
  Out of the world!

In she plunged boldly—
No matter how coldly
  The rough river ran—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
  Dissolute Man!
Lave in it, drink of it,
  Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
  Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
  Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
  Decently, kindly,
Smooth and compose them;
And her eyes, close them,
  Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
  Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
  Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurr'd by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
  Into her rest.—
Cross her hands humbly,
As if praying dumbly,
  Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,
  Her evil behavior,
And leaving with meekness,
  Her sins to her Savior!

(1844)

William Wordsworth

(1770-1850)

Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

Two years after the first appearance of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 (see p. 146) came a second edition with a preface which is more famous than many of the poems in the collection. In it Wordsworth not only explained and defended the "experiment" but penned a historic attack on eighteenth-century "poetic diction" and a penetrating analysis of the nature of poetry, and of poetic inspiration. The *Preface* is more than an *apologia* for the efforts of Wordsworth and Coleridge; it is a milestone in the history of English poetry. Wordsworth's arguments should be compared with those in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (see p. 351) and Shelley's *Defense of Poetry* (see p. 356).

The first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavor to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure; and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please.

Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems, from a belief that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realized, a class of poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the quality and in the multiplicity of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, knowing that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because adequately to display the opinions, and fully to enforce the arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to a preface. For, to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible that there would be some impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprises the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius,[1] and that of Statius or Claudian;[2] and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and

[1] Latin poets of the first century before Christ.
[2] Latin poets of the later Empire.

Fletcher,[3] and that of Donne and Cowley,[4] or Dryden, or Pope.[5] I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which, by the act of writing in verse, an Author in the present day makes to his reader; but it will undoubtedly appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope, therefore, the reader will not censure me for attempting to state what I have proposed to myself to perform; and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonorable accusations which can be brought against an Author, namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavoring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect, and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appears to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust), because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honor upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.[6]

I cannot, however, be insensible to the present outcry against the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonorable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived: but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any

[3] dramatists of the Elizabethan Age
[4] poets of the next succeeding generation.
[5] poets of the Classical Revival.

[6] It is worth while here to observe that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day. (Wordsworth.)

variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as, by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

It has been said that each of these Poems has a purpose. Another circumstance must be mentioned which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling.

A sense of false modesty shall not prevent me from asserting that the Reader's attention is pointed to this mark of distinction, far less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavor to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.—When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavor made in these volumes to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible; and were there not added to this impression a belief that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these Poems, I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their *style*, in order, among other reasons, that he may not censure me for having performed what I never attempted. The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes, and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but have endeavored utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which Writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Others who pursue a different track will interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, but wish to prefer a claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men; and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of

poetry. Without being culpably particular, I do not know how to give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which it was my wish and intention to write, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject; consequently there is, I hope, in these Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something must have been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.

If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged, and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms, as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. To illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who was at the head of those who, by their reasonings, have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction.

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire:
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.

It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics; it is equally obvious that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation it has been shown that the language of Prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and it was previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost identical, not necessarily differing in degree; Poetry[7] sheds no tears "such as angels weep," but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of Prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrange-

[7] I here use the word "Poetry" (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis; because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable. (Wordsworth.)

ment of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what has just been said on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of Prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such Poetry as is here recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and, if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? Whence is it to come? And where is it to exist? Not, surely, where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters: it cannot be necessary here, either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments: for, if the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions, the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an incongruity which would shock the intelligent Reader, should the Poet interweave any foreign splendor of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests: it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary. And, surely, it is more probable that those passages, which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures, will have effect if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate.

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the Poems now presented to the reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject, and as it is in itself of high importance to our taste and moral feelings, I cannot content myself with these detached remarks. And if, in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labor is unnecessary, and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies, such persons may be reminded that, whatever may be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown. If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgments concerning the works of the greatest Poets, both ancient and modern, will be far different from what they are at present, both when we praise and when we censure: and our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgments will, I believe, be corrected and purified.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves;—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt that the language which it will suggest to him must often, in liveliness and truth, fall short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious that, while he describes and imitates passions, his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the

language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon. He will depend upon this for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature: and, the more industriously he applies this principle the deeper will be his faith that no words, which *his* fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who does not scruple to substitute excellencies of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavors occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing or Frontiniac[8] or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing:[9] it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The Man of science, the Chemist and Mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his

[8] a wine made from a certain type of muscat grape grown near Frontignan in France.

[9] See I, p. 1122.

studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those which, through labor and length of time, the Man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and sense of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labors of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.—It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavor to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What I have thus far said applies to Poetry in general; but especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters; and upon this point it appears to authorize the conclusion that there are few persons of good sense who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are colored by a diction of the Poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual Poet or belonging simply to Poets in general; to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring the Reader to the description which I have before given of a Poet. Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what was said is, that the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and ob-

jects which the Poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless, therefore, we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height; and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him. Our feelings are the same with respect to metre; for, as it may be proper to remind the Reader, the distinction of metre is regular and uniform, and not, like that which is produced by what is usually called POETIC DICTION, arbitrary, and subject to infinite caprices upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case, the Reader is utterly at the mercy of the Poet respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion; whereas, in the other, the metre obeys certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit because they are certain, and because no inteference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shown to heighten and improve the pleasure which co-exists with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question, namely, Why, professing these opinions, have I written in verse? To this, in addition to such answer as is included in what I have already said, I reply, in the first place, Because however I may have restricted myself, there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse; the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature before me—to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery. Now, supposing for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects may be as vividly described in prose, why should I be condemned for attempting to superadd to such description the charm which, by the consent of all nations, is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this, by such as are yet unconvinced, it may be answered that a very small part of the pleasure given by Poetry depends upon the metre, and that it is injudicious to write in metre, unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which metre is usually accompanied, and that, by such deviation, more will be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the Reader's associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers. In answer to those who still contend for the necessity of accompanying metre with certain appropriate colors of style in order to the accomplishment of its appropriate end, and who also, in my opinion, greatly underrate the power of metre in itself, it might, perhaps, as far as relates to these Volumes, have been almost sufficient to observe, that poems are extant, written upon more humble subjects, and in a more naked and simple style than I have aimed at, which poems have continued to give pleasure from generation to generation. Now, if nakedness and simplicity be a defect, the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that poems somewhat less naked and simple are capable of affording pleasure at the present day; and, what I wished *chiefly* to attempt, at present, was to justify myself for having written under the impression of this belief.

But various causes might be pointed out why, when the style is manly, and the subject of some importance, words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who proves the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure; but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words, however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion. This is unquestionably true; and hence, though the opinion

will at first appear paradoxical, from the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition, there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rhyme, than in prose. The metre of the old ballads is very artless, yet they contain many passages which would illustrate this opinion; and, I hope, if the following poems be attentively perused, similar instances will be found in them. This opinion may be further illustrated by appealing to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the reperusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe*,[10] or *The Gamester*;[11] while Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which, in a much greater degree than might at first be imagined, is to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement.—On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen), if the Poet's words should be incommensurate with the passion, and inadequate to raise the Reader to a height of desirable excitement, then (unless the Poet's choice of his metre has been grossly injudicious), in the feelings of pleasure which the reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general, and in the feeling, whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the Poet proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a SYSTEMATIC defence of the theory here maintained, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin: it is the life of our ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude, are perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment to apply this principle to the consideration of metre, and to show that metre is hence enabled to afford much pleasure, and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader. All that it is *necessary* to say, however, upon this subject, may be effected by affirming, what few persons will deny, that of two

[10] a novel by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)

[11] a tragedy by Edward Moore (1712-1757) It was presented in 1753

descriptions either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once.

Having thus explained a few of my reasons for writing in verse, and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavored to bring my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating a subject of general interest; and for this reason a few words shall be added with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some defects which will probably be found in them. I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, I may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects; but I am less apprehensive on this account, than that my language may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases from which no man can altogether protect himself. Hence I have no doubt that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic. Such faulty expressions, were I convinced they were faulty at present, and that they must necessarily continue to be so, I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct. But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men; for where the understanding of an author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself: for his own feelings are his stay and support; and, if he set them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself, and becomes utterly debilitated. To this it may be added, that the Reader ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the Poet, and, perhaps, in a much greater degree: for there can be no presumption in saying of most readers, that it is not probable they will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed, or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other; and, above all, since they are so much less interested in the subject, they may decide lightly and carelessly.

Long as the reader has been detained, I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to poetry, in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies of which Dr. Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen:

> "I put my hat upon my head
> And walked into the Strand,
> And there I met another man
> Whose hat was in his hand."

Immediately under these lines I will place one of the most justly-admired stanzas of the "Babes in the Wood."

> "These pretty Babes with hand in hand
> Went wandering up and down;
> But never more they saw the Man
> Approaching from the Town."

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the words, in no respect differ from the most unimpassioned conversation. There are words in both, for example, "the Strand," and "the Town," connected with none but the most familiar ideas; yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the *matter* expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses, to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism, is not to say, this is a bad kind of poetry, or, this is not poetry; but, this wants sense; it is neither interesting in itself, nor can *lead* to anything interesting; the images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the Reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses. Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove that an ape is not a Newton,[12] when it is self-evident that he is not a man?

One request I must make of my Reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others. How common is it to hear a person say, I myself do not object to this style of composition, or this or that expression, but, to such and such classes of people it will appear mean or ludicrous! This mode

[12] Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the famous English mathematician and philosopher

of criticism, so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgment, is almost universal: let the Reader then abide independently by his own feelings, and, if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

If an Author, by any single composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that on other occasions where we have been displeased he, nevertheless, may not have written ill or absurdly; and further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us, with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice, but, in our decisions upon poetry especially, may conduce, in a high degree, to the improvement of our own taste: for an *accurate* taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds[13] has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long-continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself), but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest, that, if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgment may be erroneous; and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so.

Nothing would, I know, have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view, as to have shown of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavored to recommend: for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition; and what more can be done for him? The power of any art is limited; and he will suspect that, if it be proposed to furnish him with new friends, that can be only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honorable bigotry, for the objects which have long continued to please them; we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is in these feelings enough to resist a host of arguments; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow that, in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, many obstacles might have been removed, and the Reader assisted in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible for poetry to give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of the subject has not been altogether neglected, but it has not been so much my present aim to prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, as to offer reasons for presuming that if my purpose were fulfilled, a species of poetry would be produced which is genuine poetry; in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems, the Reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I had in view: he will determine how far it has been attained, and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining; and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the Public. (1800)

[13] noted English portrait painter and theorist (1723-1792).

Dorothy Wordsworth

(1771-1855)

If it is impossible to consider Dorothy Wordsworth's biography other than as an appendage to her brother's, the point of view is nonetheless one which she herself would have sanctioned. With enough talent to make the beginnings of a promising literary career, she desired no career, no life, indeed, distinct from his. It is true that the few examples of verse which she composed for her diary indicate no propensity for the creation of poetry. But the lively and warm observations of her notes prove that she had an eye for detail that might easily have been cultivated for literary purposes.

She was born on Christmas Day, a year after William, at Cockermouth. Even as a child she was devoted to him, and was his companion in rambles over the countryside. A clue to her character is afforded by Wordsworth's note to the *Second Evening Voluntary*: "My sister, when she first heard the voice of the sea from this point (the high ground on the coast of Cumberland overlooking Whitehaven and the sea beyond it) and beheld the sea spread before her, burst into tears. Our family then lived at Cockermouth, and this fact was often mentioned among us as indicating the sensibility for which she was so remarkable." After their mother's death, while William was at Hawkshead, she was sent to live with her maternal grandparents at Penrith, and later with her cousin at Halifax. For a number of years, in consequence, brother and sister were separated for long intervals. During one of his first vacations from Cambridge, William went to see her at Penrith; of this occasion mention is made in *The Prelude*:

> *. . . blest*
> *Between these sundry wanderings with a joy*
> *Above all joys, that seemed another morn*
> *Risen on mid noon; blest with the presence*
> *Of that sole Sister—*
> *Now after separation desolate,*
> *Restored to me—such absence that she seemed*
> *A gift then first bestowed.*

When he was on the Continent with Jones, he wrote to her: "I have thought of you perpetually." In 1793 he wrote again: "Oh, my dear, dear sister, with what transport shall I again meet you! with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight!"

His affair with Annette Vallon had determined Dorothy's guardians to keep William and his sister apart. But his inheritance of some money in 1795 enabled the two at last to live together under one roof at Racedown. Her life was now complete, and her history until his death in 1850 is his history. When she came to know Coleridge, she loved him. But he was not a free man, and her existence belonged to William; so she managed to smother her natural instincts and satisfy herself with friendship. She meant much to both men, and neither William's nor Coleridge's wife had her power (or privilege) to feed the flames of their genius. Indispensable to them, she was always with them on their creative walks and their imaginative expeditions. She never regretted her unselfish, all-encompassing love for her brother; later, when William Hazlitt proposed to her, she rejected him.

On January 20, 1798, she began to keep a journal, for the purpose of providing a reservoir, if William should have need of it, of their shared impressions and experiences. Her entries afford us an invaluable commentary on the background of William's poetry. This is especially true of the diary she kept during her tour of Scotland with her brother in 1803, published as *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1874). The journey was

productive of some of Wordsworth's finest lyrics; and our enjoyment of them can be vastly enhanced by recapturing from his sister's vivid account the actual circumstances which stimulated him to write them. But these *Recollections* are valuable in themselves for the sincere poetic sensitivity which marks every page. It has been said that no better guide to the Scottish Lakes can be found than this volume.

From *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland, A.D. 1803*

Monday, August 29th.—It rained heavily this morning, and, having heard so much of the long rains since we came into Scotland, as well as before, we had no hope that it would be over in less than three weeks at the least, so poor Coleridge, being very unwell, determined to send his clothes to Edinburgh and make the best of his way thither, being afraid to face much wet weather in an open carriage. William and I were unwilling to be confined at Tarbet, so we resolved to go to Arrochar, a mile and a half on the road to Inverary, where there is an inn celebrated as a place of good accommodation for travellers. Coleridge and I set off on foot, and William was to follow with the car, but a heavy shower coming on, Coleridge left me to shelter in a hut and wait for William while he went on before. This hut was unplastered, and without windows, crowded with beds, uncomfortable, and not in the simplicity of the ferryman's house. A number of good clothes were hanging against the walls, and a green silk umbrella was set up in a corner. I should have been surprised to see an umbrella in such a place before we came into the Highlands; but umbrellas are not so common anywhere as there—a plain proof of the wetness of the climate; even five minutes after this a girl passed us without shoes and stockings, whose gown and petticoat were not worth half a crown, holding an umbrella over her bare head.

We turned at a guide-post, 'To the New Inn,' and, after descending a little, and winding round the bottom of a hill, saw, at a small distance, a white house half hidden by tall trees upon a lawn that slopes down to the side of Loch Long, a sea-loch,[1] which is here very narrow. Right before us, across the lake, was The Cobbler, which appeared to rise directly from the water; but, in fact, it overtopped another hill, being a considerable way behind. The inn looked so much like a gentleman's house that we could hardly believe it was an inn. We drove down the broad gravel walk, and, making a sweep, stopped at the front door, were shown into a large parlor with a fire, and my first thought was, How comfortable we should be! but Coleridge, who had arrived before us, checked my pleasure: the waiter had shown himself disposed to look coolly upon us, and there had been a hint that we could not have beds;—a party was expected, who had engaged all the beds. We conjectured this might be but a pretence, and ordered dinner in the hope that matters would clear up a little, and we thought they could not have the heart to turn us out in so heavy a rain if it were possible to lodge us. We had a nice dinner, yet would have gladly changed our roasted lamb and pickles, and the gentleman-waiter with his napkin in his pocket, for the more homely fare of the smoky hut at Loch Ketterine, and the good woman's busy attentions, with the certainty of a hospitable shelter at night. After dinner I spoke to the landlord himself, but he was not to be moved: he could not even provide one bed for me, so nothing was to be done but either to return to Tarbet with Coleridge, or that William and I should push on the next stage, to Cairndow. We had an interesting close view from the windows of the room where we sate, looking across the lake, which did not differ in appearance, as we saw it here, from a fresh-water lake. The sloping lawn on which the house stood was prettily scattered over with trees; but we had seen the place to great advantage at our first approach, owing to the mists upon the mountains, which had made them seem exceedingly high, while the strange figures on The Cobbler appeared and disappeared, like living things; but, as the day cleared we were disappointed in what was more like the permanent effect of the scene: the mountains were not so lofty as we had supposed, and the low grounds not so fertile; yet still it is a very interesting, I may say beautiful, place.

[1] a "loch" in Scotland is a body of water entirely or nearly enclosed. It may therefore be either fresh or salt.

The rain ceased entirely, so we resolved to go on to Cairndow, and had the satisfaction of seeing that our landlord had not told us an untruth concerning the expected company; for just before our departure we saw, on the opposite side of the vale, a coach with four horses, another carriage, and two or three men on horseback—a striking procession, as it moved along between the bare mountain and the lake. Twenty years ago, perhaps, such a sight had not been seen here except when the Duke of Argyle, or some other Highland chieftain, might chance to be going with his family to London or Edinburgh. They had to cross a bridge at the head of the lake, which we could not see, so, after disappearing about ten minutes, they drove up to the door—three old ladies, two waiting-women, and store of men-servants. The old ladies were as gaily dressed as bullfinches in spring-time. We heard the next day that they were the renowned Miss Waughs of Carlisle, and that they enjoyed themselves over a game at cards in the evening.

Left Arrochar at about four o'clock in the afternoon. Coleridge accompanied us a little way; we portioned out the contents of our purse before our parting; and, after we had lost sight of him, drove heavily along. Crossed the bridge, and looked to the right, up the vale, which is soon terminated by mountains: it was of a yellow green, with but few trees and few houses; sea-gulls were flying above it. Our road—the same along which the carriages had come—was directly under the mountains on our right hand, and the lake was close to us on our left, the waves breaking among stones overgrown with yellow sea-weed; fishermen's boats, and other larger vessels than are seen on fresh-water lakes were lying at anchor near the opposite shore; sea-birds flying overhead; the noise of torrents mingled with the beating of the waves, and misty mountains enclosed the vale;—a melancholy but not a dreary scene. Often have I, in looking over a map of Scotland, followed the intricate windings of one of these sea-lochs, till, pleasing myself with my own imaginations, I have felt a longing, almost painful, to travel among them by land or by water.

This was the first sea-loch we had seen. We came prepared for a new and great delight, and the first impression which William and I received, as we drove rapidly through the rain down the lawn of Arrochar, the objects dancing before us, was even more delightful than we had expected. But, as I have said, when we looked through the window, as the mists disappeared and the objects were seen more distinctly, there was less of sheltered valley-comfort than we had fancied to ourselves, and the mountains were not so grand; and now that we were near to the short of the lake, and could see that it was not of fresh water, the wreck, the broken sea-shells, and scattered sea-weed gave somewhat of a dull and uncleanly look to the whole lake, and yet the water was clear, and might have appeared as beautiful as that of Loch Lomond, if with the same pure pebbly shore. Perhaps, had we been in a more cheerful mood of mind we might have seen everything with a different eye. The stillness of the mountains, the motion of the waves, the streaming torrents, the sea-birds, the fishing-boats were all melancholy; yet still, occupied as my mind was with other things, I thought of the long windings through which the waters of the sea had come to this inland retreat, visiting the inner solitudes of the mountains, and I could have wished to have mused out a summer's day on the shores of the lake. From the foot of these mountains whither might not a little barque carry one away? Though so far inland, it is but a slip of the great ocean: seamen, fishermen, and shepherds here find a natural home. We did not travel far down the lake, but, turning to the right through an opening of the mountains, entered a glen called Glen Croe.

Our thoughts were full of Coleridge, and when we were enclosed in the narrow dale, with a length of winding road before us, a road that seemed to have insinuated itself into the very heart of the mountains—the brook, the road, bare hills, floating mists, scattered stones, rocks, and herds of black cattle being all that we could see,—I shivered at the thought of his being sickly and alone, travelling from place to place.

Sunday, September 11th.—Immediately after breakfast, the morning being fine, we set off with cheerful spirits towards the Trossachs, intending to take up our lodging at the house of our old friend the ferryman. A boy accompanied us to convey the horse and car back to Callander from the head of Loch Achray. The country near Callander is very pleasing; but, as almost everywhere else, imperfectly cultivated. We went up a broad vale, through which runs the stream from Loch Ketterine, and came to Loch Vennachar, a larger lake than Loch Achray, the small one which had given us such unexpected delight when we had conceived of its neighbor, and so the reality proved to us when we came up to that little lake, and saw it before us in its true shape in the cheerful sunshine. The Trossachs, overtopped by Benledi and other high mountains, enclose the lake at the head; and those houses which we had

seen before, with their corn fields sloping towards the water, stood very prettily under low woods. The fields did not appear so rich as when we had seen them through the veil of mist; but yet, as in framing our expectations we had allowed for a much greater difference, so we were even a second time surprised with pleasure at the same spot.

Went as far as these houses of which I have spoken in the car, and then walked on, intending to pursue the road up the side of Loch Ketterine along which Coleridge had come; but we had resolved to spend some hours in the neighborhood of the Trossachs, and accordingly coasted the head of Loch Achray, and pursued the brook between the two lakes as far as there was any track. Here we found, to our surprise—for we had expected nothing but heath and rocks, like the rest of the neighborhood of the Trossachs—a secluded farm, a plot of verdant ground with a single cottage and its company of out-houses. We turned back, and went to the very point from which we had first looked upon Loch Achray when we were here with Coleridge. It was no longer a visionary scene: the sun shone into every crevice of the hills, and the mountain-tops were clear. After some time we went into the pass from the Trossachs, and were delighted to behold the forms of objects fully revealed, and even surpassing in loveliness and variety what we had conceived. The mountains, I think, appeared not so high; but on the whole we had not the smallest disappointment; the heather was fading, though still beautiful.

Sate for half-an-hour in Lady Perth's shed, and scrambled over the rocks and through the thickets at the head of the lake. I went till I could make my way no further, and left William to go to the top of the hill, whence he had a distinct view, as on a map, of the intricacies of the lake and the course of the river. Returned to the huts, and, after having taken a second dinner of the food we had brought from Callander, set our faces towards the head of Loch Ketterine. I can add nothing to my former description of the Trossachs, except that we departed with our old delightful remembrances endeared, and many new ones. The path or road—for it was neither the one nor the other, but something between both—is the pleasantest I have ever travelled in my life for the same length of way,—now with marks of sledges or wheels, or none at all, bare or green, as it might happen; now a little descent, now a level; sometimes a shady lane, at others an open track through green pastures; then again it would lead us into thick coppice-woods, which often entirely shut out the lake, and again admitted it by glimpses. We have never had a more delightful walk than this evening. Ben Lomond, and the three pointed-topped mountains of Loch Lomond, which we had seen from the Garrison, were very majestic under the clear sky, the lake perfectly calm, the air sweet and mild. I felt that it was much more interesting to visit a place where we had been before than it can possibly be the first time, except under peculiar circumstances. The sun had been set for some time, when, being within a quarter of a mile of the ferryman's hut, our path having led us close to the shore of the calm lake, we met two neatly dressed women, without hats, who had probably been taking their Sunday evening's walk. One of them said to us in a friendly, soft tone of voice, 'What! you are stepping westward?' I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun. William wrote the following poem long after, in remembrance of his feelings and mine:—

'What! you are stepping westward?' 'Yea, . . .
etc.'[2]

. . .

Continued to walk for some time along the top of the hill, having the high mountains of Loch Voil before us, and Ben Lomond and the steeps of Loch Ketterine behind. Came to several deserted mountain huts or shiels, and rested for some time beside one of them, upon a hillock of its green plot of monumental herbage. William here conceived the notion of writing an ode upon the affecting subject of those relics of human society found in that grand and solitary region. The spot of ground where we sate was even beautiful, the grass being uncommonly verdant, and of a remarkably soft and silky texture.

After this we rested no more till we came to the foot of the mountain, where there was a cottage, at the door of which a woman invited me to drink some whey: this I did, while William went to inquire respecting the road at a new stone house a few steps further. He was told to cross the brook, and proceed to the other side of the vale, and that no further directions were necessary, for we should find ourselves at the head of the lake, and on a plain road which would lead us downward. We waded the river and crossed the vale, perhaps half a mile or more. The mountains all round are very

[2] See p 172.

high; the vale pastoral and unenclosed, not many dwellings, and but few trees; the mountains in general smooth near the bottom. They are in large unbroken masses, combining with the vale to give an impression of bold simplicity.

Near the head of the lake, at some distance from us, we discovered the burial-place of the MacGregors, and did not view it without some interest, with its ornamental balls on the four corners of the wall, which, I daresay, have been often looked at with elevation of heart by our honest friend of Loch Ketterine. The lake is divided right across by a narrow slip of flat land, making a small lake at the head of the large one. The whole may be about five miles long.

As we descended, the scene became more fertile, our way being pleasantly varied—through coppices or open fields, and passing farm-houses, though always with an inter-mixture of uncultivated ground. It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly—might I be allowed to say pensively?—enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed. The following poem was suggested to William by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson's 'Tour in Scotland':—

'Behold her single in the field, . . . etc.'[3]

Sunday, September 18th.—The town of Peebles looks very pretty from the road in returning: it is an old town, built of grey stone, the same as the castle. Well-dressed people were going to church. Sent the car before, and walked ourselves, and while going along the main street William was called aside in a mysterious manner by a person who gravely examined him—whether he was an Irishman or a foreigner, or what he was; I suppose our car was the occasion of suspicion at a time when every one was talking of the threatened invasion. We had a day's journey before us along the banks of the Tweed, a name which has been sweet to my ears almost as far back as I can remember anything. After the first mile or two our road was seldom far from the river, which flowed in gentleness, though perhaps never silent; the hills on either side high and sometimes stony, but excellent pasturage for sheep. In some parts the vale was wholly of this pastoral character, in others we saw extensive tracts of corn ground, even spreading along whole hill-sides, and without visible fences, which is dreary in a flat country; but there is no dreariness on the banks of the Tweed,—the hills, whether smooth or stony, uncultivated or covered with ripe corn, had the same pensive softness. Near the corn tracts were large farm-houses, with many corn-stacks; the stacks and the house and out-houses together, I recollect, in one or two places upon the hills, at a little distance, seemed almost as large as a small village or hamlet. It was a clear autumnal day, without wind, and, being Sunday, the business of the harvest was suspended, and all that we saw, and felt, and heard, combined to excite one sensation of pensive and still pleasure.

Passed by several old halls yet inhabited, and others in ruin; but I have hardly a sufficiently distinct recollection of any of them to be able to describe them, and I now at this distance of time regret that I did not take notes. In one very sweet part of the vale a gate crossed the road, which was opened by an old woman who lived in a cottage close to it; I said to her, 'You live in a very pretty place!' 'Yes,' she replied, 'the water of Tweed is a bonny water.' The lines of the hills are flowing and beautiful, the reaches of the vale long; in some places appear the remains of a forest, in others you will see as lovely a combination of forms as any traveller who goes in search of the picturesque need desire, and yet perhaps without a single tree; or at least if trees there are, they shall be very few, and he shall not care whether they are there or not. The road took us through one long village, but I do not recollect any other; yet I think we never had a mile's length before us without a house, though seldom several cottages together. The loneliness of the scattered dwellings, the more stately edifices decaying or in ruin, or, if inhabited, not in their pride and freshness, aided the general effect of the gently varying scenes, which was that of tender pensiveness; no bursting torrents when we were there, but the murmuring of the river was heard distinctly, often blended with the bleating of sheep. In one place we saw a shepherd lying in the midst of a flock upon a sunny knoll, with his face towards the sky, happy picture of shepherd life.

. . .

At Clovenford, being so near to the Yarrow, we could not but think of the possibility of going thither, but came to the conclusion of reserving the pleasure for some future time, in consequence of which, after our return, William wrote the poem[4] which I shall here transcribe:

'From Stirling Castle we had seen . . . etc.'

[3] See p. 173

[4] See p. 173.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(1772-1834)

From *Biographia Literaria*

Coleridge's most important prose work is a mixture of light-hearted personal anecdote, heavy-handed metaphysics, and clear-headed analysis of the nature of poetry and the virtues and vices of Wordsworth's work. Except for the delightful reminiscences of the opening chapter, the biographical thread is almost completely obscured by critical comment. The reader should compare Coleridge's didactic picture of Bowyer with Lamb's more extensive tribute to Christ's Hospital (see p. 364). The student who wishes to analyze in detail Coleridge's evaluation of Wordsworth's theory and practice should read chapters XIV through XXII in the *Biographia* and the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (see p. 335). For an account of Coleridge's life see p. 184.

From *Chapter I*

. . . At school (Christ's Hospital), I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time a very severe, master, the Reverend James Bowyer. He early molded my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Vergil, and again of Vergil to Ovid. He habituated me to compare Lucretius (in such extracts as I then read), Terence, and, above all, the chaster poems of Catullus, not only with the Roman poets of the so-called silver and brazen ages, but with even those of the Augustan era; and on grounds of plain sense and universal logic, to see and assert the superiority of the former, in the truth and nativeness both of their thoughts and diction. At the same time that we were studying the Greek tragic poets, he made us read Shakespeare and Milton as lessons: and they were the lessons, too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to escape his censure. I learned from him that poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word; and I well remember that, availing himself of the synonyms to the Homer of Didymus[1] he made us attempt to show, with regard to each, why it would not have answered the same purpose; and wherein consisted the peculiar fitness of the word in the original text.

In our own English compositions (at least for the last three years of our school education), he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words. *Lute*, *harp*, and *lyre*; *Muse*, *Muses*, and *inspirations*; *Pegasus*, *Parnassus*, and *Hippocrene*[2] were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming "Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? Your nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring?[3] Oh aye! The cloister-pump, I suppose!" Nay, certain introductions, similes, and examples, were placed by name on a list of interdiction. Among the similes, there was, I remember, that of the manchineel fruit, as suiting equally well with too many subjects; in which however it yielded the palm at once to the example of Alexander and Clytus,[4] which was equally good and apt, whatever might be the theme. Was it ambition? Alexander and Clytus!—Flattery? Alexander and Clytus!—Anger—drunkenness—pride—friendship—ingratitude—late repentance? Still, still Alexander and Clytus! At length, the praises of agriculture having been exemplified in the sagacious observation that, had Alexander been holding the plow, he would not have run his friend Clytus through with a spear, this tried and serviceable old friend was banished by public edict in *sæcula sæculorum*.[5] I have sometimes ventured to think that a list of this kind, or an *index expurgatorius*[6] of certain well known and ever-returning phrases, both introductory and transitional, including a large assortment of modest egoisms and flattering illeisms, and the like, might be hung up in our Law-courts, and both Houses of Parliament, with great advantage to the public, as an important saving of national time, an incalculable relief to his Majesty's ministers, but, above all, as insuring the thanks of

[1] Greek scholar (63 B.C.?-10 A.D.).

[2] Fountain on Mt. Helicon, sacred to the Muses.

[3] At Pieria, near Mt. Olympus, where the Muses were worshiped.

[4] Alexander the Great, in a drunken rage at a banquet, slew Clytus, who had once saved his life in battle.

[5] forever. [6] list of passages to be deleted from books.

country attorneys, and their clients who have private bills to carry through the House.

Be this as it may, there was one custom of our master's which I cannot pass over in silence, because I think it imitable and worthy of imitation. He would often permit our exercises, under some pretext of want of time, to accumulate, till each lad had four or five to be looked over. Then placing the whole number abreast on his desk, he would ask the writer why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis: and if no satisfying answer could be returned, and two faults of the same kind were found in one exercise, the irrevocable verdict followed; the exercise was torn up, and another on the same subject to be produced, in addition to the tasks of the day. The reader will, I trust, excuse this tribute of recollection to a man, whose severities, even now, not seldom furnish the dreams, by which the blind fancy would fain interpret to the mind the painful sensations of distempered sleep; but neither lessen nor dim the deep sense of my moral and intellectual obligations. He sent us to the University excellent Latin and Greek scholars, and tolerable Hebraists. Yet our classical knowledge was the least of the good gifts which we derived from his zealous and conscientious tutorage. He is now gone to his final reward, full of years, and full of honors, even of those honors, which were dearest to his heart, as gratefully bestowed by that school, and still binding him to the interests of that school, in which he had been himself educated, and to which during his whole life he was a dedicated thing.

Chapter XIV

Occasion of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the objects originally proposed—Preface to the second edition—The ensuing controversy, its causes and acrimony—Philosophic definitions of a Poem and Poetry with scholia

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself—(to which of us I do not recollect)—that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*; in which it was agreed, that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing among other poems, *The Dark Ladie*, and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction, which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published; and were presented by him, as an experiment, whether subjects, which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest, which it is the

peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length; in which, notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of speech that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of real life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long-continued controversy. For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions, with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things, which they were for a long time described as being: had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them; they must have sunk at once. a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found too not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its religious fervor. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author, which was more or less consciously felt, where it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions, and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism, which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence with which it whirled them round and round. With many parts of this preface in the sense attributed to them and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorize, I never concurred; but on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author's own practice in the greater part of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth in his recent collection has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice. But he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering it as the source of a controversy, in which I have been honored more than I deserve by the frequent conjunction of my name with his, I think it expedient to declare once for all, in what points I coincide with the opinions supported in that preface, and in what points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my views, first, of a Poem; and secondly, of Poetry itself, in kind, and in essence.

The office of philosophical disquisition consists in just distinction; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical process of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the result of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object being proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months;

"Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November," etc.

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm super-added, whatever be their contents, *may* be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial form. A difference of object and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may result from the attainment of the end: but it is not itself the immediate end. In other

works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blest indeed is that state of society, in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the *Bathyllus* even of an Anacreon, or the *Alexis* of Virgil, from disgust and aversion!

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work not metrically composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels and romances. Would then the mere superaddition of metre, with or without rhyme, entitle these to the name of poems? The answer is, that nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If metre be superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such, as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species—(having *this* object in common with it)—it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*.

Controversy is not seldom excited in consequence of the disputants attaching each a different meaning to the same word; and in few instances has this been more striking, than in disputes concerning the present subject. If a man chooses to call every composition a poem, which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted. The distinction is at least competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined, that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting, as a tale, or as a series of interesting reflections, I of course admit this as another fit ingredient of a poem, and an additional merit. But if the definition sought for be that of a *legitimate* poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgment of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the other hand, to a series of striking lines or distiches, each of which, absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself, becomes disjoined from its context, and forms a separate whole, instead of a harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air;—at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward. *Præcipitandus est liber spiritus*,[1] says Petronius most happily. The epithet, *liber*, here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of Plato,[2] and Jeremy Taylor,[3] and Burnet's[4] *Theory of the Earth*, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem. The first chapter of Isaiah—(indeed a very large portion of the whole book)—is poetry in the most emphatic sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert, that pleasure, and not truth was the immediate object of the prophet. In short, whatever specific import we attach to the word, Poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry. Yet if an harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved in keeping with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement, as will partake of one, though not a peculiar property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal attention than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part

[1] A free spirit ought to be thrown forward.
[2] Greek philosopher (427?-347 B.C.).
[3] English bishop and author (1613-1667).
[4] Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), English bishop and historian.

anticipated in some of the remarks on the Fancy and Imagination in the early part of this work. What is poetry?—is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet?—that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind.

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control, *laxis effertur habenis*,[5] reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. Doubtless, as Sir John Davies[6] observes of the soul—(and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately, to the poetic Imagination)—

Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
Bodies to *spirit* by sublimation strange,
As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
As we our food into our nature change.

From their gross matter she abstracts *their* forms,
And draws a kind of quintessence from things;
Which to her proper nature she transforms
To bear them light on her celestial wings.

Thus does she, when from *individual states*
She doth abstract the universal kinds;
Which then re-clothed in divers names and fates
Steal access through the senses to our minds.

Finally, Good Sense is the Body of poetic genius, Fancy its Drapery, Motion its Life, and Imagination the Soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

[5] is driven with loose reins.

[6] English poet (1569-1626).

From *Chapter XVIII*

Language of metrical composition, why and wherein essentially different from that of prose—Origin and elements of metre—Its necessary consequences, and the conditions thereby imposed on the metrical writer in the choice of his diction.

I conclude, therefore, that the attempt[7] is impracticable; and that, were it not impracticable, it would still be useless. For the very power of making the selection implies the previous possession of the language selected. Or where can the poet have lived? And by what rules could he direct his choice, which would not have enabled him to select and arrange his words by the light of his own judgment? We do not adopt the language of a class by the mere adoption of such words exclusively, as that class would use, or at least understand; but likewise by following the order, in which the words of such men are wont to succeed each other. Now this order, in the intercourse of uneducated men, is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power, by the greater disjunction and separation in the component parts of that, whatever it be, which they wish to communicate. There is a want of that prospectiveness of mind, that surview, which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organized whole.

Now I will take the first stanza, on which I have chanced to open, in the *Lyrical Ballads*. It is one the most simple and the least peculiar in its language.

In distant countries have I been,
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public roads, alone.
But such a one, on English ground,
And in the broad highway, I met;
Along the broad highway he came,
His cheeks with tears were wet:
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;
And in his arms a lamb he had.

The words here are doubtless such as are cur-

[7] to use for poetry a selection of the speech of common man as Wordsworth had proposed, see p 335

rent in all ranks of life; and of course not less so in the hamlet and cottage than in the shop, manufactory, college, or palace. But is this the *order*, in which the rustic would have placed the words? I am grievously deceived, if the following less compact mode of commencing the same tale be not a far more faithful copy. "I have been in a many parts, far and near, and I don't know that I ever saw before a man crying by himself in the public road; a grown man I mean, that was neither sick nor hurt," etc., etc. But when I turn to the following stanza in *The Thorn*:

> At all times of the day and night
> This wretched woman thither goes;
> And she is known to every star,
> And every wind that blows:
> And there, beside the Thorn, she sits,
> When the blue day-light's in the skies,
> And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
> Or frosty air is keen and still,
> And to herself she cries,
>
> Oh misery! Oh misery!
> Oh woe is me! Oh misery!

and compare this with the language of ordinary men; or with that which I can conceive at all likely to proceed, in real life, from such a narrator, as is supposed in the note to the poem; compare it either in the succession of the images or of the sentences; I am reminded of the sublime prayer and hymn of praise, which Milton, in opposition to an established liturgy, presents as a fair specimen of common extemporary devotion, and such as we might expect to hear from every self-inspired minister of a conventicle! And I reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who possesses, as Mr. Wordsworth, if ever man did, most assuredly does possess,

The Vision and the Faculty divine.

(1817)

Percy Bysshe Shelley

(1792-1822)

From *A Defense of Poetry*

In *The Four Ages of Poetry* (1820), Thomas Love Peacock charged that the art of poetry had deteriorated and was on the road to becoming extinct. "A poet in our times," he said, "is a semi-barbarian in a civilized community. . . . The highest inspirations of poetry are resolvable into three ingredients: the rant of unregulated passion, the whine of exaggerated feeling, and the cant of factitious sentiment. . . . It can never make a philosopher, nor a statesman, nor in any class of life an useful or rational man. It cannot claim the slightest share in any one of the comforts and utilities of life of which we have witnessed so many and so rapid advances. But though not useful, it may be said to be highly ornamental. . . . But in whatever degree poetry is cultivated, it must necessarily be to the neglect of some branch of useful study; and it is a lamentable thing to see minds, capable of better things, running to seed in the spacious indolence of these empty aimless mockeries of the intellectual exertion." Shelley felt called upon to answer this attack on his beloved art. His noble defense is in the tradition of Sir Philip Sidney (see I, p. 360 ff.).

For an account of Shelley's life, see p. 256.

The poetry of Dante may be considered as the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and ancient world. The distorted notions of invisible things which Dante and his rival Milton have idealized, are merely the mask and mantle in which these great poets walk through eternity enveloped and disguised. It is a difficult question to determine how far they were conscious of the distinction which must have subsisted in their minds between their own creeds and that of the people. Dante at least appears to wish to mark the full extent of it by placing Riphaeus, whom Virgil calls *justissimus unus*,[1] in Paradise, and observing a most poetical caprice in his distribution of rewards and punishments. And Milton's poem contains within itself a philosophical refutation of that system of which, by a strange

[1] one of the most just of men.

and natural antithesis, it has been a chief popular support. Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennobles his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonors his conquest in the victor. Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed (if this shall be judged to be a violation) as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his Devil. And this bold neglect of a direct moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of Milton's genius. He mingled as it were the elements of human nature as colors upon a single palette, and arranged them in the composition of his great picture according to the laws of epic truth, that is, according to the laws of that principle by which a series of actions of the external universe and of intelligent and ethical beings is calculated to excite the sympathy of succeeding generations of mankind. The *Divina Commedia* and *Paradise Lost* have conferred upon modern mythology a systematic form; and when change and time shall have added one more superstition to the mass of those which have arisen and decayed upon the earth, commentators will be learnedly employed in elucidating the religion of ancestral Europe, only not utterly forgotten because it will have been stamped with the eternity of genius.

Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet: that is, the second poet, the series of whose creations bore a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived, and of the ages which followed it: developing itself in correspondence with their development. For Lucretius had limed the wings of his swift spirit in the dregs of the sensible world; and Virgil, with a modesty that ill became his genius, had affected the fame of an imitator, even whilst he created anew all that he copied; and none among the flock of mock-birds, though their notes are sweet, Appollonius Rhodius, Quintus Calaber, Smyrnaeus, Nonnus, Lucan, Statius, or Claudian,[2] have sought even to fulfill a single condition of epic truth. Milton was the third epic poet. For if the title of epic in its highest sense be refused to the *Aeneid*, still less can it be conceded to the *Orlando Furioso*[3], the *Gerusalemme Liberata*[4], the *Lusiad*[5], or the *Fairy Queen*.[6]

Dante and Milton were both deeply penetrated with the ancient religion of the civilized world; and its spirit exists in their poetry probably in the same proportion as its forms survived in the unreformed worship of modern Europe. The one preceded and the other followed the Reformation at almost equal intervals. Dante was the first religious reformer, and Luther[7] surpassed him rather in the rudeness and acrimony, than in the boldness of his censures, of papal usurpation. Dante was the first awakener of entranced Europe; he created a language, in itself music and persuasion, out of a chaos of inharmonious barbarisms. He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning; the Lucifer[8] of that starry flock which in the thirteenth century shone forth from republican Italy, as from a heaven, into the darkness of the benighted world. His very words are instinct with spirit; each is as a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought; and many yet lie covered in the ashes of their birth, and pregnant with a lightning which has yet found no conductor All high poetry is infinite; it is as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially. Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed. A great poem is a fountain for ever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all of its divine effluence which their peculiar relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforeseen and unconceived delight. . . .

The functions of the poetical faculty are twofold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders

[2] all minor Latin poets
[3] See I, p. 1072.
[4] See I, p. 1078
[5] Portuguese epic by Camoens (1524-1580).
[6] See I, p. 291.
[7] Martin Luther (1483-1546), the great German Protestant reformer
[8] Literally, "light-bearer"

in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order, which may be called the beautiful and the good. The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieldy for that which animates it.

Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odor and the color of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendor of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship—what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave—and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of its results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labor and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions, by the intertexture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself: for Milton conceived the *Paradise Lost* as a whole before he executed it in portions. We have his own authority also for the muse having "dictated" to him the "unpremeditated song." And let this be an answer to those who would allege the fifty-six various readings of the first line of the *Orlando Furioso*. Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting. The instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts: a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in a mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation, is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling, sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression: so that even in the desire and the regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the morning calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship, is essentially linked with such emotions; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can color all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced those emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in

language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union, under its light yoke, all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes: its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms.

(written 1821)

John Keats

(1795-1821)

From *The Letters*

Keats's correspondence is full of interest to the student of his poetry and biography. His political views, for instance, are barely revealed in his poems, as a result of his conviction that pure poetry should exclude social purposes; but his letters show him to have been considerably concerned with contemporary events, and a liberal in his opinions. They reveal, too, the manliness of his character—a quality that Shelley's portrait of him in *Adonais* is likely to make us forget. Such letters as the one to the painter Haydon and the one to Shelley make clear his unflinching self-criticism and the austerity with which he had devoted himself to his chosen art. The latter epistle, in answer to Shelley's kind invitation to come to stay with him in Italy, although overshadowed by the premonition of death, shows how strong was Keats's soul in the face of every discouragement.

The letters to Brown, however, are written in the despair of certain death and frustrated love. It is difficult to read them without being harrowed, impotent spectators, as we are, to the poet's anguish. Rarely has a broken heart spoken with such eloquence.

For an account of Keats's life, see p. 299.

To Benjamin Robert Haydon

March 8, 1819

MY DEAR HAYDON,

You must be wondering where I am and what I am about! I am mostly at Hampstead, and about nothing; being in a sort of qui bono[1] temper, not exactly on the road to an epic poem. Nor must you think I have forgotten you. No, I have about every three days been to Abbey's[2] and to the Lawyers. Do let me know how you have been getting on, and in what spirits you are.

You got out gloriously in yesterday's *Examiner*. What a set of little people we live amongst! I went the other day into an ironmonger's shop—without any change in my sensations—men and tin kettles are much the same these days—they do not study like children at five and thirty—but they talk like men of twenty. Conversation is not a search after knowledge, but an endeavor at effect.

In this respect two most opposite men, Wordsworth and Hunt, are the same. A friend of mine observed the other day that if Lord Bacon were to make any remark in a party of the present day, the conversation would stop on the sudden. I am convinced of this, and from this I have come to this resolution—never to write for the sake of writing or making a poem, but from running over with any little knowledge or experience

[1] doubtless a mistake for *cui bono*, i.e. "What's the use?"

[2] Richard Abbey, guardian of the Keats children during their minority.

which many years of reflection may perhaps give me; otherwise I will be dumb. What imagination I have I shall enjoy, and greatly, for I have experienced the satisfaction of having great conceptions without the trouble of sonnetteering. I will not spoil my love of gloom by writing an Ode to Darkness!

With respect to my livelihood, I will not write for it,—for I will not run with that most vulgar of all crowds, the literary. Such things I ratify by looking upon myself, and trying myself at lifting mental weights, as it were. I am three and twenty, with little knowledge and middling intellect. It is true that in the height of enthusiasm I have been cheated into some fine passages; but that is not the thing.

I have not been to see you because all my going out has been to town, and that has been a great deal. Write soon.

Yours constantly,

JOHN KEATS

To Percy Bysshe Shelley

August 1820

MY DEAR SHELLEY,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost overoccupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now-a-days is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration"—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of *Prometheus*[1] every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for hope of gain; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now . . .

JOHN KEATS

To Charles Brown

November 1, 1820

MY DEAR BROWN,

Yesterday we were let out of Quarantine,[1] during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little;—perhaps it may relieve the load of WRETCHEDNESS which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. I cannot q—[2] My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. O, God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my traveling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time

[1] See p 273.

[1] The boat on which Keats was bound for Italy in search of health was held for ten days in quarantine at Naples.

[2] Brown makes the following note: "He could not go on with this sentence nor even write the word 'quit,'—as I suppose"

that I was a prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again—Now!—O that I could be buried near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her handwriting would break my heart—even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed, through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)[3]—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus +; if——

Remember me to all. I will endeavor to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her—I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all!

Your ever affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS

Thursday, November 2, 1820—I was a day too early for the Courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account, from Haslam. I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to Fanny. God bless you!

To Charles Brown

November 30, 1820

MY DEAR BROWN,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, &c., walking with her, and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live? Dr. Clark is very attentive to me; he says, there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George, for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell Haslam I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess; and also a note to my sister—who walks about my imagination like a ghost—she is so like Tom.[1] I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you!

JOHN KEATS

[3] to be held till called for.

[1] Keats's younger brother, who died in December, 1818.

Charles Lamb

(1775-1834)

Whatever diversity of opinion may exist concerning the merits of great English authors, there is general agreement about the worth of Charles Lamb. To know him is to love him. English prose has had essayists as witty, essayists of greater depth or wider scope, but not one for whom readers have shown a warmer affection. He is perhaps the perfect familiar essayist. For the familiar essay has been called rather fittingly "the prose lyric"; and if self-revelation be a chief virtue in that form, Lamb has most assuredly succeeded better than any other. Like Montaigne (see I, p. 402), to whom he is in this respect closest of Englishmen, it is himself that he portrays, no matter what his topic. The Charles Lamb revealed in the *Essays* is one of the most engaging of men, a man of sunlit soul. Yet few human beings have had to lead a life more tragic, and fewer have lived with heroism more unostentatious.

He was born in London on February 10, 1775, the son of John Lamb, clerk to a barrister of the Inner Temple, where the Lambs had lodgings. Through the influence of his father's employer, to whose library Charles had access, the boy was sent to study at Christ's Hospital. There he met Coleridge, who remained his lifelong friend. But Lamb's rich knowledge of books was largely self-acquired, for at the age of fifteen his formal education was terminated because of the family's lack of funds. He secured employment as a clerk at South Sea House, where his brother also worked, and after a few months he took a better position at East India House. In the offices of the latter he served for thirty-three years (1792-1825). At the age of fifty he was retired on a comfortable pension which enabled him to spend his last nine years in the leisure he had earned.

Thus Lamb's cultivation of the rare things in literature and nearly all the immortal creations of his pen were the productions of only those few hours when he was free from the account books of East India House. That he should have accomplished so much in this fashion is remarkable enough. But that he should have accomplished it against a background of overwhelming odds is almost astonishing. In his family there was an hereditary tendency toward insanity. At the age of twenty he wrote to Coleridge: "The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a mad-house, at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite anyone. But mad I was. . . . Coleridge! it may convince you of my regard for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary insanity." (This other person is probably that Alice W——n referred to in *Dream-Children*—see p. 370.) Although always facing the possibility, Lamb never had a recurrence of this malady. But not long after his brief lapse, he came home one day to find that his sister Mary in a fit of insanity had killed their mother and wounded their father. "My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity," he told Coleridge, "has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to catch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a mad-house from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital." By assuming full responsibility for her, Lamb was able to prevent his sister's being confined to an asylum for life. This was a sacrifice that made marriage impossible for him, although he did once make an unaccepted proposal of matrimony to an actress. On many occasions Mary Lamb's insanity returned, but the loving care of her brother lengthened her intervals of intellectual balance. The two learned to

recognize the symptoms of the disease, and at such times as they appeared Lamb would take her to the asylum for treatment. The inquisitiveness of neighbors and their own sensitiveness made them constantly change their residence. Such a life might have been calculated to crush a man's genius rather than urge him to do creative work. But his studies and his writings were a source of strength to him. It would be inaccurate to call them an escape. For he spun out his personality in a series of superb essays in which there is never a hint of complaint or grievance against his destiny.

It would be inaccurate, too, to think of his existence as deprived of joy or compensation. Mary, in her lucid periods, was a wonderful companion to her brother, shared his interests, and collaborated on some of his work. He won the respect and friendship, moreover, of the greatest men of his time: Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Godwin, and De Quincey, among others. On Wednesday nights his friends would gather at the Lamb home to share their dinner and "the vast jug of porter often replenished from the foaming pots which the best tap of Fleet Street supplies." Even before he had attained literary recognition his circle of friends was made, for they recognized in him a man of rare taste in books.

By temperament Lamb was an antiquary. And his love of old things and the past usually fastened upon the less familiar. He preferred the bypaths rather than the highroads of literature, the quaint and curious to the typical. Thus, he read Sterne and Smollett rather than Richardson and Fielding among the novelists. His favorite books were Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Browne's *Religio Medici* (see I, p. 576), and from them he learned something of the music which characterizes his own prose. The Elizabethan dramatists who had been Shakespeare's fellows, neglected by the Augustans, were rediscovered by him, and to him we are vastly indebted for our appreciation of Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, and the rest. In 1808 he published his volume of *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare,* a selection of great scenes from Elizabethan drama with enthusiastic commentaries, which fostered a new interest in these forgotten masters.

It took him a number of years to plumb his aptitude for the essay. He began as a poet with four sonnets in an early volume of Coleridge's poetry (1796). In 1798 he published a prose romance, *Rosamund Gray,* and in 1802 a tragedy, *John Woodvil,* which was never produced. His farce, *Mr. H.,* was hissed off the stage on its first performance in 1806, and there is a characteristic story that no one in the audience hissed louder than the author. In 1807 he published the perennial *Tales from Shakespeare,* written for children, in collaboration with his sister. He was forty-five when, in 1820, he found his true medium in the first of a series of essays signed "Elia," published in the *London Magazine.* In 1823 he made a collection of twenty-five of them and issued them as *The Essays of Elia. The Last Essays of Elia* appeared ten years later. These two volumes, together with the volumes of his wonderful letters, form the most irresistible body of self-revelatory prose in English.

Lamb was the only romanticist of his generation who preferred the city to the country. For him the sights and sounds of London were an enchantment far more compelling than those of the countryside which enraptured his friend Coleridge. He was one of the first men to sense the romance and poetry of the town. "London," he wrote in a letter, "whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest bowing tradesman I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter and the parson into the bargain! [a dig at Wordsworth's *The Brothers*] . . . O! her lamps at night! her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardwaremen, pastry-cooks! St. Paul's Churchyard, the Strand! Exeter Change! Charing Cross, with the man *upon* a black horse! Those are thy gods, O London!" And the glamour of London irradiates the *Essays.*

Indeed, the whole tissue of Lamb's life is woven into his prose: his childhood, his days at Christ's Hospital, his hours at India House, his daily experiences with Mary (immortalized in the *Essays* as Bridget), his daydreams and idle hopes, his beloved books, and his friends. There too may be found his love of fun and jokes, his cultivated prejudices,

his enthusiasms, and his dislikes. And all these are communicated to us by a distinctive style, deliberately compounded of the reflective, the quaint, and the jocular, which gives us the man.

Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago

In Mr. Lamb's *Works*, published a year or two since, I find a magnificent eulogy on my old school,[1] such as it was, or now appears to him to have been, between the years 1782 and 1789. It happens, very oddly, that my own standing at Christ's was nearly corresponding with his; and, with all gratitude to him for his enthusiasm for the cloisters, I think he has contrived to bring together whatever can be said in praise of them, dropping all the other side of the argument most ingeniously.

I remember L. at school; and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his schoolfellows had not. His friends lived in town, and were near at hand; and he had the privilege of going to see them, almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction, which was denied to us. The present worthy subtreasurer to the Inner Temple[2] can explain how that happened. He had his tea and hot rolls in a morning, while we were battening upon our quarter of a penny loaf—our *crug*—moistened with attenuated small beer, in wooden piggins,[3] smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. Our Monday's milk porritch, blue and tasteless, and the pease soup of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of "extraordinary bread and butter," from the hot-loaf of the Temple. The Wednesday's mess of millet, somewhat less repugnant—(we had three banyan[4] to four meat days in the week)—was endeared to his palate with a lump of double-refined, and a smack of ginger (to make it go down the more glibly) or the fragrant cinnamon. In lieu of our *half-pickled* Sundays, or *quite fresh* boiled beef on Thursdays (strong as *caro equina*[5]), with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth—our scanty mutton crags on Fridays—and rather more savory, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted or rare, on the Tuesdays (the only dish which excited our appetites, and disappointed our stomachs, in almost equal proportion)—he had his hot plate of roast veal, or the more tempting griskin[6] (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen (a great thing), and brought him daily by his maid or aunt! I remember the good old relative (in whom love forbade pride) squatting down upon some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters, disclosing the viands (of higher regale than those cates which the ravens ministered to the Tishbite[7]); and the contending passions of L. at the unfolding. There was love for the bringer; shame for the thing brought, and the manner of its bringing; sympathy for those who were too many to share in it; and, at top of all, hunger (eldest, strongest of the passions!) predominant, breaking down the stony fences of shame, and awkwardness, and a troubling over-consciousness.

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. They seemed to them to recur too often, though I thought them few enough; and, one after another, they all failed me, and I felt myself alone among six hundred playmates.

[1] Lamb is writing under the pseudonym of "Elia" and is pretending to talk about Lamb as another person who was at his school, Christ's Hospital, at the same time. This reminiscence should be compared with that of Coleridge (see p. 351).

[2] one of the law courts where students receive their legal training.

[3] small pails.

[4] the days on which sailors received no allowance of meat

[5] horse flesh.

[6] pork loin

[7] Elisha, the Hebrew prophet of the ninth century B.C., who was fed by ravens.

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead! The yearnings which I used to have towards it in those unfledged years! How, in my dreams, would my native town (far in the west) come back, with its church, and trees, and faces! How I would wake weeping, and in the anguish of my heart exclaim upon sweet Calne in Wiltshire!

To this late hour of my life, I trace impressions left by the recollection of those friendless holidays. The long warm days of summer never return but they bring with them a gloom from the haunting memory of those *whole-day-leaves*, when, by some strange arrangement, we were turned out, for the live-long day, upon our own hands, whether we had friends to go to, or none. I remember those bathing excursions to the New River, which L. recalls with such relish, better, I think, than he can—for he was a home-seeking lad, and did not much care for such water-pastimes.—How merrily we would sally forth into the fields; and strip under the first warmth of the sun; and wanton like young dace in the streams; getting us appetites for noon, which those of us that were penniless (our scanty morning crust long since exhausted) had not the means of allaying—while the cattle, and the birds, and the fishes, were at feed about us, and we had nothing to satisfy our cravings—the very beauty of the day, and the exercise of the pastime, and the sense of liberty, setting a keener edge upon them!—How faint and languid, finally we would return, towards nightfall, to our desired morsel, half-rejoicing, half-reluctant, that the hours of our uneasy liberty had expired!

It was worse in the days of winter, to go prowling about the streets objectless—shivering at cold windows of print-shops, to extract a little amusement; or haply, as a last resort, in the hope of a little novelty, to pay a fifty-times repeated visit (where our individual faces should be as well known to the warden as those of his own charges) to the Lions in the Tower[8]—to whose levée, by courtesy immemorial, we had a prescriptive title to admission.

L.'s governor[9] (so we called the patron who presented us to the foundation) lived in a manner under his paternal roof. Any complaint which he had to make was sure to being attended to. This was understood at Christ's, and was an effectual screen to him against the severity of masters, or worse tyranny of the monitors. The oppressions of these young brutes are heart-sickening to call to recollection. I have been called out of my bed, and *waked for the purpose*, in the coldest winter nights—and this not once, but night after night—in my shirt, to receive the discipline of a leathern thong, with eleven other sufferers, because it pleased my callow overseer, when there has been any talking heard after we were gone to bed, to make the six last beds in the dormitory, where the youngest children of us slept, answerable for an offence they neither dared to commit, nor had the power to hinder.—The same execrable tyranny drove the younger part of us from the fires, when our feet were perishing with snow; and under the cruellest penalties, forbade the indulgence of a drink of water, when we lay in sleepless summer nights, fevered with the season, and the day's sports.

There was one H——,[10] who, I learned, in after days, was seen expiating some maturer offence in the hulks.[11] (Do I flatter myself in fancying that this might be the planter of that name, who suffered —— at Nevis, I think, or St. Kitts,[12] —— some few years since? My friend Tobin was the benevolent instrument of bringing him to the gallows.) This petty Nero actually branded a boy, who had offended him, with a red-hot iron; and nearly starved forty of us, with exacting contributions, to the one half of our bread, to pamper a young ass, which, incredible as it may seem, with the connivance of the nurse's daughter (a young flame of his) he had contrived to smuggle in, and keep upon the leads of the *ward*, as they called our dormitories. This game went on for better than a week, till the foolish beast, not able to fare well but he must cry roast meat—happier than Caligula's minion,[13] could he have kept his own counsel—but, foolisher, alas! than any of his species in the fables—waxing fat, and kicking, in the fulness of bread, one unlucky minute would needs proclaim his good fortune to the world below; and, laying out his simple throat, blew such a ram's horn blast, as (toppling down the walls of his own Jericho[14]) set concealment any longer at defiance.

[8] Lions were kept in the Tower of London.

[9] Samuel Salt, the employer in whose home Lamb's family lived

[10] Hodges (name supplied by Lamb).

[11] prison ship.

[12] islands in the West Indies

[13] The Roman Emperor Caligula (37-41 A.D.) became insane and appointed a horse as his chief consul.

[14] According to the Biblical account, Joshua, leader of the Israelites, caused the walls of Jericho to fall by blowing on a trumpet; cf *Joshua*, 6 20

The client was dismissed, with certain attentions, to Smithfield; but I never understood that the patron underwent any censure on the occasion. This was in the stewardship of L.'s admired Perry.

Under the same *facile* administration, can L. have forgotten the cool impunity with which the nurses used to carry away openly, in open platters, for their own tables, one out of two of every hot joint, which the careful matron had been seeing scrupulously weighed out for our dinners? These things were daily practised in that magnificent apartment, which L. (grown connoisseur since, we presume) praises so highly for the grand paintings "by Verrio, and others," with which it is "hung round and adorned." But the sight of sleek, well-fed blue-coat boys in pictures was, at that time, I believe, little consolatory to him, or us, the living ones, who saw the better part of our provisions carried away before our faces by harpies; and ourselves reduced (with the Trojan[15] in the hall of Dido)

"To feed our mind with idle portraiture."

L. has recorded the repugnance of the school to *gags*, or the fat of fresh beef boiled; and sets it down to some superstition. But these unctuous morsels are never grateful to young palates (children are universally fat-haters) and in strong, coarse, boiled meats, *unsalted*, are detestable. A *gag-eater* in our time was equivalent to a *ghoul*, and held in equal detestation. —— suffered under the imputation.

"——'Twas said,
He ate strange flesh."

He was observed, after dinner, carefully to gather up the remnants left at his table (not many, nor very choice fragments, you may credit me)—and, in an especial manner, these disreputable morsels, which he would convey away, and secretly stow in the settle that stood at his bed-side. None saw when he ate them. It was rumored that he privately devoured them in the night. He was watched, but no traces of such midnight practices were discoverable. Some reported, that, on leave-days, he had been seen to carry out of the bounds a large blue check handkerchief, full of something. This then must be the accursed thing. Conjecture next was at work to imagine how he could dispose of it. Some said he sold it to the beggars. This belief generally prevailed. He went about moping. None spake to him. No one would play with him. He was excommunicated; put out of the pale of the school. He was too powerful a boy to be beaten, but he underwent every mode of that negative punishment, which is more grievous than many stripes. Still he persevered. At length he was observed by two of his school-fellows, who were determined to get at the secret, and had traced him one leave-day for that purpose, to enter a large worn-out building, such as there exist specimens of in Chancery Lane, which are let out to various scales of pauperism with open door, and a common staircase. After him they silently slunk in, and followed by stealth up four flights, and saw him tap at a poor wicket, which was opened by an aged woman, meanly clad. Suspicion was now ripened into certainty. The informers had secured their victim. They had him in their toils. Accusation was formally preferred, and retribution most signal was looked for. Mr. Hathaway, the then steward (for this happened a little after my time), with that patient sagacity which tempered all his conduct, determined to investigate the matter, before he proceeded to sentence. The result was, that the supposed mendicants, the receivers or purchasers of the mysterious scraps, turned out to be the parents of ——, an honest couple come to decay,—whom this seasonable supply had, in all probability, saved from mendicancy; and that this young stork, at the expense of his own good name, had all this while been only feeding the old birds!—The governors on this occasion, much to their honor, voted a present relief to the family of ——, and presented him with a silver medal. The lesson which the steward read upon RASH JUDGEMENT, on the occasion of publicly delivering the medal to ——, I believe, would not be lost upon his auditory.—I had left school then, but I well remember ——. He was a tall, shambling youth, with a cast in his eye, not at all calculated to conciliate hostile prejudices. I have since seen him carrying a baker's basket. I think I heard he did not do quite so well by himself, as he had done by the old folks.

I was a hypochondriac lad; and the sight of a boy in fetters, upon the day of my first putting on the blue clothes, was not exactly fitted to assuage the natural terrors of initiation. I was of tender years, barely turned of seven; and had only read of such things in books, or seen them but in dreams. I was told he had *run away*. This was the punishment for the first offence.—As a novice I was soon after taken to see the dungeons. These were little

[15] Aeneas; see Virgil's *Aeneid*, books I-IV

square, Bedlam cells,[16] where a boy could just lie at his length upon straw and a blanket—a mattress, I think, was afterwards substituted—with a peep of light, let in askance, from a prison-orifice at top, barely enough to read by. Here the poor boy was locked in by himself all day, without sight of any but the porter who brought him his bread and water—who *might not speak to him*;—or of the beadle, who came twice a week to call him out to receive his periodical chastisement, which was almost welcome, because it separated him for a brief interval from solitude:—and here he was shut up by himself *of nights*, out of the reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to his time of life, might subject him to. This was the penalty for the second offence.—Wouldst thou like, reader, to see what became of him in the next degree?

The culprit, who had been a third time an offender, and whose expulsion was at this time deemed irreversible, was brought forth, as at some solemn *auto da fe*,[17] arrayed in uncouth and most appalling attire—all trace of his late "watchet weeds"[18] carefully effaced, he was exposed in a jacket, resembling those which London lamplighters formerly delighted in, with a cap of the same. The effect of this divestiture was such as the ingenious devisers of it could have anticipated. With his pale and frighted features, it was as if some of those disfigurements in Dante had seized upon him. In this disguisement he was brought into the hall (*L.'s favorite state-room*), where awaited him the whole number of his schoolfellows, whose joint lessons and sports he was thenceforth to share no more; the awful presence of the steward, to be seen for the last time; of the executioner beadle, clad in his state robe for the occasion; and of two faces more, of direr import, because never but in these extremities visible. These were governors; two of whom, by choice, or charter, were always accustomed to officiate at these *Ultima Supplicia*;[19] not to mitigate (so at least we understood it), but to enforce the uttermost stripe. Old Bamber Gascoigne, and Peter Aubert, I remember, were colleagues on one occasion, when the beadle turning rather pale, a glass of brandy was ordered to prepare him for the mysteries. The scourging was, after the old Roman fashion, long and stately. The lictor accompanied the criminal quite round the hall. We were generally too faint with attending to the previous disgusting circumstances, to make accurate report with our eyes of the degree of corporal suffering inflicted. Report, of course, gave out the back knotty and livid. After scourging, he was made over, in his *San Benito*,[20] to his friends, if he had any (but commonly such poor runagates were friendless), or to his parish officer, who, to enhance the effect of the scene, had his station allotted to him on the outside of the hall gate.

These solemn pageantries were not played off so often as to spoil the general mirth of the community. We had plenty of exercise and recreation *after* school hours; and, for myself, I must confess, that I was never happier, than *in* them. The Upper and Lower Grammar Schools were held in the same room; and an imaginary line only divided their bounds. Their character was as different as that of the inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees. The Rev. James Boyer was the Upper Master: but the Rev. Matthew Field presided over that portion of the apartment, of which I had the good fortune to be a member. We lived a life as careless as birds. We talked and did just what we pleased, and nobody molested us. We carried an accidence, or a grammar, for form; but, for any trouble it gave us, we might take two years in getting through the verbs deponent, and another two in forgetting all that we had learned about them. There was now and then the formality of saying a lesson, but if you had not learned it, a brush across the shoulders (just enough to disturb a fly) was the sole remonstrance. Field never used the rod; and in truth he wielded the cane with no great good will—holding it "like a dancer." It looked in his hands rather like an emblem than an instrument of authority; and an emblem, too, he was ashamed of. He was a good easy man, that did not care to ruffle his own peace, nor perhaps set any great consideration upon the value of juvenile time. He came among us, now and then, but often stayed away whole days from us; and when he came, it made no difference to us—he had his private room to retire to, the short time he stayed, to be out of the sound of our noise. Our mirth and uproar went on. We had classics of our own, without being beholden to "insolent Greece or haughty Rome," that passed current among us—Peter Wilkins—the Adventures of the Hon. Capt. Robert Boyle—the For-

[16] the asylum for the insane in London, a corruption of the name "Bethlehem."

[17] the burning of heretics at the stake.

[18] blue uniforms.

[19] extreme punishments.

[20] garments like those woven by the monks of St. Benedict and worn by victims of an *auto da fé*.

tunate Blue-Coat Boy—and the like. Or we cultivated a turn for mechanic or scientific operation; making little sundials of paper; or weaving those ingenious parentheses, called *cat-cradles*; or making dry peas to dance upon the end of a tin pipe; or studying the art military over that laudable game "French and English," and a hundred other such devices to pass away the time—mixing the useful with the agreeable—as would have made the souls of Rousseau[21] and John Locke[22] chuckle to have seen us.

Matthew Field belonged to that class of modest divines who affect to mix in equal proportion the *gentleman*, the *scholar*, and the *Christian*; but, I know not how, the first ingredient is generally found to be the predominating dose in the composition. He was engaged in gay parties, or with his courtly bow at some episcopal levée, when he should have been attending upon us. He had for many years the classical charge of a hundred children, during the four or five first years of their education; and his very highest form seldom proceeded further than two or three of the introductory fables of Phædrus.[23] How things were suffered to go on thus, I cannot guess. Boyer, who was the proper person to have remedied these abuses, always affected, perhaps felt, a delicacy in interfering in a province not strictly his own. I have not been without my suspicions, that he was not altogether displeased at the contrast we presented to his end of the school. We were a sort of Helots[24] to his young Spartans. He would sometimes, with ironic deference, send to borrow a rod of the Under Master, and then, with Sardonic grin, observe to one of his upper boys, "how neat and fresh the twigs looked." While his pale students were battering their brains over Xenophon and Plato, with a silence as deep as that enjoined by the Samite,[25] we were enjoying ourselves at our ease in our little Goshen. We saw a little into the secrets of his discipline, and the prospect did but the more reconcile us to our lot. His thunders rolled innocuous for us; his storms came near, but never touched us; contrary to Gideon's miracle,[26] while all around were drenched, our fleece was dry. His boys turned out the better scholars; we, I suspect, have the advantage in temper. His pupils cannot speak of him without something of terror allaying their gratitude; the remembrance of Field comes back with all the soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers, and work like play, and innocent idleness, and Elysian exemptions, and life itself a "playing holiday."

Though sufficiently removed from the jurisdiction of Boyer, we were near enough (as I have said) to understand a little of his system. We occasionally heard sounds of the *Ululantes*,[27] and caught glances of Tartarus.[28] B. was a rabid pedant. His English style was cramped to barbarism. His Easter anthems (for his duty obliged him to those periodical flights) were grating as scrannel pipes.[29] —He would laugh, ay, and heartily, but then it must be at Flaccus's quibble about *Rex*[30]——or at the *tristis severitas in vultu*,[31] or *inspicere in patinas*,[32] of Terence—thin jests, which at their first broaching could hardly have had *vis*[33] enough to move a Roman muscle. —He had two wigs, both pedantic, but of different omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discolored, unkempt, angry caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution Woe to the school, when he made his morning appearance in his *passy*, or *passionate wig*. No comet expounded surer.—J. B. had a heavy hand. I have known him double his knotty fist at a poor trembling child (the maternal milk hardly dry upon its lips) with a "Sirrah, do you presume to set your wits at me?"—Nothing was more common than to see him make a head-long entry into the schoolroom, from his inner recess, or library, and, with turbulent eye, singling out a lad, roar out, "Od's my life, Sirrah" (his favorite adjuration), "I have a great mind to whip you,"—then, with as sudden a retracting impulse, fling back into his lair—and, after a cooling lapse of some minutes (during which all but the culprit had totally forgotten the context) drive headlong out again, piecing out his imperfect sense, as if it had been

[21] See p. 1136.
[22] also an exponent of a natural system of education.
[23] Roman writer of fables (first century A.D.).
[24] the servile class in Sparta.
[25] Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher of the sixth century B.C., enjoined upon his pupils silence about their own conclusions until they had listened to his lectures for five years.
[26] See *Judges*, 6 36-38.
[27] the howling of the damned souls in Dante's *Inferno*.
[28] hell.
[29] harsh sounding pipes; see *Lycidas*, line 124, I, p. 611.
[30] Horace, *Satires*, 1, 7, 35.
[31] sad severity of countenance. Terence, *Andria*, V, ii, 16.
[32] to look into the platter. Terrence, *Adelphi*, III, iii, 74.
[33] power.

some Devil's Litany, with the expletory yell—"*and I* WILL *too.*"—In his gentler moods, when the *rabidus furor*[34] was assuaged, he had resort to an ingenious method, peculiar, for what I have heard, to himself, of whipping the boy, and reading the Debates, at the same time; a paragraph, and a lash between; which in those times, when parliamentary oratory was most at a height and flourishing in these realms, was not calculated to impress the patient with a veneration for the diffuser graces of rhetoric.

Once, and but once, the uplifted rod was known to fall ineffectual from his hand—when droll squinting W—— having been caught putting the inside of the master's desk to a use for which the architect had clearly not designed it, to justify himself, with great simplicity averred, that *he did not know that the thing had been forewarned.* This exquisite irrecognition of any law antecedent to the *oral* or *declaratory* struck so irresistibly upon the fancy of all who heard it (the pedagogue himself not excepted) that remission was unavoidable.

L. has given credit to B.'s great merits as an instructor. Coleridge, in his literary life, has pronounced a more intelligible and ample encomium on them. The author of the Country Spectator doubts not to compare him with the ablest teachers of antiquity. Perhaps we cannot dismiss him better than with the pious ejaculation of C.—when he heard that his old master was on his death-bed—"Poor J. B.!—may all his faults be forgiven; and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities."

Under him were many good and sound scholars bred.—First Grecian[35] of my time was Lancelot Pepys Stevens, kindest of boys and men, since Co-grammar-master (and inseparable companion) with Dr. T——e.[36] What an edifying spectacle did this brace of friends present to those who remembered the anti-socialities of their predecessors!—You never met the one by chance in the street without a wonder, which was quickly dissipated by the almost immediate sub-appearance of the other. Generally arm in arm, these kindly coadjutors lightened for each other the toilsome duties of their profession, and when, in advanced age, one found it convenient to retire, the other was not long in discovering that it suited him to lay down the fasces also. Oh, it is pleasant, as it is rare, to find the same arm linked in yours at forty, which at thirteen helped it to turn over the *Cicero De Amicitia*,[37] or some tale of Antique Friendship, which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate—Co-Grecian with S. was Th——,[38] who has since executed with ability various diplomatic functions at the Northern courts. Th—— was a tall, dark, saturnine youth, sparing of speech, with raven locks.—Thomas Fanshaw Middleton followed him (now Bishop of Calcutta) a scholar and a gentleman in his teens. He has the reputation of an excellent critic; and is author (besides the Country Spectator) of a Treatise on the Greek Article, against Sharpe.—M. is said to bear his mitre high in India, where the *regni novitas*[39] (I dare say) sufficiently justifies the bearing. A humility quite as primitive as that of Jewel[40] or Hooker[41] might not be exactly fitted to impress the minds of those Anglo-Asiatic diocesans[42] with a reverence for home institutions, and the church which those fathers watered. The manners of M. at school, though firm, were mild, and unassuming. Next to M. (if not senior to him) was Richards, author of the Aboriginal Britons, the most spirited of the Oxford Prize Poems: a pale, studious Grecian.—Then followed poor S——,[43] ill-fated M——![44] of these the Muse is silent,

> Finding some of Edward's race
> Unhappy, pass their annals by.

Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge[45]—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula[46]), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep

[34] raging madness.
[35] a scholar recommended to Cambridge University.
[36] Trollope, successor of Boyer as head master.
[37] Cicero's treatise *On Friendship*
[38] Thornton.
[39] newness of the rule.
[40] John Jewel (1522-1571), Bishop of Salisbury.
[41] Richard Hooker (1553-1600), author of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*
[42] members of the Anglican church in India.
[43] Scott died in Bedlam. (Lamb.)
[44] Maunde, dismissed from school. (Lamb.)
[45] See pp. 184 and 351.
[46] Giovanni Pico delle Mirandola (1463-1494), Italian scholar.

and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus,[47] or Plotinus[48] (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar[49]—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy*! Many were the "wit-combats" (to dally awhile with the words of old Fuller[50]) between him and C. V. Le G——.[51] "which two I behold like a Spanish great gallion, and an English man-of-war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C. V. L., with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."

Nor shalt thou, their compeer, be quickly forgotten, Allen, with the cordial smile, and still more cordial laugh, with which thou wert wont to make the old Cloisters shake, in thy cognition of some poignant jest of theirs; or the anticipation of some more material, and peradventure, practical one, of thine own. Extinct are those smiles, with that beautiful countenance, with which (for thou wert the *Nireus formosus*[52] of the school), in the days of thy maturer waggery, thou didst disarm the wrath of infuriated town-damsel, who, incensed by provoking pinch, turning tigress-like round, suddenly converted by thy angel-look, exchanged the half-formed terrible "bl——," for a gentler greeting—*"bless thy handsome face!"*

Next follow two, who ought to be now alive, and the friends of Elia—the junior Le G—— and F——;[53] who impelled, the former by a roving temper, the latter by too quick a sense of neglect—ill capable of enduring the slights poor Sizars[54] are sometimes subject to in our seats of learning—exchanged their Alma Mater for the camp; perishing, one by climate, and one on the plains of Salamanca:[55]—Le G—— sanguine, volatile, sweet-natured; F—— dogged, faithful, anticipative of insult, warm-hearted, with something of the old Roman height about him.

Fine, frank-hearted Fr——[56] the present master of Hertford, with Marmaduke T——[57] mildest of Missionaries—and both my good friends still—close the catalogue of Grecians in my time.

(1820)

Dream-Children: A Reverie

Alice W——n of this essay has been identified as a girl, Anna Simmons, whom Lamb had come to know well when visiting his grandmother in Hertfordshire. The man she eventually married was named Bartrum.

Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived) which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimneypiece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts, till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed

[47] neoplatonic philosopher of the fourth century.
[48] neoplatonic philosopher of the third century
[49] See p. 1133.
[50] Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), English preacher and author. The passage given below is a paraphrase of his discussion of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson (see I, p. 583).
[51] Charles Valentine Le Grice (1773-1858), a clergyman who wrote reminiscences of Coleridge and Lamb.
[52] Handsome Nireus, the most beautiful Greek in the Trojan War.
[53] Favell
[54] students who receive an allowance toward their college expenses.
[55] a battle in Spain fought July 22, 1812.
[56] Frederick William Franklin.
[57] Marmaduke Thompson

the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it, too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if someone were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the Abbey, and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "That would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry, too, of the neighborhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good indeed that she knew all the Psaltery by heart, aye, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer—here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement, till upon my looking grave, it desisted—the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said "those innocents would do her no harm"; and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she—and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grand-children, having us to the great house in the holidays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the Twelve Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, with the gilding almost rubbed out—sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me—and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them because they were forbidden fruit, unless now and then—and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir apples, which were good for nothing but to look at—or in lying about upon the fresh grass, with all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening, too, along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the dace that darted to and fro in the fishpond, at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings—I had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavors of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then in somewhat a more heightened tone I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grand-children, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out—and yet he loved the old great house and gardens, too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries—and how their uncle grew up to a man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain—and how in after life he became lame-footed, too, and I did not al-

ways (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient, and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarreling with him (for we quarreled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him as he their poor uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W—n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe[1] millions of ages before we have existence, and a name"—and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor armchair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side—but John L. (or James Elia) was gone forever.

(1822)

A Dissertation upon Roast Pig

Mankind, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M. was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his Mundane Mutations,[1] where he designates a kind of golden age by the term Cho-fang, literally the Cook's Holiday. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting, or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother) was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swineherd, Ho-ti, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect mast for his hogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son Bo-bo, a great lubberly boy, who being fond of playing with fire, as youngsters of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with the cottage (a sorry antediluvian make-shift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labor of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one of those untimely sufferers, an odor assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from?—not from the burnt cottage—he had smelt that smell before—indeed this was by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young fire brand. Much less did it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory

[1] Lamb is, of course, only having fun by citing this fictitious authority.

[1] the river of forgetfulness in the lower world.

moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burnt his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted—*crackling*! Again he felt and fumbled at the pig. It did not burn him so much now, still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious; and, surrendering himself up to the newborn pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion, when his sire entered amid the smoking rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hailstones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following dialogue ensued.

"You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you, but you must be eating fire, and I know not what—what have you got there, I say?"

"O, father, the pig, the pig, do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out "Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste—O Lord,"—with such-like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.

Ho-ti trembled every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's, and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavor, which, make what sour mouths he would for a pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious) both father and son fairly sat down to the mess, and never left off till they had despatched all that remained of the litter.

Bo-bo was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbors would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the good meat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's cottage was burnt down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night-time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Ho-ti himself, which was the more remarkable, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Pekin, then an inconsiderable assize town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it, and burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given,—to the surprise of the whole court, townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present—without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision; and, when the court was dismissed, went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his Lordship's town house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world. Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my

manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery, that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked (*burnt*, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string, or spit, came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful, and seemingly the most obvious arts, make their way among mankind.——

Without placing too implicit faith in the account above given, it must be agreed, that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as setting houses on fire (especially in these days) could be assigned in favor of any culinary object, that pretext and excuse might be found in ROAST PIG.

Of all the delicacies in the whole *mundus edibilis*,[2] I will maintain it to be the most delicate—*princeps obsoniorum*.[3]

I speak not of your grown porkers—things between pig and pork—those hobbledehoys—but a young and tender suckling—under a moon old—guiltless as yet of the sty—with no original speck of the *amor immunditiæ*,[4] the hereditary failing of the first parent, yet manifest—his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble, and a grumble—the mild forerunner or *præludium*, of a grunt.

He must be roasted. I am not ignorant that our ancestors ate them seethed, or boiled—but what a sacrifice of the exterior tegument!

There is no flavor comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not overroasted, *crackling*, as it is well called—the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance—with the adhesive oleaginous—O call it not fat—but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it—the tender blossoming of fat—fat cropped in the bud—taken in the shoot—in the first innocence—the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food—the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna—or, rather, fat, and lean, (if it must be so) so blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result, or common substance.

Behold him, while he is doing—it seemeth rather a refreshing warmth, than a scorching heat, that he is so passive to. How equably he twirleth round the string!—Now he is just done. To see the extreme sensibility of that tender age, he hath wept out his pretty eyes—radiant jellies—shooting stars.—

See him in the dish, his second cradle, how meek he lieth!—wouldst thou have had this innocent grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood? Ten to one he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate, disagreeable animal—wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation—from these sins he is happily snatched away—

> Ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade,
> Death came with timely care—

his memory is odoriferous—no clown curseth, while his stomach half rejecteth, the rank bacon—no coalheaver bolteth him in reeking sausages—he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of the judicious epicure—and for such a tomb might be content to die.

He is the best of Sapors. Pine-apple is great. She is indeed almost too transcendent—a delight, if not sinful, yet so like to sinning, that really a tender-conscienced person would do well to pause—too ravishing for mortal taste, she woundeth and excoriateth the lips that approach her—like lovers' kisses, she biteth—she is a pleasure bordering on pain from the fierceness and insanity of her relish—but she stoppeth at the palate—she meddleth not with the appetite—and the coarsest hunger might barter her consistently for a mutton chop.

Pig—let me speak his praise—is no less provocative of the appetite, than he is satisfactory to the criticalness of the censorious palate. The strong man may batten on him, and weakling refuseth not his mild juices.

Unlike to mankind's mixed characters, a bundle of virtues and vices, inexplicably intertwisted, and not to be unravelled without hazard, he is—good throughout. No part of him is better or worse than another. He helpeth, as far as his little means extend, all around. He is the least envious of banquets. He is all neighbors' fare.

I am one of those, who freely and ungrudgingly impart a share of the good things of this life which fall to their lot (few as mine are in this kind) to a friend. I protest I take as great an interest in my friend's pleasures, his relishes, and proper satisfactions, as in mine own. "Presents," I often say, "endear Absents." Hares, pheasants, partridges, snipes, barn-door chickens (those "tame villatic fowl"), capons, plovers, brawn, barrels of oysters, I dispense as freely as I receive them. I love to

[2] the world of eatables
[3] the prince of viands.
[4] love of the unclean.

taste them as it were, upon the tongue of my friend. But a stop must be put somewhere. One would not, like Lear, "give everything." I make my stand upon pig. Methinks it is an ingratitude to the Giver of all good flavors, to extra-domiciliate, or send out of the house, slightingly (under pretext of friendship, or I know not what), a blessing so particularly adapted, predestined, I may say, to my individual palate.—It argues an insensibility.

I remember a touch of conscience in this kind at school. My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweetmeat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London Bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very cox-combry of charity, school-boy like, I made him a present of—the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I—I myself, and not another—would eat her nice cake—and what should I say to her the next time I saw her—how naughty I was to part with her pretty present!—and the odor of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure, and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make it, and her joy when she sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last—and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy, of goodness, and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing old grey impostor.

Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims. We read of pigs whipt to death with something of a shock, as we hear of any other obsolete custom. The age of discipline is gone by, or it would be curious to inquire (in a philosophical light merely) what effect this process might have towards intenerating[5] and dulcifying a substance, naturally so mild and dulcet as the flesh of young pigs. It looks like refining a violet. Yet we should be cautious, while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto.—

I remember an hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's,[6] and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, "Whether, supposing that the flavor of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (*per flagellationem extremam*) superadded a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?" I forget the decision.

His sauce should be considered. Decidedly, a few bread crumbs, done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage. But, banish, dear Mrs. Cook, I beseech you, the whole onion tribe. Barbecue your whole hogs to your palate, steep them in shalots, stuff them out with plantations of the rank and guilty garlic; you cannot poison them, or make them stronger than they are—but consider, he is a weakling—a flower. (1822)

Old China

I have an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china-closet, and next for the picture-gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference but by saying that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to: but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.

I had no repugnance then—why should I now have?—to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques that, under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a china teacup.

I like to see my old friends—whom distance cannot diminish—figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on *terra firma* still—for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper

[5] making tender

[6] a Roman Catholic college in France for English boys

blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, had made to spring up beneath their sandals.

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.

Here is a young and courtly Mandarin, handing tea to a lady from a salver—two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect! And here the same lady, or another—for likeness is identity on teacups—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world) must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead—a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream!

Farther on—if far or near can be predicated of their world—see horses, trees, pagodas, dancing the hays.

Here—a cow and rabbit couchant, and coextensive—so objects show, seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay.[1]

I was pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon), some of these *speciosa miracula*[2] upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using; and could not help remarking how favorable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort—when a passing sentiment seemed to overshade the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

"I wish the good old times would come again," she said, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state"—so she was pleased to ramble on—"in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!)—we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

"Do you remember the brown suit which you made to hang upon you till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher,[3] which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedward) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating*, you called it)—and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical—give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now.

"When you came home with twenty apologies for laying out a less number of shillings upon that print after Lionardo,[4] which we christened the 'Lady Blanch'; when you looked at the purchase, and thought of the money—and thought of the money, and looked again at the picture—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Now you have nothing to do but to walk into Colnaghi's, and buy a wilderness of Lionardos. Yet do you?

"Then, do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter's Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holiday—holidays and all other fun are gone now we are rich—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day's fare of savory cold lamb and salad—and how you would pry about at noontide for some decent house, where we might go in and produce our store—only paying for the ale that you must call for—and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a tablecloth—and wish

[1] China [2] extraordinary scenes.

[3] English dramatists of the early seventeenth century.

[4] Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Italian painter.

for such another honest hostess as Izaak Walton[5] has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea, when he went a-fishing—and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us—but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savorily, scarcely grudging Piscator[6] his Trout Hall? Now—when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom, moreover, we *ride* part of the way, and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense—which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps, when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage, and a precarious welcome.

"You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we used to sit, when we saw the *Battle of Hexham*, and the *Surrender of Calais*, and Bannister and Mrs. Bland in the *Children in the Wood*—when we squeezed out our shillings apiece to sit three or four times in a season in the one-shilling gallery—where you felt all the time that you ought not to have brought me—and more strongly I felt obligation to you for having brought me—and the pleasure was the better for a little shame—and when the curtain drew up, what cared we for our place in the house, or what mattered it where we were sitting, when our thoughts were with Rosalind in Arden,[7] or with Viola at the Court of Illyria? You used to say that the gallery was the best place of all for enjoying a play socially—that the relish of such exhibitions must be in proportion to the infrequency of going—that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were obliged to attend the more, and did attend, to what was going on, on the stage—because a word lost would have been a chasm, which it was impossible for them to fill up. With such reflections we consoled our pride then—and I appeal to you whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accommodation than I have done since in more expensive situations in the house? The getting in, indeed, and the crowding up those inconvenient staircases, was bad enough—but there was still a law of civility to woman recognized to quite as great an extent as we ever found in the other passages—and how a little difficulty overcome heightened the snug seat and the play, afterwards! Now we can only pay our money and walk in. You cannot see, you say, in the galleries now. I am sure we saw, and heard, too, well enough then—but sight, and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.

"There was pleasure in eating strawberries, before they became quite common—in the first dish of peas, while they were yet dear—to have them for a nice supper, a treat. What treat can we have now? If we were to treat ourselves now—that is, to have dainties a little above our means, it would be selfish and wicked. It is the very little more that we allow ourselves beyond what the actual poor can get at that makes what I call a treat—when two people, living together as we have done, now and then indulge themselves in a cheap luxury, which both like; while each apologizes, and is willing to take both halves of the blame to his single share. I see no harm in people making much of themselves, in that sense of the word. It may give them a hint how to make much of others. But now—what I mean by the word—we never *do* make much of ourselves. None but the poor can do it. I do not mean the veriest poor of all, but persons as we were, just above poverty.

"I know what you were going to say, that it is mighty pleasant at the end of the year to make all meet—and much ado we used to have every thirty-first night of December to account for our exceedings—many a long face did you make over your puzzled accounts, and in contriving to make it out how we had spent so much—or that we had not spent so much—or that it was impossible we should spend so much next year—and still we found our slender capital decreasing—but then—betwixt ways, and projects, and compromises of one sort or another, and talk of curtailing this charge, and doing without that for the future—and the hope that youth brings, and laughing spirits (in which you were never poor till now), we pocketed up our loss, and in conclusion, with 'lusty brimmers' (as you used to quote it out of *hearty cheerful Mr. Cotton*,[8] as you called him), we used to welcome in the 'coming guest.' Now we have no reckoning at all at the end of the old year—no flattering promises about the new year doing better for us."

Bridget is so sparing of her speech on most occasions that when she gets into a rhetorical vein, I

[5] See I, p. 570.

[6] the fisherman in Walton's *Compleat Angler*, and his favorite inn, Trout Hall.

[7] references to Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*

[8] Charles Cotton (1630-1687), English poet and translator.

am careful how I interrupt it. I could not help, however, smiling at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up out of a clear income of poor —— hundred pounds a year. "It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superflux into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of. The resisting power—those natural dilations of the youthful spirit, which circumstances cannot straiten —with us are long since passed away. Competence to age is supplementary youth, a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride where we formerly walked; live better and lie softer—and shall be wise to do so—than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return—could you and I once more walk our thirty miles a day—could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young, and you and I be young to see them—could the good old one-shilling gallery days return—they are dreams, my cousin, now—but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted fireside, sitting on this luxurious sofa—be once more struggling up those inconvenient staircases, pushed about and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers—could I once more hear those anxious shrieks of yours—and the delicious *Thank God, we are safe*, which always followed when the topmost stair, conquered, let in the first light of the whole cheerful theater down beneath us—I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Crœsus[9] had, or the great Jew R—— is supposed to have, to purchase it. And now do just look at that merry little Chinese waiter holding an umbrella, big enough for a bed-tester, over the head of that pretty insipid half Madonna-ish chit of a lady in that very blue summer-house." (1823)

Poor Relations

This delightful piece shows the intimate relation of the essay to the seventeenth-century Characters written under the influence of Theophrastus (see I, pp. 562-69).

A poor Relation—is the most irrelevant thing in nature,—a piece of impertinent correspondency,—an odious approximation,—a haunting conscience, —a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noontide of our prosperity,—an unwelcome remembrancer,—a perpetually recurring mortification,—a drain on your purse,—a more intolerable dun upon your pride,—a drawback upon success,—a rebuke to your rising,—a stain in your blood,—a blot on your 'scutcheon,—a rent in your garment,—a death's head at your banquet.—Agathocles' pot,[1]—a Mordecai in your gate,[2]—a Lazarus[3] at your door,—a lion in your path,—a frog in your chamber,—a fly in your ointment,—a mote in your eye,—a triumph to your enemy, an apology to your friends,—the one thing not needful,—the hail in harvest,[4]—the ounce of sour in a pound of sweet.

He is known by his knock. Your heart telleth you "That is Mr. ——." A rap, between familiarity and respect; that demands, and, at the same time, seems to despair of, entertainment. He entereth smiling and—embarrassed. He holdeth out his hand to you to shake, and—draweth it back again. He casually looketh in about dinner-time—when the table is full. He offereth to go away, seeing you have company, but is induced to stay. He filleth a chair, and your visitor's two children are accommodated at a side table. He never cometh upon open days, when your wife says with some complacency, "My dear, perhaps Mr. —— will drop in to-day." He remembereth birthdays—and professeth he is fortunate to have stumbled upon one. He declareth against fish, the turbot being small—yet suffereth himself to be importuned into a slice against his

[1] Agathocles, tyrant of Sicily (361-289 B.C.), disliked the sight of a pot, since it reminded him that he was the son of a potter.

[2] Mordecai waited at the gate of King Ahasuerus to learn what was happening to his relative Esther. See *Esther*, 3·1-2; 5·11-13

[3] the beggar who placed himself at the door of a rich man to beg for crumbs from his table. See *Luke*, 16·20.

[9] a king of ancient Lydia traditional for his wealth

[4] These comparisons are all taken from the Bible.

first resolution. He sticketh by the port,[5]—yet will be prevailed upon to empty the remainder glass of claret, if a stranger press it upon him. He is a puzzle to the servants, who are fearful of being too obsequious, or not civil enough, to him. The guests think "they have seen him before." Everyone speculateth upon his condition; and the most part take him to be—a tide waiter.[6] He calleth you by your Christian name, to imply that his other is the same with your own. He is too familiar by half, yet you wish he had less diffidence. With half the familiarity he might pass for a casual dependent; with more boldness he would be in no danger of being taken for what he is. He is too humble for a friend, yet taketh on him more state than befits a client. He is a worse guest than a country tenant, inasmuch as he bringeth up no rent—yet 'tis odds, from his garb and demeanor, that your guests take him for one. He is asked to make one at the whist table; refuseth on the score of poverty, and—resents being left out. When the company break up he proffereth to go for a coach—and lets the servant go. He recollects your grandfather; and will thrust in some mean and quite unimportant anecdote of—the family. He knew it when it was not quite so flourishing as "he is blest in seeing it now." He reviveth past situations to institute what he calleth —favorable comparisons. With a reflecting sort of congratulation, he will inquire the price of your furniture: and insults you with a special commendation of your window-curtains. He is of opinion that the urn is the more elegant shape, but, after all, there was something more comfortable about the old tea-kettle—which you must remember. He dare say you must find a great convenience in having a carriage of your own, and appealeth to your lady if it is not so. Inquireth if you have had your arms done on vellum yet; and did not know, till lately, that such-and-such had been the crest of the family. His memory is unseasonable; his compliments perverse; his talk a trouble; his stay pertinacious; and when he goeth away, you dismiss his chair into a corner, as precipitately as possible, and feel fairly rid of two nuisances.

There is a worse evil under the sun, and that is—a female Poor Relation. You may do something with the other; you may pass him off tolerably well; but your indigent she-relative is hopeless. "He is an old humorist,"[7] you may say, "and affects to go thread-bare. His circumstances are better than folks would take them to be. You are fond of having a Character at your table, and truly he is one." But in the indications of female poverty there can be no disguise. No woman dresses below herself from caprice. The truth must out without shuffling. "She is plainly related to the L——s; or what does she at their house?" She is, in all probability, your wife's cousin. Nine times out of ten, at least, this is the case. Her garb is something between a gentlewoman and a beggar, yet the former evidently predominates. She is most provokingly humble, and ostentatiously sensible to her inferiority. He may require to be repressed sometimes—*aliquando sufflaminandus erat*[8]—but there is no raising her. You send her soup at dinner, and she begs to be helped —after the gentlemen. Mr. —— requests the honor of taking wine with her; she hesitates between Port and Madeira, and chooses the former—because he does. She calls the servant *Sir*; and insists on not troubling him to hold her plate. The housekeeper patronizes her. The children's governess takes upon her to correct her, when she has mistaken the piano for harpsichord.

Richard Amlet, Esq., in the play,[9] is a noticeable instance of the disadvantages to which this chimerical notion of *affinity constituting a claim to an acquaintance*, may subject the spirit of a gentleman. A little foolish blood is all that is betwixt him and a lady with a great estate. His stars are perpetually crossed by the malignant maternity of an old woman, who persists in calling him "her son Dick." But she has wherewithal in the end to recompense his indignities, and float him again upon the brilliant surface, under which it had been her seeming business and pleasure all along to sink him. All men, besides, are not of Dick's temperament. I knew an Amlet in real life, who wanting Dick's buoyancy, sank indeed. Poor W——[10] was of my own standing at Christ's, a fine classic, and a youth of promise. If he had a blemish, it was too much pride; but its quality was inoffensive; it was not of that sort which hardens the heart, and serves to keep inferiors at a distance; it only sought to ward off derogation from itself. It was the principle of self-respect carried as far as it could go, without infringing upon that respect, which he would have everyone else equally maintain for himself. He would have you to think alike with him on this topic. Many a quarrel have I had with him,

[5] insists that he will drink nothing but port wine.
[6] a custom official who waits for the arrival of ships.
[7] an eccentric person
[8] sometimes he had to be repressed.
[9] *The Confederacy* by Sir John Vanbrugh (1666-1726).
[10] Lamb's friend, Favell; see *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*, p 364

when we were rather older boys, and our tallness made us more obnoxious to observation in the blue clothes, because I would not thread the alleys and blind ways of the town with him to elude notice, when we have been out together on a holiday in the streets of this sneering and prying metropolis. W—— went, sore with these notions, to Oxford, where the dignity and sweetness of a scholar's life, meeting with the alloy of a humble introduction, wrought in him a passionate devotion to the place, with a profound aversion to the society. The servitor's gown (worse than his school array) clung to him with Nessian venom.[11] He thought himself ridiculous in a garb, under which Latimer[12] must have walked erect; and in which Hook r,[13] in his young days, possibly flaunted in a vein of no discommendable vanity. In the depths of college shades, or in his lonely chamber, the poor student shrunk from observation. He found shelter among books, which insult not; and studies, that ask no questions of a youth's finances. He was lord of his library, and seldom cared for looking out beyond his domains. The healing influence of studious pursuits was upon him, to soothe and to abstract. He was almost a healthy man; when the waywardness of his fate broke out against him with a second and worse malignity. The father of W—— had hitherto exercised the humble profession of house-painter at N——, near Oxford. A supposed interest with some of the heads of colleges had now induced him to take up his abode in that city, with the hope of being employed upon some public works which were talked of. From that moment I read in the countenance of the young man, the determination which at length tore him from academical pursuits for ever. To a person unacquainted with our Universities, the distance between the gownsmen and the townsmen, as they are called—the trading part of the latter especially—is carried to an excess that would appear harsh and incredible. The temperament of W——'s father was diametrically the reverse of his own. Old W—— was a little, busy, cringing tradesman, who, with his son upon his arm, would stand bowing and scraping, cap in hand, to anything that wore the semblance of a gown—insensible to the winks and opener remonstrances of the young man, to whose chamberfellow, or equal in standing, perhaps, he was thus obsequiously and gratuitously ducking. Such a state of things could not last. W—— must change the air of Oxford or be suffocated. He chose the former; and let the sturdy moralist, who strains the point of the filial duties as high as they can bear, censure the dereliction; he cannot estimate the struggle. I stood with W——, the last afternoon I ever saw him, under the eaves of his paternal dwelling. It was in the fine lane leading from the High Street to the back of —— college, where W—— kept his rooms. He seemed thoughtful, and more reconciled. I ventured to rally him—finding him in a better mood—upon a representation of the Artist Evangelist,[14] which the old man, whose affairs were beginning to flourish, had caused to be set up in a splendid sort of frame over his really handsome shop, either as a token of prosperity, or badge of gratitude to his saint. W—— looked up at the Luke, and, like Satan, "knew his mounted sign—and fled."[15] A letter on his father's table the next morning, announced that he had accepted a commission in a regiment about to embark for Portugal. He was among the first who perished before the walls of St. Sebastian.[16]

I do not know how, upon a subject which I began with treating half seriously, I should have fallen upon a recital so eminently painful; but this theme of poor relationship is replete with so much matter for tragic as well as comic associations, that it is difficult to keep the account distinct without blending. The earliest impressions which I received on this matter, are certainly not attended with anything painful, or very humiliating, in the recalling. At my father's table (no very splendid one) was to be found, every Saturday, the mysterious figure of an aged gentleman, clothed in neat black, of a sad yet comely appearance. His deportment was of the essence of gravity; his words few or none; and I was not to make a noise in his presence. I had little inclination to have done so—for my cue was to admire in silence. A particular elbow chair was appropriated to him, which was in no case to be violated. A peculiar sort of sweet pudding, which appeared on no other occasion, distinguished the days of his coming. I used to think him a prodigiously rich man. All I could make out of him was, that

[11] Hercules, who had slain the Centaur, Nessus, with a poisoned arrow lost his own life by wearing a shirt dipped in the blood of Nessus.

[12] Hugh Latimer (1488-1555), preacher and reformer.

[13] Richard Hooker (1553-1600), noted English clergyman.

[14] St. Luke, who by tradition was a painter.

[15] See *Paradise Lost*, IV, 1013.

[16] a city on the north coast of Spain, taken by Wellington, in 1813.

he and my father had been schoolfellows a world ago at Lincoln, and that he came from the Mint. The Mint I knew to be a place where all the money was coined—and I thought he was the owner of all that money. Awful ideas of the Tower twined themselves about his presence. He seemed above human infirmities and passions. A sort of melancholy grandeur invested him. From some inexplicable doom I fancied him obliged to go about in an eternal suit of mourning; a captive—a stately being, let out of the Tower on Saturdays. Often have I wondered at the temerity of my father, who, in spite of an habitual general respect which we all in common manifested towards him, would venture now and then to stand up against him in some argument, touching their youthful days. The houses of the ancient city of Lincoln are divided (as most of my readers know) between the dwellers on the hill, and in the valley. This marked distinction formed an obvious division between the boys who lived above (however brought together in a common school) and the boys whose paternal residence was on the plain; a sufficient cause of hostility in the code of these young Grotiuses.[17] My father had been a leading Mountaineer; and would still maintain the general superiority, in skill and hardihood, of the *Above Boys* (his own faction) over the *Below Boys* (so were they called), of which party his contemporary had been a chieftain. Many and hot were the skirmishes on this topic—the only one upon which the old gentleman was ever brought out—and bad blood bred; even sometimes almost to the recommencement (so I expected) of actual hostilities. But my father, who scorned to insist upon advantages, generally contrived to turn the conversation upon some adroit by-commendation of the old Minster;[18] in the general preference of which, before all other cathedrals in the island, the dweller on the hill, and the plain-born, could meet on a conciliating level, and lay down their less important differences. Once only I saw the old gentleman really ruffled, and I remembered with anguish the thought that came over me: "Perhaps he will never come here again." He had been pressed to take another plate of the viand, which I have already mentioned as the indispensable concomitant of his visits. He had refused with a resistance amounting to rigor, when my aunt—an old Lincolnian, but who had something of this in common with my cousin Bridget, that she would sometimes press civility out of season—uttered the following memorable application—"Do take another slice, Mr. Billet, for you do not get pudding every day." The old gentleman said nothing at the time —but he took occasion in the course of the evening, when some argument had intervened between them, to utter with an emphasis which chilled the company, and which chills me now as I write it—"Woman, you are superannuated." John Billet did not survive long, after the digesting of this affront; but he survived long enough to assure me that peace was actually restored! and, if I remember aright, another pudding was discreetly substituted in the place of that which had occasioned the offence. He died at the Mint (anno 1781) where he had long held, what he accounted, a comfortable independence; and with five pounds, fourteen shillings, and a penny, which were found in his escritoire after his decease, left the world, blessing God that he had enough to bury him, and that he had never been obliged to any man for a six-pence. This was—a Poor Relation. (1823)

Letters

There are no pieces of English prose more delightful than Lamb's letters, unless they be his essays. Certainly they reveal him as a born essayist, for many of the letters are actually chatty essays; if they are written with less conscious art than the compositions of Elia, they are more spontaneous.

To Thomas Manning

24th Sept., 1802, LONDON.

MY DEAR MANNING,—

Since the date of my last letter I have been a traveller. A strong desire seized me of visiting remote regions. My first impulse was to go and see Paris. It was a trivial objection to my aspiring mind, that I did not understand a word of the language, since I certainly intend sometime in my life to see Paris, and equally certainly intend never to learn the language; therefore that could be no objection. However, I am very glad I did not go,

[17] law students, followers of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the great Dutch authority on international law

[18] the Cathedral at Lincoln.

because you had left Paris (I see) before I could have set out. I believe Stoddart promising to go with me another year, prevented that plan. My next scheme (for to my restless, ambitious mind London was become a bed of thorns) was to visit the far-famed peak in Derbyshire, where the Devil sits, they say, without breeches. *This* my purer mind rejected as indelicate. And my final resolve was, a tour to the Lakes. I set out with Mary to Keswick, without giving Coleridge any notice, for my time, being precious, did not admit of it. He received us with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country. He dwells upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunshine, which transmuted all the mountains into colors, purple, &c., &c. We thought we had got into fairyland. But that went off (as it never came again; while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets;) and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, &c., I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an intrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed, for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning. Coleridge had got a blazing fire in his study; which is a large, antique, ill-shaped room, with an old-fashioned organ, never played upon, big enough for a church, shelves of scattered folios, an Æolian harp, and an old sofa, half bed, &c. And all looking out upon the last fading view of Skiddaw, and his broad-breasted brethren: what a night! Here we stayed three full weeks, in which time I visited Wordsworth's cottage, where we stayed a day or two with the Clarksons, (good people, and most hospitable, at whose house we tarried one day and night,) and saw Lloyd. The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London, and past much time with us: he is now gone into Yorkshire to be married. So we have seen Keswick, Grasmere, Ambleside, Ulswater, (where the Clarksons live,) and a place at the other end of Ulswater; I forget the name: to which we travelled on a very sultry day, over the middle of Helvellyn. We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before: they make such a spluttering about it, and toss their splendid epithets around them, till they give as dim a light as at four o'clock next morning the lamps do after an illumination. Mary was excessively tired when she got about half-way up Skiddaw, but we came to a cold rill (than which nothing can be imagined more cold, running over cold stones,) and with the reinforcement of a draught of cold water, she surmounted it most manfully. Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out, like a mountain, I am sure, in my life. But I am returned, (I have now been come home near three weeks: I was a month out,) and you cannot conceive the degradation I felt at first, from being accustomed to wander free as air among mountains, and bathe in rivers without being controlled by anyone, to come home and *work*. I felt very *little*. I had been dreaming I was a very great man. But that is going off, and I find I shall conform in time to that state of life to which it has pleased God to call me. Besides, after all, Fleet Street and the Strand are better places to live in for good and all than amidst Skiddaw. Still, I turn back to those great places where I wandered about, participating in their greatness. After all, I could not *live* in Skiddaw. I could spend a year, two, three years among them, but I must have a prospect of seeing Fleet Street at the end of that time, or I should mope and pine away, I know. Still, Skiddaw is a fine creature. My habits are changing, I think, *i.e.*, from drunk to sober. Whether I shall be happy or not remains to be proved. I shall certainly be more happy in a morning; but whether I shall not sacrifice the fat, and the marrow, and the kidneys, *i.e.*, the night, glorious care-drowning night, that heals all our wrongs, pours wine into our mortifications, changes the scene from indifferent and flat to bright and brilliant! O Manning, if I should have formed a diabolical resolution, by the time you come to England, of not admitting any spirituous liquors into my house, will you be my guest on such shameworthy terms? Is life, with such limitations, worth trying? The truth is, that my liquors bring a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who

consume me. This is a pitiful tale to be read at St. Gothard,[1] but it is just now nearest my heart. Fenwick is a ruined man. He is hiding himself from his creditors, and has sent his wife and children into the country. Fell, my other drunken companion (that has been: *nam hic caestus artemque repono*)[2], is turned editor of a Naval Chronicle. Godwin continues a steady friend, though the same facility does not remain of visiting him often. That . . . has detached Marshall from his house; Marshall, the man who went to sleep when the "Ancient Mariner" was reading; the old, steady, unalterable friend of the Professor. Holcroft is not yet come to town. I expect to see him, and will deliver your message. Things come crowding in to say, and no room for 'em. Some things are too little to be told, *i.e.* to have a preference; some are too big and circumstantial. Thanks for yours, which was most delicious. Would I had been with you, benighted, etc.! I fear my head is turned with wandering. I shall never be the same acquiescent being. Farewell. Write again quickly, for I shall not like to hazard a letter, not knowing where the fates have carried you. Farewell, my dear fellow.

C. LAMB.

To Samuel Taylor Coleridge

[Autumn, 1820?]

DEAR COLERIDGE,—Why will you make your visits which should give pleasure, a matter of regret to your friends? You never come but you take away some folio, that is part of my existence. With a great deal of difficulty I was made to comprehend the extent of my loss. My maid, Becky, brought me a dirty bit of paper, which contained her description of some book which Mr. Coleridge had taken away. It was "Luster's Tables,"[1] which, for some time, I could not make out. "What! has he carried away any of the *tables*, Becky?" "No, it wasn't any tables, but it was a book that he called Luster's Tables." I was obliged to search personally among my shelves, and a huge fissure suddenly disclosed to me the true nature of the damage I had sustained. That book, Coleridge, you should not have taken away, for it is not mine; it is the property of a friend, who does not know its value, nor indeed have I been very sedulous in explaining to him the estimate of it; but was rather contented in giving a sort of corroboration to a hint that he let fall, as to its being suspected to be not genuine, so that in all probability it would have fallen to me as a deodand;[2] not but I am as sure it is Luther's as I am sure that Jack Bunyan wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*; but it was not for me to pronounce upon the validity of testimony that had been disputed by learneder clerks than I; so I quietly let it occupy the place it had usurped upon my shelves, and should never have thought of issuing an ejectment against it; for why should I be so bigoted as to allow rites of hospitality to none but my own books, children, &c.?—a species of egotism I abhor from my heart. No; let 'em all snug together, Hebrews and Proselytes of the gate; no selfish partiality of mine shall make distinction between them, I charge no warehouse room for my friend's commodities; they are welcome to come and stay as long as they like, without paying rent. I have several such strangers that I treat with more than Arabian courtesy. There's a copy of More's fine poem,[3] which is none of mine, but I cherish it as my own. I am none of those churlish landlords that advertise the goods to be taken away in ten days' time, or then to be sold to pay expenses. So you see I had no right to lend you that book. I may lend you my own books, because it is at my own hazard; but it is not honest to hazard a friend's property; I always make that distinction. I hope you will bring it with you, or send it by Hartley;[4] or he can bring that, and you the *Polemical Discourses*, and come and eat some atoning mutton with us one of these days shortly. We are engaged two or three Sundays deep, but always dine at home on week-days at half-past four. So come all four—men and books I mean. My third shelf (northern compartment) from the top has two devilish gaps, where you have knocked out its two eye-teeth.

Your wronged friend,

C. LAMB.

[1] a pass in the Alps now famous for its long tunnel.

[2] Here I lay down my gloves and the game. [Said by the boxer who has fought his last fight.]—Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 484.

[1] possibly *The Table Talk* of Martin Luther (1483-1546), the Protestant reformer.

[2] a thing given or forfeited to God.

[3] probably *Psychosoia Platonica* by Henry More, an English writer of the seventeenth century.

[4] Coleridge's son

Walter Savage Landor

(1775-1864)

[For an account of Landor's life see p. 325.]

From *Imaginary Conversations*

Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn

The union of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, his second wife, was validated by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1533. In 1536 she was executed on charges of adultery and treason. This dialogue takes place after her arrest and sentence.

HENRY. Dost thou know me, Nanny, in this yeoman's dress? 'S blood! does it require so long and vacant a stare to recollect a husband after a week or two? No tragedy-tricks with me! a scream, a sob, or thy kerchief a trifle the wetter, were enough. Why, verily the little fool faints in earnest. These whey faces, like their kinsfolk the ghosts, give us no warning. (*Sprinkling water over her.*) Hast had water enough upon thee? Take that, then: art thyself again?

ANNE. Father of mercies! do I meet again my husband, as was my last prayer on earth? Do I behold my beloved lord—in peace—and pardoned, my partner in eternal bliss? It was his voice. I cannot see him: why cannot I? Oh why do these pangs interrupt the transports of the blessed?

HENRY. Thou openest thy arms: faith! I came for that. Nanny, thou art a sweet slut.* Thou groanest, wench: art in labor? Faith! among the mistakes of the night, I am ready to think almost that thou hast been drinking, and that I have not.

ANNE. God preserve your Highness: grant me your forgiveness for one slight offense. My eyes were heavy; I fell asleep while I was reading. I did not know of your presence at first; and, when I did, I could not speak. I strove for utterance: I wanted no respect for my liege and husband.

HENRY. My pretty warm nestling, thou wilt then lie! Thou wert reading, and aloud too, with thy saintly cup of water by thee, and—what! thou art still girlishly fond of those dried cherries!

ANNE. I had no other fruit to offer your Highness the first time I saw you, and you were then pleased to invent for me some reason why they should be acceptable. I did not dry these: may I present them, such as they are? We shall have fresh next month.

HENRY. Thou art always driving away from the discourse. One moment it suits thee to know me, another not.

ANNE. Remember, it is hardly three months since

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* Henry was not unlearned, nor indifferent to the costlier externals of a gentleman; but in manners and language he was hardly on a level with our hostlers of the present day. He was fond of bear-baitings and other such amusements in the midst of the rabble, and would wrestle with Francis I. His reign is one continued proof, flaring and wearisome as a Lapland summer day, that even the English form of government, under a sensual king with money at his disposal, may serve only to legitimatize injustice. The Constitution was still insisted on, in all its original strength and purity, by those who had abolished many of its fundamental laws, and had placed the remainder at the discretion of the King. It never has had a more zealous advocate than Empson. This true patriot of legitimacy requested on his trial, that, "if he and Dudley were punished, it might not be divulged to other nations, lest they should infer that the final dissolution of the English government was approaching."

The government was whatever the King ordered; and he a ferocious and terrific thing, swinging on high between two windy superstitions, and caught and propelled alternately by fanaticism and lust. In Anne Boleyn, the frank and unsuspicious gayety of her temper, the restless playfulness of high spirits, which we often saw formerly in the families of country gentlemen, first captivated the affections and afterward raised the jealousy of Henry. Lightness of spirit, which had made all about her happy the whole course of her life, made her so the last day of it. She was beheaded on the 19th of May, and Henry on the morrow married Jane Seymour. [Landor's note]

I miscarried:** I am weak, and liable to swoons.

HENRY. Thou hast, however, thy bridal cheeks, with lustre upon them when there is none elsewhere, and obstinate lips resisting all impression; but, now thou talkest about miscarrying, who is the father of the boy?

ANNE. The Father is yours and mine. He who hath taken him to his own home, before (like me) he could struggle or cry for it.

HENRY. Pagan, or worse, to talk so! He did not come into the world alive: there was no baptism.

ANNE. I thought only of our loss: my senses are confounded. I did not give him my milk, and yet I loved him tenderly; for I often fancied, had he lived, how contented and joyful he would have made you and England.

HENRY. No subterfuges and escapes. I warrant, thou canst not say whether at my entrance thou wert waking or wandering.

ANNE. Faintness and drowsiness came upon me suddenly.

HENRY. Well, since thou really and truly sleepedst, what didst dream of?

ANNE. I begin to doubt whether I did indeed sleep.

HENRY. Ha! false one—never two sentences of truth together! But come, what didst think about, asleep or awake?

ANNE. I thought that God had pardoned me my offenses, and had received me unto him.

HENRY. And nothing more?

ANNE. That my prayers had been heard and my wishes were accomplishing: the angels alone can enjoy more beatitude than this.

HENRY. Vexatious little devil! she says nothing now about me, merely from perverseness.—Hast thou never thought about me, nor about thy falsehood and adultery?

ANNE. If I had committed any kind of falsehood, in regard to you or not, I should never have rested until I had thrown myself at your feet and obtained your pardon; but, if ever I had been guilty of that other crime, I know not whether I should have dared to implore it, even of God's mercy.

HENRY. Thou hast heretofore cast some soft glances upon Smeaton; hast thou not?

ANNE. He taught me to play on the virginals, as you know, when I was little, and thereby to please your Highness.

HENRY. And Brereton and Norris, what have they taught thee?

ANNE. They are your servants, and trusty ones.

HENRY. Has not Weston told thee plainly that he loved thee?

ANNE. Yes; and—

HENRY. What didst thou?

ANNE. I defied him.

HENRY. Is that all?

ANNE. I could have done no more if he had told me that he hated me. Then, indeed, I should have incurred more justly the reproaches of your Highness: I should have smiled.

HENRY. We have proofs abundant: the fellows shall one and all confront thee. Ay, clap thy hands and kiss thy sleeve, harlot!

ANNE. Oh, that so great a favor is vouchsafed me! My honor is secure; my husband will be happy again; he will see my innocence.

HENRY. Give me now an account of the moneys thou hast received from me within these nine months. I want them not back: they are letters of gold in record of thy guilt. Thou hast had no fewer than fifteen thousand pounds in that period, without even thy asking; what hast done with it, wanton?

ANNE. I have regularly placed it out to interest.

HENRY. Where? I demand of thee.

ANNE. Among the needy and ailing. My Lord Archbishop has the account of it, sealed by him weekly.*** I also had a copy myself: those who took away my papers may easily find it; for there are few others, and they lie open.

HENRY. Think on my munificence to thee; recollect who made thee. Dost sigh for what thou hast lost?

ANNE. I do, indeed.

HENRY. I never thought thee ambitious; but thy vices creep out one by one.

ANNE. I do not regret that I have been a queen

** She miscarried of a son, January 29, 1536: the King concluded from this event that his marriage was disagreeable to God. He had abundance of conclusions for believing that his last marriage was disagreeable to God, whenever he wanted a fresh one, and was ready in due time to give up this too with the same resignation; but he never had any CONCLUSIONS of doing a thing disagreeable to God when a divorce or decapitation was in question. [Landor's note]

*** The Duke of Norfolk obtained an order that the Archbishop of Canterbury should retire to his palace of Lambeth on the Queen's trial. Burnet, very sharp-sighted on irregularities in ladies, says that she had distributed, in the last nine months of her life, between fourteen and fifteen thousand pounds among the poor,—a sum equal in value to nearly five times the amount at present. It tends to prove how little she could have reserved for vanities or favorites. [Landor's note]

and am no longer one; nor that my innocence is called in question by those who never knew me: but I lament that the good people who loved me so cordially, hate and curse me; that those who pointed me out to their daughters for imitation, check them when they speak about me; and that he whom next to God I have served with most devotion is my accuser.

HENRY. Wast thou conning over something in that dingy book for thy defense? Come, tell me, what wast thou reading?

ANNE. This ancient chronicle. I was looking for some one in my own condition, and must have missed the page. Surely in so many hundred years there shall have been other young maidens, first too happy for exaltation, and after too exalted for happiness,—not, perchance, doomed to die upon a scaffold, by those they ever honored and served faithfully: that, indeed, I did not look for nor think of; but my heart was bounding for any one I could love and pity. She would be unto me as a sister dead and gone; but hearing me, seeing me, consoling me, and being consoled. O my husband! it is so heavenly a thing—

HENRY. To whine and whimper, no doubt, is vastly heavenly.

ANNE. I said not so; but those, if there be any such, who never weep, have nothing in them of heavenly or of earthly. The plants, the trees, the very rocks and unsunned clouds, show us at least the semblances of weeping; and there is not an aspect of the globe we live on, nor of the waters and skies around it, without a reference and similitude to our joys or sorrows.

HENRY. I do not remember that notion anywhere. Take care no enemy rake out of it something of materialism. Guard well thy empty hot brain: it may hatch more evil. As for those odd words, I myself would fain see no great harm in them, knowing that grief and frenzy strike out many things which would else lie still, and neither spirt nor sparkle. I also know that thou hast never read any thing but Bible and history,—the two worst books in the world for young people, and the most certain to lead astray both prince and subject. For which reason I have interdicted and entirely put down the one, and will (by the blessing of the Virgin and of holy Paul) commit the other to a rigid censor. If it behooves us kings to enact what our people shall eat and drink,—of which the most unruly and rebellious spirit can entertain no doubt,—greatly more doth it behoove us to examine what they read and think. The body is moved according to the mind and will: we must take care that the movement be a right one, on pain of God's anger in this life and the next.

ANNE. O my dear husband! it must be a naughty thing, indeed, that makes him angry beyond remission. Did you ever try how pleasant it is to forgive any one? There is nothing else wherein we can resemble God perfectly and easily.

HENRY. Resemble God perfectly and easily! Do vile creatures talk thus of the Creator?

ANNE. No, Henry, when his creatures talk thus of him, they are no longer vile creatures! When they know that he is good, they love him; and when they love him, they are good themselves. O Henry! my husband and King! the judgments of our Heavenly Father are righteous: on this, surely, we must think alike.

HENRY. And what, then? Speak out: again I command thee, speak plainly! thy tongue was not so torpid but this moment. Art ready? Must I wait?

ANNE. If any doubt remains upon your royal mind of your equity in this business; should it haply seem possible to you that passion or prejudice, in yourself or another, may have warped so strong an understanding,—do but supplicate the Almighty to strengthen and enlighten it, and he will hear you.

HENRY. What! thou wouldst fain change thy quarters, ay?

ANNE. My spirit is detached and ready, and I shall change them shortly, whatever your Highness may determine. Ah! my native Bickling is a pleasant place. May I go back to it? Does that kind smile say, YES? Do the hounds ever run that way now? The fruit trees must be all in full blossom, and the gorse on the hill above quite dazzling. How good it was in you to plant your park at Greenwich after my childish notion, tree for tree, the very same as at Bickling! Has the hard winter killed them or the winds loosened the stakes about them?

HENRY. Silly child! as if thou shouldst see them any more.

ANNE. Alas, what strange things happen! But they and I are nearly of the same age; young alike, and without hold upon anything.

HENRY. Yet thou appearest hale and resolute, and (they tell me) smirkest and smilest to everybody.

ANNE. The withered leaf catches the sun sometimes, little as it can profit by it; and I have heard stories of the breeze in other climates that sets

in when daylight is about to close, and how constant it is, and how refreshing. My heart, indeed, is now sustained strangely: it became the more sensibly so from that time forward, when power and grandeur and all things terrestrial were sunk from sight. Every act of kindness in those about me gives me satisfaction and pleasure, such as I did not feel formerly. I was worse before God chastened me; yet I was never an ingrate. What pains have I taken to find out the village girls who placed their posies in my chamber ere I arose in the morning! How gladly would I have recompensed the forester who lit up a brake on my birthnight, which else had warmed him half the winter! But these are times past: I was not Queen of England.

HENRY. Nor adulterous nor heretical.

ANNE. God be praised!

HENRY. Learned saint! thou knowest nothing of the lighter, but perhaps canst inform me about the graver, of them.

ANNE. Which may it be, my liege?

HENRY. Which may it be? Pestilence! I marvel that the walls of this tower do not crack around thee at such impiety.

ANNE. I would be instructed by the wisest of theologians: such is your Highness.

HENRY. Are the sins of the body, foul as they are, comparable to those of the soul?

ANNE. When they are united, they must be worse.

HENRY. Go on, go on: thou pushest thy own breast against the sword. God hath deprived thee of thy reason for thy punishment. I must hear more: proceed, I charge thee.

ANNE. An aptitude to believe one thing rather than another, from ignorance or weakness, or from the more persuasive manner of the teacher, or from his purity of life, or from the strong impression of a particular text at a particular time, and various things beside, may influence and decide our opinion; and the hand of the Almighty, let us hope, will fall gently on human fallibility.

HENRY. Opinion in matters of faith! rare wisdom! rare religion! Troth, Anne! thou hast well sobered me. I came rather warmly and lovingly; but these light ringlets, by the holy rood, shall not shade this shoulder much longer. Nay, do not start; I tap it for the last time, my sweetest. If the Church permitted it, thou shouldst set forth on thy long journey with the eucharist between thy teeth, however loath.

ANNE. Love your Elizabeth, my honored lord, and God bless you! She will soon forget to call me. Do not chide her: think how young she is.****

Could I, could I kiss her, but once again! it would comfort my heart,—or break it.

(1834)

From *The Pentameron*[1]

The imaginary conversations recorded in this work take place between Boccaccio and Petrarch. The two writers discuss, among other subjects, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Boccaccio's love for Fiammetta, daughter of the king of Naples. An acquaintance with the biographical material presented in Vol. I, pages 1050, 1063, and 1066 will provide a background for this selection.

The Dreams of Boccaccio and Petrarch

. . . BOCCACCIO. In vain had I determined not only to mend in future, but to correct the past; in vain had I prayed most fervently for grace to accomplish it, with a final aspiration to Fiammetta that she would unite with your beloved Laura, and that, gentle and beatified spirits as they are, they would breathe together their purer prayers on mine. See what follows.

PETRARCA. Sigh not at it. Before we can see all

**** Elizabeth was not quite three years old at her mother's death, being born the 7th of September, 1533. It does not appear that the Defender of the Faith brought his wife to the scaffold for the good of her soul, nor that she was pregnant at the time, which would have added much to the merit of the action [Landor's note]

[1] This title is made in imitation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* It means "the five days"

that follows from their intercession, we must join them again. But let me hear anything in which they are concerned.

Boccaccio. I prayed; and my breast, after some few tears, grew calmer. Yet sleep did not ensue until the break of morning, when the dropping of soft rain on the leaves of the fig-tree at the window, and the chirping of a little bird to tell another there was shelter under them, brought me repose and slumber. Scarcely had I closed my eyes, if indeed time can be reckoned any more in sleep than in heaven, when my Fiammetta seemed to have led me into the meadow. You will see it below you: turn away that branch—gently! gently! do not break it, for the little bird sat there. . . .

"Thy prayers have been heard, O Giovanni," said she.

I sprang to embrace her.

"Do not spill the water! Ah! you have spilt a part of it."

I then observed in her hand a crystal vase. A few drops were sparkling on the sides and running down the rim; a few were trickling from the base and from the hand that held it.

"I must go down to the brook," said she, "and fill it again as it was filled before."

What a moment of agony was this to me! Could I be certain how long might be her absence? She went; I was following; she made a sign for me to turn back. I disobeyed her only an instant; yet my sense of disobedience, increasing my feebleness and confusion, made me lose sight of her. In the next moment she was again at my side with the cup quite full. I stood motionless: I feared my breath might shake the water over. I looked her in the face for her commands, and to see it,—to see it so calm, so beneficent, so beautiful. I was forgetting what I had prayed for, when she lowered her head, tasted of the cup, and gave it me. I drank, and suddenly sprang forth before me many groves and palaces and gardens, and their statues and their avenues, and their labyrinths of alaternus[2] and bay, and alcoves of citron, and watchful loop-holes in the retirements of impenetrable pomegranate. Farther off, just below where the fountain slipped away from its marble hall and guardian gods, arose from their beds of moss and drosera and darkest grass the sisterhood of oleanders, fond of tantalizing with their bosomed flowers and their moist and pouting blossoms the little shy rivulet, and of covering its face with all the colors of the dawn.

My dream expanded and moved forward. I trod again the dust of Posilipo,[3] soft as the feathers in the wings of Sleep. I emerged on Baia;[4] I crossed her innumerable arches; I loitered in the breezy sunshine of her mole; I trusted the faithful seclusion of her caverns, the keepers of so many secrets; and I reposed on the buoyancy of her tepid sea. Then Naples, and her theatres and her churches, her grottoes and dells and forts and promontories, rushed forward in confusion, now among soft whispers, now among sweetest sounds, and subsided, and sank, and disappeared. Yet a memory seemed to come fresh from every one; each had time enough for its tale, for its pleasure, for its reflection, for its pang. As I mounted with silent steps the narrow staircase of the old palace, how distinctly did I feel against the palm of my hand the coldness of that smooth stone-work, and the greater of the cramps of iron in it!

"Ah me! is this forgetting?" cried I anxiously to Fiammetta.

"We must recall these scenes before us," she replied; "such is the punishment of them. Let us hope and believe that the apparition, and the compunction which must follow it, will be accepted as the full penalty, and that both will pass away almost together."

I feared to lose anything attendant on her presence: I feared to approach her forehead with my lips: I feared to touch the lily on its long wavy leaf in her hair, which filled my whole heart with fragrance. Venerating, adoring, I bowed my head at last to kiss her snow-white robe, and trembled at my presumption. And yet the effulgence of her countenance vivified while it chastened me. I loved her—I must not say *more* than ever—*better* than ever; it was Fiammetta who had inhabited the skies. As my hand opened toward her,

"Beware!" said she, faintly smiling; "beware, Giovanni. Take only the crystal; take it, and drink again."

"Must all be then forgotten?" said I sorrowfully.

"Remember your prayer and mine, Giovanni! Shall both have been granted—O how much worse than in vain!"

I drank instantly; I drank largely. How cool my bosom grew; how could it grow so cool before her! But it was not to remain in its quiescency; its trials were not yet over. I will not, Francesco! no, I may not commemorate the incidents she related me, nor which of us said, "I blush

[2] an evergreen shrub.

[3] a ridge southwest of Naples famous for its ancient grotto.

[4] a seaport west of Naples

for having loved *first*"; nor which of us replied, "Say *least*, say *least*, and blush again."

The charm of the words (for I felt not the encumbrance of the body nor the acuteness of the spirit) seemed to possess me wholly. Although the water gave me strength and comfort, and somewhat of celestial pleasure, many tears fell around the border of the vase as she held it up before me, exhorting me to take courage, and inviting me with more than exhortation to accomplish my deliverance. She came nearer, more tenderly, more earnestly; she held the dewy globe with both hands, leaning forward, and sighed and shook her head, drooping at my pusillanimity. It was only when a ringlet had touched the rim, and perhaps the water (for a sunbeam on the surface could never have given it such a golden hue), that I took courage, clasped it, and exhausted it. Sweet as was the water, sweet as was the serenity it gave me—alas! that also which it moved away from me was sweet!

"This time you can trust me alone," said she, and parted my hair, and kissed my brow. Again she went toward the brook: again my agitation, my weakness, my doubt, came over me: nor could I see her while she raised the water, nor knew I whence she drew it. When she returned, she was close to me at once: she smiled: her smile pierced me to the bones: it seemed an angel's. She sprinkled the pure water on me; she looked most fondly; she took my hand; she suffered me to press hers to my bosom; but, whether by design I cannot tell, she let fall a few drops of the chilly element between.

"And now, O my beloved!" said she, "we have consigned to the bosom of God our earthly joys and sorrows. The joys cannot return, let not the sorrows. These alone would trouble my repose among the blessed."

"Trouble thy repose! Fiammetta! Give me the chalice!" cried I—"not a drop will I leave in it, not a drop."

"Take it!" said that soft voice. "O now most dear Giovanni! I know thou hast strength enough; and there is but little—at the bottom lies our first kiss."

"Mine! didst thou say, beloved one? and is that left thee still?"

"Mine," said she, pensively; and as she abased her head, the broad leaf of the lily hid her brow and her eyes; the light of heaven shone through the flower.

"O Fiammetta! Fiammetta!" cried I in agony, "God is the God of mercy, God is the God of love—can I, can I ever?" I struck the chalice against my head, unmindful that I held it; the water covered my face and my feet. I started up, not yet awake, and I heard the name of Fiammetta in the curtains.

PETRARCA. Love, O Giovanni, and life itself, are but dreams at best. I do think

Never so gloriously was Sleep attended
As with the pageant of that heavenly maid.

But to dwell on such subjects is sinful. The recollection of them, with all their vanities, brings tears into my eyes.

BOCCACCIO. And into mine too,—they were so very charming. . . .

PETRARCA. I have had as many dreams as most men. We are all made up of them, as the webs of the spider are particles of her own vitality. But how infinitely less do we profit by them! I will relate to you, before we separate, one among the multitude of mine, as coming the nearest to the poetry of yours, and as having been not totally useless to me. Often have I reflected on it,—sometimes with pensiveness, with sadness never.

BOCCACCIO. Then, Francesco, if you had with you as copious a choice of dreams as clustered on the elm-trees where the Sibyl led Æneas,[5] this, in preference to the whole swarm of them, is the queen dream for me.

PETRARCA. When I was younger I was fond of wandering in solitary places, and never was afraid of slumbering in woods and grottoes. . . . Allegory, which you named with sonnets and canzonets, had few attractions for me, believing it to be the delight in general of idle, frivolous, inexcursive minds, in whose mansions there is neither hall nor portal to receive the loftier of the passions. A stranger to the affections, she holds a low station among the handmaidens of Poetry, being fit for little but an apparition in a mask. I had reflected for some time on this subject, when, wearied with the length of my walk over the mountains, and finding a soft old molehill covered with gray grass by the wayside, I laid my head upon it, and slept. I cannot tell how long it was before a species of dream or vision came over me.

Two beautiful youths appeared beside me. Each was winged; but the wings were hanging down, and seemed ill adapted to flight. One of them, whose voice was the softest I ever heard, looking at me frequently, said to the other, "He is under

[5] See *Virgil's Aeneid*, book VI.

my guardianship for the present; do not awaken him with that feather."

Methought, hearing the whisper, I saw something like the feather on an arrow, and then the arrow itself,—the whole of it, even to the point, although he carried it in such a manner that it was difficult at first to discover more than a palm's length of it; the rest of the shaft, and the whole of the barb, was behind his ankles.

"This feather never awakens any one," replied he, rather petulantly; "but it brings more of confident security, and more of cherished dreams, than you without me are capable of imparting."

"Be it so!" answered the gentler; "none is less inclined to quarrel or dispute than I am. Many whom you have wounded grievously call upon me for succor. But so little am I disposed to thwart you, it is seldom I venture to do more for them than to whisper a few words of comfort in passing. How many reproaches on these occasions have been cast upon me for indifference and infidelity! Nearly as many, and nearly in the same terms, as upon you!"

"Odd enough that we, O Sleep! should be thought so alike!" said Love contemptuously. "Yonder is he who bears a nearer resemblance to you; the dullest have observed it."

I fancied I turned my eyes to where he was pointing, and saw at a distance the figure he designated. Meanwhile the contention went on uninterruptedly. Sleep was slow in asserting his power or his benefits; Love recapitulated them, but only that he might assert his own above them. Suddenly he called on me to decide, and to choose my patron. Under the influence first of the one, then of the other, I sprang from repose to rapture, I alighted from rapture on repose,—and knew not which was sweetest. Love was very angry with me, and declared he would cross me throughout the whole of my existence. Whatever I might on other occasions have thought of his veracity, I now felt too surely the conviction that he would keep his word. At last, before the close of the altercation, the third Genius had advanced and stood near us. I cannot tell how I knew him, but I knew him to be the Genius of Death. Breathless as I was at beholding him, I soon became familiar with his features. First they seemed only calm, presently they grew contemplative, and lastly beautiful; those of the Graces themselves are less regular, less harmonious, less composed. Love glanced at him unsteadily, with a countenance in which there was somewhat of anxiety, somewhat of disdain, and cried, "Go away! go away! nothing that thou touchest lives!"

"Say rather, child!" replied the advancing form, and advancing grew loftier and statelier, "say rather that nothing of beautiful or of glorious lives its own true life until my wing hath passed over it."

Love pouted, and rumpled and bent down with his forefinger the stiff short feathers on his arrowhead; but replied not. Although he frowned worse than ever, and at me, I dreaded him less and less and scarcely looked toward him. The milder and calmer Genius, the third, in proportion as I took courage to contemplate him, regarded me with more and more complacency. He held neither flower nor arrow as the others did; but throwing back the clusters of dark curls that overshadowed his countenance, he presented to me his hand, openly and benignly. I shrank on looking at him so near, and yet I sighed to love him. He smiled, not without an expression of pity, at perceiving my diffidence, my timidity: for I remembered how soft was the hand of Sleep, how warm and entrancing was Love's. By degrees I became ashamed of my ingratitude; and turning my face away, I held out my arms, and I felt my neck within his. Composure strewed and allayed all the throbbings of my bosom; the coolness of freshest morning breathed around, the heavens seemed to open above me; while the beautiful cheek of my deliverer rested on my head. I would now have looked for those others; but knowing my intention by my gesture, he said consolatorily,

"Sleep is on his way to the Earth, where many are calling him; but it is not to these he hastens; for every call only makes him fly farther off. Sedately and gravely as he looks, he is nearly as capricious and volatile as the more arrogant and ferocious one."

"And Love!" said I, "whither is he departed? If not too late, I would propitiate and appease him."

"He who cannot follow me, he who cannot overtake and pass me," said the Genius, "is unworthy of the name, the most glorious in earth or heaven. Look up! Love is yonder, and ready to receive thee."

I looked: the earth was under me: I saw only the clear blue sky, and something brighter above it. . . .

(1837)

William Hazlitt

(1778-1830)

The extent to which books possess an objective reality of their own has rarely been more completely exemplified than in the essays and lectures of Hazlitt. As a man he was singularly prone to alienate other people and difficult to keep as a friend. Yet the Hazlitt whom we know in his writings is entirely sympathetic and likable. In scope, in artistic sensitivity, and in breadth of knowledge he is England's leading essayist. If we must love Lamb more, Hazlitt we can more admire.

He was born on April 10, 1778, at Maidstone, in Kent, the son of a Unitarian minister. The faith of his father was in that day perhaps more involved with advanced liberal thought than was any other faith in England. In 1780 the Hazlitts, then in Ireland, became interested in the welfare of certain American prisoners of war, with the result that they moved next to Massachusetts (1783), in the vicinity of Boston. Unable to secure a permanent post in the new land of freedom, the elder Hazlitt removed his family once more to England in 1786, and settled in Wem, Shropshire.

Hazlitt's father belonged to the party of Godwin, Holcroft, and Benjamin Franklin. Thus Hazlitt was nurtured in an atmosphere of radicalism. Like Shelley, Hazlitt remained constant to the principles of the French Revolution throughout his life, and the conservatism of English politics in his era only intensified that feeling of maladjustment to society toward which his character strongly led him. At the age of thirteen he wrote a letter to a newspaper in protest against the violence done by a mob upon the radical Joseph Priestley. As he outlived Shelley, he must therefore be called the last notable writer who was born into the period of the French Revolution and remained its partisan. Early in life he rejected the Hobbesian theory (adopted by Helvétius, Hartley, Malthus, Bentham, and their followers) that man is by nature selfish. His first publication, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805), was composed in order "to remove a stumbling-block in the metaphysical doctrine of the innate and necessary selfishness of the human mind." In the same spirit he penned his *Reply to the Essay on Population by the Rev. T. R. Malthus* (1807), his first aggressive defense of the rights of the poor. Liberty, fraternity, and the rights of men remained Hazlitt's watchwords. But he was by no means always the benevolent critic. He attacked vigorously where he disliked, and his hates seem to have been more numerous than his affections. It was not only the Tories, the aristocrats, the world of fashion, or the Roman and Anglican churches which received his abuse. "He is your only good damner," said Keats of him, "and if ever I am damned—damn me if I shouldn't like him to damn me." Though Keats was spared his attack, other romantic poets (Byron, Shelley, Scott, and even Coleridge) were not. His criticisms were, however, never done in the unpardonably unfair spirit of the Tory reviewers, and Keats could with justice name as one of the "three things to rejoice at in this age . . . Hazlitt's depth of taste."

He had been sent to a theological college at Hackney, but left it three years later. Soon after (1798) he made the great discovery of his life, Coleridge. Of this experience he tells us in the beautiful essay *My First Acquaintance with Poets* (1823). "The light of his genius," he says of Coleridge, "shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the

puddles of the road." Miserable at his inability to master his chosen field, metaphysics, Hazlitt for ten years after leaving college worked zealously at an art in which his brother John was already a success, painting. He went to Paris (1802) to study and copy the masterpieces of the Louvre, but although his original paintings showed some talent, he at last became convinced that he lacked the genius demanded by the fine arts. The time spent in this study was not wasted, however. For not only was he to produce some valuable art criticism, but he was also to bring to his writing the painter's awareness of line and color. On his return to England, he wrote on many subjects—politics, economics, philosophy, and grammar.

In 1808 he married Sarah Stoddard, and lived with her for a number of years at Winterslow, near Salisbury. But Hazlitt's relations with women were doomed to failure by his Bohemian temperament. He separated from his wife and had an ill-fated, half-mad love affair with Sarah Walker, which with amazing lack of restraint he displayed before the public in his *Liber Amoris* (1823). That book shows how much he was a child of Rousseau, whose *Confessions* it resembles in its frank exhibition of suffering and folly (see p. 1136). Later he married again, and his *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy* (1826) are a record of his brief life with the second Mrs. Hazlitt. In the meantime, having delivered some lectures on philosophy, Hazlitt had turned more and more to literature. He began to write dramatic criticism for the *Morning Chronicle*, and delivered his four great groups of lectures: *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *The English Poets* (1818), *The English Comic Writers* (1819), and *The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820). By virtue of these alone Hazlitt may be considered the greatest of the romantic critics, since the criticism of Coleridge and Lamb is fragmentary in character. One must go as far back as Dryden's great prefaces to find comment on English literature of such vital and enlightened quality. But political matters never ceased to interest him, and in 1819 he collected a series of writings under the title of *Political Essays*. He later wrote a *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* (1828-30). As for his art criticism, in addition to the splendid account of paintings in his book on France and Italy, he collaborated with the painter Haydon on articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, composed the *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England* (1824), and wrote many similar essays which were published after his death. His later volume of criticism, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), shows Hazlitt at his best in his estimate of twenty-five eminent contemporaries.

But it is in his familiar essays written for the *London Magazine*, Hunt's *Examiner*, and various periodicals that Hazlitt is now most often read. These appeared in book form under the titles of *The Round Table* (1817), *Table Talk* (1821-22), and *The Plain Speaker* (1826). After Hazlitt's death his son issued some of his best essays, till then uncollected, in the volumes *Winterslow* and *Sketches and Essays*. In these volumes, Hazlitt proves himself second to none as an essayist. He makes Lamb, for all his kindly warmth and fine taste, seem narrow and withdrawn from life. In sheer versatility Hazlitt has never been matched among essayists, for he is equally at home among people, books, plays, paintings, politics, or economics. To him "gusto" was a prime requisite in all art, and his writing abounds in that quality. Though in his own life oversensitive and ill adjusted to people, he brought emotional energy and enthusiasm to everything he wrote. As Professor C. G. Osgood well says, "Hazlitt changes like the weather—now fair and sunny, or stormy, rough, tranquil, humid, overcast, according to the mood, yet always free as out-of-doors." He was a great talker, and the idiom of speech invests his work with raciness. "No style is good," he once said, "that is not fit to be spoken or read aloud with effect."

As a critic, he exhibits perfectly the romantic point of view toward literature. It is instructive to note the difference between the approach of a typical neoclassicist and Hazlitt. Addison, for example, when he came to write his remarkable papers on *Paradise Lost*, first had to establish a criterion for judgment; taking Aristotelian dogma as a measurement, he then proceeded to gauge Milton's stature by those principles. Hazlitt, on the other hand, is freely impressionistic. He records for us his adventures among great books, and

we see them through the glass of his literary personality. The greatness of such criticism is, of course, dependent upon the greatness of the critic. In Hazlitt's case the result is some of the most inspiring opinions and interpretations in our literature.

On Going a Journey

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out-of-doors, Nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

The fields his study, Nature was his book.[1]

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticizing hedgerows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room, and fewer incumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

a friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper, solitude is sweet.[2]

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired,[3]

that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a Tilbury,[4] to exchange good things with and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sunburnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasuries," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull commonplaces, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff o' the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon? I should be bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, as neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship," say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's,[5] that he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time. So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation, by fits and starts.

[1] Bloomfield, *The Farmer's Boy, Spring*, 31.
[2] Cowper, *Retirement*, 741-2.
[3] Milton, *Comus*, 378-80.
[4] a two-wheeled carriage without top or cover.
[5] William Cobbett (1762-1835), English political writer.

"Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne,[6] "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said; but in my opinion this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid; if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of Nature without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomize them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with anyone for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveler has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the color of a cloud which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill-humor. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recall a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company seems extravagance or affectation; and on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it—otherwise the end is not answered—is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend C——, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing." If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have someone with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had"; and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following:

Here be woods as green
As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
Face of the curled stream, with flowers as many
As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
Here be all new delights, cool streams, and wells,
Arbors o'ergrown with woodbine, caves and dells;
Choose where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,
Or gather rushes to make many a ring
For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love—
How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
She took eternal fire that never dies;
How she conveyed him softly in a sleep,
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountains with her brother's light,
To kiss her sweetest.

—*Faithful Shepherdess.*[7]

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds; but at the sight of Nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot—I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects; it should be reserved for table-talk. L—— is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out-of-doors; because he is the best within. I grant there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey; and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavor of the viands we expect at the end of it. How

[6] Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), English clergyman and novelist

[7] by John Fletcher (Act I, Scene 3).

fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then, after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn"! These eventful moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness, to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop; they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea—

The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,[8]

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed upon cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation, to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen—*Procul, O procul este profani!*[9] These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathize with him, and he breaks no squares. I associate nothing with my traveling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits; or from having someone with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world; but your "unhoused, free condition is put into circumscription and confine." The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of oneself, uncumbered with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of Nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweetbreads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening—and no longer seeking for applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the gentleman in the parlor!* One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed commonplaces that we appear in the world; an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham Common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's—I think it was—where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons,[10] into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's[11] drawings, which I compared triumphantly—for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist—with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in a boat between me and the twilight—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*,[12] which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame d'Arblay's *Camilla*.[13] It was on the tenth of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise*,[14] at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux describes his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the

[8] Cowper, *The Task*, IV, 39; see p. 42.

[9] Hence, O hence, ye profane.

[10] Simon Gribelin (1661-1733) published the cartoons of Raphael in 1707.

[11] either Richard Westall (1765-1836) or his brother William (1781-1850)

[12] by Bernardin de St Pierre (1788).

[13] published in 1796.

[14] See p. 1143.

heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bonne bouche*[15] to crown the evening with. It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighborhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheater, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green, upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the highroad that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.[16]

The beautiful is vanished, and returns not.

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced! I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now? Not only I myself have changed; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O silvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness as thou wert; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely!

There is hardly anything that shows the shortsightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than traveling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it; the horizon that shuts it from our sight also blots it from our memory like a dream. In traveling through a wild, barren country I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter,[17] "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast; the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written on a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population known by the name of China to us? An inch of pasteboard on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life; things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piecemeal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections we cannot, as it were, unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So, in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate associations, everyone must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!

[15] choice morsel.

[16] Hazlitt was much disturbed at the loss of political liberty after Napoleon's defeat

[17] in Etherege's *The Man of Mode*.

To return to the question I have quitted above. —I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge[18] will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure the first consideration always is where we shall go to; in taking a solitary ramble the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place"; nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honors indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—showed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

With glistering spires and pinnacles adorned,[19]

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and cottages—was at home in the Bodleian;[20] and at Blenheim[21] quite superseded the powdered cicerone[22] that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to commonplace beauties in matchless pictures. As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen; there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by oneself, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support. Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbor, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones. I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled; nothing remains but the Bourbons[23] and the French people! —There is undoubtedly a sensation in traveling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else; but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump" all our present comforts and connections. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful, and, in one sense, instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable, individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

Out of my country and myself I go.

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them; but we can be said only to fulfill our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in traveling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home! (1822)

[18] a large group of prehistoric stone pillars on Salisbury Plain.

[19] *Paradise Lost*, III, 550.

[20] the famous university library.

[21] the palace built by the Duke of Marlborough as a gift of the state in recognition of his victory at Blenheim.

[22] guide.

[23] the French ruling family deposed by the Revolution but restored after Waterloo.

On Familiar Style

It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may so say, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects not only all the unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine familiar or truly English style is to write as any one would speak in common conversation who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes. Or to give another illustration, to write naturally is the same thing in regard to common conversation as to read naturally is in regard to common speech. It does not follow that it is an easy thing to give the true accent and inflection to the words you utter, because you do not attempt to rise above the level of ordinary life and colloquial speaking. You do not assume, indeed, the solemnity of the pulpit, or the tone of stage-declamation; neither are you at liberty to gabble on at a venture, without emphasis or discretion, or to resort to vulgar dialect or clownish pronunciation. You must steer a middle course. You are tied down to a given and appropriate articulation, which is determined by the habitual associations between sense and sound, and which you can only hit by entering into the author's meaning, as you must find the proper words and style to express yourself by fixing your thoughts on the subject you have to write about. Any one may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts; but to write or speak with propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task. Thus it is easy to affect a pompous style, to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to express: it is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it. Out of eight or ten words equally common, equally intelligible, with nearly equal pretensions, it is a matter of some nicety and discrimination to pick out the very one, the preferableness of which is scarcely perceptible, but decisive. The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson's style[1] is that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it. He uses none but "tall, opaque words," taken from the "first row of the rubric" —words with the greatest number of syllables, or Latin phrases with merely English terminations. If a fine style depended on this sort of arbitrary pretension, it would be fair to judge of an author's elegance by the measurement of his words and the substitution of foreign circumlocutions (with no precise associations) for the mother-tongue.[2] How simple it is to be dignified without ease, to be pompous without meaning! Surely it is but a mechanical rule for avoiding what is low, to be always pedantic and affected. It is clear you cannot use a vulgar English word, if you never use a common English word at all. A fine tact is shown in adhering to those which are perfectly common, and yet never falling into any expressions which are debased by disgusting circumstances, or which owe their signification and point to technical or professional allusions. A truly natural or familiar style can never be quaint or vulgar, for this reason, that it is of universal force and applicability, and that quaintness and vulgarity arise out of the immediate connection of certain words with coarse and disagreeable or with confined ideas. The last form what we understand by *cant* or *slang* phrases. —To give an example of what is not very clear in the general statement. I should say that the phrase *To cut with a knife*, or *To cut a piece of wood*, is perfectly free from vulgarity, because it is perfectly common; but to *cut an acquaintance* is not quite unexceptionable, because it is not perfectly common or intelligible, and has hardly yet escaped out of the limits of slang phraseology. I should hardly therefore use the word in this sense without putting it in italics as a license of expression, to be received *cum grano salis*.[3] All provincial or bye-phrases come under the same mark of reprobation —all such as the writer transfers to the page from

[1] See I, p. 908.

[2] "I have heard of such a thing as an author who makes it a rule never to admit a monosyllable into his vapid verse. Yet the charm and sweetness of Marlowe's lines depended often on their being made up almost entirely of monosyllables."—Hazlitt

[3] with a grain of salt

his fireside or a particular *coterie*, or that he invents for his own sole use and convenience. I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives them circulation or value. I am fastidious in this respect, and would almost as soon coin the currency of the realm as counterfeit the King's English. I never invented or gave a new and unauthorised meaning to any word but one single one (the term *impersonal* applied to feelings) and that was in an abstruse metaphysical discussion to express a very difficult distinction. I have been (I know) loudly accused of revelling in vulgarisms and broken English. I cannot speak to that point; but so far I plead guilty to the determined use of acknowledged idioms and common elliptical expressions. I am not sure that the critics in question know the one from the other, that is, can distinguish any medium between formal pedantry and the most barbarous solecism. As an author, I endeavor to employ plain words and popular modes of construction, as, were I a chapman and dealer, I should common weights and measures.

The proper force of words lies not in the words themselves, but in their application. A word may be a fine-sounding word, of an unusual length, and very imposing from its learning and novelty, and yet in the connection in which it is introduced may be quite pointless and irrelevant. It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea, that clenches a writer's meaning:—as it is not the size or glossiness of the materials, but their being fitted each to its place, that gives strength to the arch; or as the pegs and nails are as necessary to the support of the building as the larger timbers, and more so than the mere showy, unsubstantial ornaments. I hate any thing that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without any thing in them. A person who does not deliberately dispose of all his thoughts alike in cumbrous draperies and flimsy disguises may strike out twenty varieties of familiar every-day language, each coming somewhat nearer to the feeling he wants to convey, and at last not hit upon that particular and only one which may be said to be identical with the exact impression in his mind. This would seem to show that Mr. Cobbett[4] is hardly right in saying that the first word that occurs is always the best. It may be a very good one; and yet a better may present itself on reflection or from time to time. It should be suggested naturally, however, and spontaneously, from a fresh and lively conception of the subject. We seldom succeed by trying at improvement, or by merely substituting one word for another that we are not satisfied with, as we cannot recollect the name of a place or person by merely plaguing ourselves about it. We wander farther from the point by persisting in a wrong scent; but it starts up accidentally in the memory when we least expected it, by touching some link in the chain of previous association.

There are those who hoard up and make a cautious display of nothing but rich and rare phraseology—ancient medals, obscure coins, and Spanish pieces of eight They are very curious to inspect, but I myself would neither offer nor take them in the course of exchange. A sprinkling of archaisms is not amiss, but a tissue of obsolete expressions is more fit *for keep than wear*. I do not say I would not use any phrase that had been brought into fashion before the middle or the end of the last century, but I should be shy of using any that had not been employed by any approved author during the whole of that time. Words, like clothes, get old-fashioned, or mean and ridiculous, when they have been for some time laid aside. Mr. Lamb[5] is the only imitator of old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject, that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress. The matter is completely his own, though the manner is assumed. Perhaps his ideas are altogether so marked and individual as to require their point and pungency to be neutralised by the affectation of a singular but traditional form of conveyance. Tricked out in the prevailing costume, they would probably seem more startling and out of the way. The old English authors, Burton,[6] Fuller, Coryate, Sir Thomas Browne, are a kind of mediators between us and the more eccentric and whimsical modern, reconciling us to his peculiarities. I do not however know how far this is the case or not, till he condescends to write like one of us. I must confess that what I like best of his papers under the signature of Elia (still I do not presume, amidst such

[4] William Cobbett (1726-1835), English political writer.

[5] See p. 362.

[6] seventeenth-century authors whom Lamb imitates.

excellence, to decide what is most excellent) is the account of "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist," which is also the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression—

"A well of native English undefiled."

To those acquainted with his admired prototypes, these Essays of the ingenious and highly gifted author have the same sort of charm and relish that Erasmus's Colloquies or a fine piece of modern Latin have to the classical scholar. Certainly, I do not know any borrowed pencil that has more power or felicity of execution than the one of which I have here been speaking.

It is as easy to write a gaudy style without ideas as it is to spread a pallet of showy colors, or to smear in a flaunting transparency. "What do you read?"—"Words, words, words."—"What is the matter?"—*"Nothing,"* it might be answered. The florid style is the reverse of the familiar. The last is employed as an unvarnished medium to convey ideas; the first is resorted to as a spangled veil to conceal the want of them. When there is nothing to be set down but words, it costs little to have them fine. Look through the dictionary, and cull out a *florilegium*,[7] rival the *tulippomania*.[8] *Rouge* high enough, and never mind the natural complexion. The vulgar, who are not in the secret, will admire the look of preternatural health and vigor; and the fashionable, who regard only appearances, will be delighted with the imposition. Keep to your sounding generalities, your tinkling phrases, and all will be well. Swell out an unmeaning truism to a perfect tympany of style. A thought, a distinction is the rock on which all this brittle cargo of verbiage splits at once. Such writers have merely *verbal* imaginations, that retain nothing but words. Or their puny thoughts have dragon-wings, all green and gold. They soar far above the vulgar failing of the *Sermo humi obrepens*[9]—their most ordinary speech is never short of an hyperbole, splendid, imposing, vague, incomprehensible, magniloquent, a cento of sounding common-places. If some of us, whose "ambition is more lowly," pry a little too narrowly into nooks and corners to pick up a number of "unconsidered trifles," they never once direct their eyes or lift their hands to seize on any but the most gorgeous, tarnished, threadbare, patch-work set of phrases, the left-off finery of poetic extravagance, transmitted down through successive generations of barren pretenders. If they criticise actors and actresses, a huddled phantasmagoria of feathers, spangles, floods of light, and oceans of sound float before their morbid sense, which they paint in the style of Ancient Pistol. Not a glimpse can you get of the merits or defects of the performers: they are hidden in a profusion of barbarous epithets and wilful rhodomontade. Our hypercritics are not thinking of these little fantoccini[10] beings—

"That strut and fret their hour upon the stage"[11]—,

but of tall phantoms of words, abstractions, *genera* and *species*, sweeping clauses, periods that unite the Poles, forced alliterations, astounding antitheses—

"And on their pens *Fustian* sits plumed."[12]

If they describe kings and queens, it is an Eastern pageant. The Coronation at either House is nothing to it. We get at four repeated images—a curtain, a throne, a sceptre, and a footstool. These are with them the wardrobe of a lofty imagination; and they turn their servile strains to servile uses. Do we read a description of pictures? It is not a reflection of tones and hues which "nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," but piles of precious stones, rubies, pearls, emeralds, Golconda's[13] mines, and all the blazonry of art. Such persons are in fact besotted with words, and their brains are turned with the glittering but empty and sterile phantoms of things. Personifications, capital letters, seas of sunbeams, visions of glory, shining inscriptions, the figures of a transparency, Britannia with her shield, or Hope leaning on an anchor, make up their stock-in-trade. They may be considered as *hieroglyphical* writers. Images stand out in their minds isolated and important merely in themselves, without any ground-work of feeling—there is no context in their imaginations. Words affect them in the same way, by the mere sound, that is, by their possible, not by their actual application to the subject in hand. They are fascinated by first appearances, and have no sense of consequences. Nothing more is meant by them than meets the ear: they understand or feel nothing more than meets their eye. The web and texture of the universe, and of the heart of man, is a mystery to them: they have no faculty that strikes a chord

[7] collection of flowers.
[8] a mania for acquiring and growing tulips.
[9] speech that crawls along the ground.
[10] little puppet. [11] See Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, V, v, 25.
[12] Possibly suggested by *Paradise Lost*, IV, 988-989:

"And on his crest
Sat horror plumed."

[13] a city in India formerly famous for its diamonds.

in unison with it. They cannot get beyond the daubings of fancy, the varnish of sentiment. Objects are not linked to feelings, words to things, but images revolve in splendid mockery, words represent themselves in their strange rhapsodies. The categories of such a mind are pride and ignorance—pride in outside show, to which they sacrifice every thing, and ignorance of the true worth and hidden structure both of words and things. With a sovereign contempt for what is familiar and natural, they are the slaves of vulgar affectation—of a routine of high-flown phrases. Scorning to imitate realities, they are unable to invent any thing, to strike out one original idea. They are not copyists of nature, it is true; but they are the poorest of all plagiarists, the plagiarists of words. All is far-fetched, dear-bought, artificial, oriental in subject and allusion; all is mechanical, conventional, vapid, formal, pedantic in style and execution. They startle and confound the understanding of the reader by the remoteness and obscurity of their illustrations; they soothe the ear by the monotony of the same everlasting round of circuitous metaphors. They are the *mock-school* in poetry and prose. They flounder about between fustian in expression and bathos in sentiment. They tantalise the fancy, but never reach the head nor touch the heart. Their Temple of Fame is like a shadowy structure raised by Dulness to Vanity, or like Cowper's description of the Empress of Russia's palace of ice, "as worthless as in show 'twas glittering"—

"It smiled, and it was cold!"[14] (1821)

Thomas De Quincey

(1785-1859)

"In what mood and what shape shall he be brought forward? Shall it be as first we met at the table of Lucullus, whereto he was seduced by the false pretence that he would there meet with one who entertained novel and anarchical opinions regarding the Golden Ass of Apuleius? No one speaks of waiting dinner for him. He will come and depart at his own sweet will, neither burdened with punctualities, nor burdening others by exacting them. The festivities of the afternoon are far on when a commotion is heard in the hall as if some dog or other stray animal had found its way in. The instinct of a friendly guest tells him of the arrival—he opens the door, and fetches in the little stranger. Who can it be? A street-boy of some sort? His costume, in fact, is a boy's duffle great-coat, very threadbare, with a hole in it, and buttoned tight to the chin, where it meets the fragments of a parti-colored belcher handkerchief; on his feet are list-shoes, covered with snow, for it is a stormy winter night; and the trousers—some one suggests that they are inner linen garments blackened with writing-ink, but that Papaverius [i.e. De Quincey] never would have been at the trouble so to disguise them. What can be the theory of such a costume? The simplest thing in the world—it consisted of the fragments of apparel nearest at hand. . . . The first impression that a boy has appeared vanishes instantly. . . . On one occasion when he corrected an erroneous reference to an event as being a century old, by saying that he recollected its occurrence, one felt almost a surprise at the necessary limitation in his age, so old did he appear, with his arched brow loaded with thought, and the countless little wrinkles that engrained his skin, gathering thickly round the curiously expressive and

[14] See Cowper's *Task*, V, 173-176.

subtle lips. His lips are speedily opened by some casual remark, and presently the flood of talk passes forth from him, free, clear, and continuous—never rising into declamation—never losing a certain mellow earnestness, and all consisting of sentences as exquisitely joined together as if they were destined to challenge the criticism of the remotest posterity. Still the hours stride over each other, and still flows on the stream of gentle rhetoric. . . . It is now far into the night, and slight hints and suggestions are propagated about separation and home-going. The topic starts new ideas on the progress of civilization, the effect of habit on men in all ages, and the power of domestic affections. . . . He could testify to the inconvenience of late hours; for, was it not the other night that, coming to what was, or what he believed to be, his own door, he knocked and knocked, but the old woman within either couldn't or wouldn't hear him, so he scrambled over a wall, and having taken his repose in a furrow, was able to testify to the extreme unpleasantness of such a couch.

"Shall I try another sketch of him, when travel-stained and foot-sore, he glided in on us one night like a shadow, the child by the fire gazing on him with round eyes of astonishment, and suggesting that he should get a penny and go home—a proposal which he subjected to some philosophical criticism very far wide of its practical tenor. How far he had wandered since he had last refreshed himself, or even whether he had eaten food that day, were matters on which there was no getting articulate utterance from him. Though his costume was muddy, however, and his communications about the material wants of life very hazy, the ideas which he had stored up during his wandering poured themselves forth as clear and sparkling, both in logic and language, as the purest fountain that springs from a Highland rock. How that wearied, worn, little body was to be refreshed was a difficult problem: soft food disagreed with him—the hard he could not eat. Suggestions pointed at length to the solution of that vegetable unguent to which he had given a sort of lustre, and it might be supposed that there were some fifty cases of acute toothache to be treated in the house that night. How many drops? Drops! nonsense. If the wineglasses of the establishment were not beyond the ordinary normal size, there was no risk—and so the weary is at rest for a time."

In this graphic passage John Hill Burton has given us a portrait of the "Opium Eater," Thomas De Quincey.

De Quincey was born at Manchester on August 17, 1785, the son of a wealthy merchant. Because of tuberculosis his father was forced to live abroad, and the boy did not know him until he came home to die. With him came another stranger, Thomas's brother William, who had been on the Continent with their father—a boy with a "genius for mischief that amounted to inspiration." At the hands of his tyrannical brother, five years his senior, the dreamer Thomas suffered all kinds of agonies. During this period both boys went daily to school at the home of a clergyman, who taught them Latin and Greek so well that upon De Quincey's entry into the Grammar School at Bath, where the family removed in 1796, he was soon considered a wonder in the classics. After two years at this school, a blow intended by the master for another student landed on De Quincey's head and caused him to be placed under medical care for some time. His convalescence (he was now thirteen) was spent in reading Ariosto, Tasso, and *Paradise Lost.*

In the summer of 1800 he visited Eton and made a tour of Ireland in the company of Lord Westport, a young Irish nobleman whom he had met at Bath. On his return, he was sent to the Manchester Grammar School, for which he had no liking. After a year and a half of what was intolerable monotony to him, he ran away to spend a summer walking through North Wales on an allowance of a guinea a week. His father had left him a considerable fortune, but De Quincey tired of depending on the will of his guardians. At the age of seventeen, therefore, he went to London where, waiting for an advance loan from moneylenders, he spent a winter in abject poverty. Roaming the streets by day, he slept on the bare floor of a room to which he was admitted at night. His sole friends

were a young streetwalker, whom he met in his prowlings through London, and a ten-year-old servant girl. The hardships of this winter produced in him that severe disease of the stomach to deaden the pain of which he later took opium.

At last he was rescued by friends and sent home. His guardians agreed to allow him £100 a year if he studied at Oxford. He entered Worcester College in 1803. Living by himself, he made but one close friend at Oxford, a German who awoke his interest in German literature. At this time he began to read more solidly in English literature as well. Long an admirer of the Lake Poets, he now wrote to Wordsworth a letter of appreciation, to which he received a treasured cordial answer. This cemented his devotion to Wordsworth, an allegiance which was to have important consequences upon De Quincey's work. Another crucial experience of these Oxford days was a visit to London in 1804, during which he took his first dose of opium. In 1807 he came to know Coleridge, and, now being of age, De Quincey graciously managed to relieve the poet's financial distresses of the moment by an anonymous gift of £300. With the Coleridge family he visited the Wordsworths at Grasmere and spent two days there. Taken with his young admirer, Wordsworth suggested that De Quincey live in the cottage they were leaving. This he was only too happy to do. In 1809 he established himself there, and in 1816 he married the daughter of a neighboring farmer. He remained at Grasmere until he was thirty-six.

By 1813 his "appalling irritation ~~of the stomach" had made~~ him "a regular and confirmed (no longer an intermitting) opium-eater." Ever increasing the quantity, he was soon taking an unheard-of amount, with consequent physical and mental depression. Thereafter, though he never ceased to take opium, he learned to control the habit so that his mind would not suffer from an overdose. His fortune all spent, he had now to turn to writing for his livelihood. For the *London Magazine* he began the composition of *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821). Its instant success encouraged him to embark on his career as a writer for periodicals. Indeed, De Quincey's high place in English literature was achieved by his authorship of some one hundred and fifty magazine articles, miscellaneous in subject, and covering the fields of literature, philosophy, history, economics, and the purely imaginative. For four years he wrote for the *London Magazine* (publisher of "Elia") and Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*. He began, in 1826, to write for *Blackwood's Magazine*, published in Edinburgh. Spending much time in London, he lived chiefly in his books. His small circle of friends included Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hood. In 1830 he moved his family from Grasmere to Edinburgh, where he enjoyed the friendship of Carlyle. In Scotland he was beset by financial difficulties and was often embroiled in troubles with tradesmen, landlords, and publishers. Despite all these vexations, he continued to write and study. His room was usually to be found cluttered in a hopeless confusion of books and papers. When it was definitely futile to make any order out of them, he would rent other lodgings in which to work. As a result of this practice he once had, simultaneously, four different residences.

His wife died in 1837, and De Quincey later took a cottage at Lasswade, a few miles out of Edinburgh. The last ten years of his life were engaged in the preparation of a Collected Edition of his works, at the request of the publisher, James Hogg. Hogg had plenty of labor in discovering the location of De Quincey's manuscripts and in extricating them from the possession of irate landladies. He had his worries, too, in seeing the edition through the press because of De Quincey's insatiable desire to revise and perfect every line he had written. Luckily De Quincey managed to have finished the last volume just before his death, in 1859.

David Masson classifies De Quincey's copious output under three heads: (I) Descriptive, Biographical, and Historical (*Confessions;* the *Autobiography*; biographical sketches of *Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Lessing, Herder*; and numerous historical sketches like *The Caesars, The Revolt of the Tartars,* etc.); (II) Speculative, Didactic, and Critical (*Kant, Rhetoric, Style, Theory of Greek Tragedy,*

etc.); (III) Imaginative Writings and Prose Poetry (*Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts, Early Memorials of Grasmere, Joan of Arc, The Spanish Military Nun,* parts of *the Confessions, The English Mail-Coach* and *Suspiria de Profundis*). All these works exhibit De Quincey's passionate curiosity and love of investigation. He had little interest in conduct, but an unquenchable zest for amassing information and drawing fine distinctions.

In the realm of criticism De Quincey cannot be rated very high. With the exception of the profound poetic sympathy of the justly famous *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* and many illuminating flashes in his other pieces, his judgments too often lack universality; they seem the product of whim and suffer from his tendency to digress. He is unique, however, in his imaginative pieces, particularly *The Pleasures of Opium, The Pains of Opium* (both from the *Confessions*), *Suspiria de Profundis,* and *The English Mail-Coach*. These works excel in their imaginative brilliance, the record of dazzling visions produced by his use of opium. (But De Quincey was a dreamer of such visions long before he had ever taken the drug. He records his having had a dream of "terrific grandeur about a favorite nurse" when he was only two; in his seventh year, as he stood in the death-chamber of his sister, "a solemn wind began to blow," and he fell into a trance.) For these fantasies, De Quincey elaborated "a mode of impassioned prose" which partook of some of the best qualities of poetry—music, rhythm, and imaginative diction. In such pieces he admitted no word which a great poet could not have employed. The cadences and the luxurious movement of the prose stir us in precisely the manner in which poetry affects us. This "poetic prose," of which he was the nineteenth-century rediscoverer, greatly influenced Ruskin and Dickens later. Sonorous, lyrical, and melodious, as the idea requires, it is a style which, if sometimes too self-conscious, is superbly eloquent for the conveying of subtleties and overtones.

From *Suspiria de Profundis*[1]

Originally written for *Blackwood's Magazine,* the "Sighs from the Depths" was a series of three pieces in continuation of *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. The most celebrated is the third, *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow,* which, recounting De Quincey's dreams under the influence of opium, is a wonderful example of his poetic prose at its best.

Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow

Oftentimes at Oxford I saw Levana in my dreams. I knew her by her Roman symbols. Who is Levana? Reader, that do not pretend to have leisure for very much scholarship, you will not be angry with me for telling you. Levana was the Roman goddess that performed for the newborn infant the earliest office of ennobling kindness—typical by its mode, of that grandeur which belongs to man everywhere, and of that benignity in powers invisible, which even in Pagan worlds sometimes descends to sustain it. At the very moment of birth, just as the infant tasted for the first time the atmosphere of our troubled planet, it was laid on the ground. *That* might bear different interpretations. But immediately, lest so grand a creature

[1] sighs from the depths.

should grovel there for more than one instant, either the paternal hand, as proxy for the goddess Levana, or some near kinsman, as proxy for the father, raised it upright, bade it look erect as the king of all this world, and presented its forehead to the stars, saying, perhaps, in his heart—"Behold what is greater than yourselves!" This symbolic act represented the function of Levana. And that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare*, to raise aloft.

This is the explanation of Levana. And hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery. She, that would not suffer at his birth even a prefigurative or mimic degradation for her awful ward, far less could be supposed to suffer the real degradation attaching to the non-development of his powers. She therefore watches over human education. Now, the word *edŭco*, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallization of languages) from the word *edūco*, with the penultimate long. Whatsoever *edūces* or develops —*educates*. By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant—not the poor machinery that moves by spelling-books and grammars, but that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works for ever upon children—resting not day or night, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering for ever as they revolve.

If, then, these are the ministries by which Levana works, how profoundly must she reverence the agencies of grief! But you, reader, think—that children generally are not liable to grief such as mine. There are two senses in the word *generally*—the sense of Euclid[2] where it means *universally* (or in the whole extent of the *genus*), and a foolish sense of this world where it means *usually*. Now I am far from saying that children universally are capable of grief like mine. But there are more than you ever heard of, who die of grief in this island of ours. I will tell you a common case. The rules of Eton[3] require that a boy on the *Foundation* should be there twelve years: he is superannuated at eighteen, consequently he must come at six. Children torn away from mothers and sisters at that age not unfrequently die. I speak of what I know. The complaint is not entered by the registrar as grief; but *that* it is. Grief of that sort, and at that age, has killed more than ever have been counted amongst its martyrs.

Therefore it is that Levana often communes with the powers that shake man's heart: therefore it is that she dotes upon grief. "These ladies," said I softly to myself, on seeing the ministers with whom Levana was conversing, "these are the Sorrows; and they are three in number, as the *Graces* are three, who dress man's life with beauty; the *Parcæ* are three, who weave the dark arras of man's life in their mysterious loom always with colors sad in part, sometimes angry with tragic crimson and black; the *Furies* are three, who visit with retributions called from the other side of the grave offences that walk upon this; and once even the *Muses* were but three, who fit the harp, the trumpet, or the lute, to the great burdens of man's impassioned creations. These are the Sorrows, all three of whom I know." The last words I say *now*; but in Oxford I said—"one of whom I know, and the others too surely I *shall* know." For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark background of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters. These sisters—by what name shall we call them?

If I say simply—"The Sorrows," there will be a chance of mistaking the term; it might be understood of individual sorrow—separate cases of sorrow,—whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart; and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations, that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, *Our Ladies of Sorrow*. I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household; and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? Oh, no! Mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves is no voice nor sound—eternal silence reigns in *their* kingdoms. *They* spoke not as they talked with Levana. *They* whispered not. *They* sang not. Though oftentimes methought they *might* have sung; for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and

[2] famous Greek geometrician (c. 300 B.C.).
[3] Eton College.

timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven—by changes on earth—by pulses in secret rivers—heraldries painted on darkness—and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. *They* wheeled in mazes; *I* spelled the steps. *They* telegraphed from afar; *I* read the signals. *They* conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness *my* eye traced the plots. *Theirs* were the symbols,—*mine* are the words.

What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do? Let me describe their form, and their presence; if form it were that still fluctuated in its outline; or presence it were that for ever advanced to the front, or for ever receded amongst shades.

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, when a voice was heard of lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted.[4] She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents,[5] and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven.

Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds; oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This sister, the elder, it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sate all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the spring-time of the year, and whilst yet her own spring was budding, He recalled her to Himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over *her*; still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he wakens to a darkness that is *now* within a second and a deeper darkness. This *Mater Lachrymarum* also has been sitting all this winter of 1844-5 within the bedchamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter (not less pious) that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound. By the power of her keys it is that Our Lady of Tears glides a ghostly intruder into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to the Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honor with the title of "Madonna."

The second sister is called *Mater Suspiriorum*, Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops for ever; for ever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister, Madonna, is oftentimes stormy and frantic; raging in the highest against heaven; and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamors, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight. Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This sister is the visitor of the Pariah,[6] of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in Mediterranean galleys, of the English criminal in Norfolk Island,[7] blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far-off England, of the baffled penitent reverting his eye for ever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother,

[4] See *Jeremiah*, 31:15.

[5] For the slaughter of the innocents, see *Matthew*, 2:13-18. Herod hoped to kill the new-born Christ.

[6] outcast; the pariahs are low-caste Hindus in India shunned by the higher castes. The word has become generalized to mean any outcast.

[7] formerly a criminal colony in the South Pacific.

but for *him* a stepmother, as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against *him* sealed and sequestered;—every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections, which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients;—every nun defrauded of her unreturning May-time by wicked kinsmen, whom God will judge;—every captive in every dungeon;—all that are betrayed, and all that are rejected; outcasts by traditionary law, and children of *hereditary* disgrace—all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs. She also carries a key; but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem,[8] and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest ranks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world, carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads.

But the third sister, who is also the youngest —— Hush! whisper, whilst we talk of *her*! Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybele,[9] rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes rising so high, *might* be hidden by distance. But being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers—for noon of day or noon of night—for ebbing or for flowing tide—may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She also is the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. Madonna moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest sister moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with a tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And *her* name is *Mater Tenebrarum*—Our Lady of Darkness.

These were the *Semnai Theai*, or Sublime Goddesses—these were the *Eumenides*, or Gracious Ladies (so called by antiquity in shuddering propitiation)—of my Oxford dreams. Madonna spoke. She spoke by her mysterious hand. Touching my head, she beckoned to Our Lady of Sighs; and *what* she spoke, translated out of the signs which (except in dreams) no man reads, was this:

"Lo! here is he, whom in childhood I dedicated to my altars. This is he that once I made my darling. Him I led astray, him I beguiled, and from heaven I stole away his young heart to mine. Through me did he become idolatrous; and through me it was, by languishing desires, that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption. Him, this young idolater, I have seasoned for thee, dear gentle Sister of Sighs! Do thou take him now to *thy* heart, and season him for our dreadful sister. And thou"—turning to the *Mater Tenebrarum*, she said —"wicked sister, that temptest and hatest, do thou take him from *her*. See that thy sceptre lie heavy on his head. Suffer not woman and her tenderness to sit near him in his darkness. Banish the frailties of hope—wither the relentings of love—scorch the fountains of tears: curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace—so shall he see the things that ought *not* to be seen —sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again *before* he dies. And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had —to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit." (1845)

[8] literally, descendants of Shem, particularly the nomadic tribes of Arabia. The word here is applied to outcasts in general. See *Genesis*, 9:26-27.

[9] the Great Mother of the gods, who is represented with a turreted crown.

From *The English Mail-Coach*

The Vision of Sudden Death

This little paper, according to my original intention, formed part of the *Suspiria de Profundis*; from which, for a momentary purpose, I did not scruple to detach it, and to publish it apart, as sufficiently intelligible even when dislocated from its place in a larger whole. To my surprise, however, one or two critics, not carelessly in conversation, but deliberately in print, professed their inability to apprehend the meaning of the whole, or to follow the links of the connexion between its several parts. I am myself as little able to understand where the difficulty lies, or to detect any lurking obscurity, as these critics found themselves to unravel my logic. Possibly I may not be an indifferent and neutral judge in such a case. I will therefore sketch a brief abstract of the little paper according to my original design, and then leave the reader to judge how far this design is kept in sight through the actual execution.

Thirty-seven years ago, or rather more, accident made me, in the dead of night, and of a night memorably solemn, the solitary witness of an appalling scene, which threatened instant death in a shape the most terrific to two young people whom I had no means of assisting, except in so far as I was able to give them a most hurried warning of their danger; but even *that* not until they stood within the very shadow of the catastrophe, being divided from the most frightful of deaths by scarcely more, if more at all, than seventy seconds.

Such was the scene, such in its outline, from which the whole of this paper radiates as a natural expansion. This scene is circumstantially narrated in Section the Second, entitled *The Vision of Sudden Death*.

But a movement of horror, and of spontaneous recoil from this dreadful scene, naturally carried the whole of that scene, raised and idealized, into my dreams, and very soon into a rolling succession of dreams. The actual scene, as looked down upon from the box of the mail, was transformed into a dream, as tumultuous and changing as a musical fugue. This troubled dream is circumstantially reported in Section the Third, entitled *Dream-Fugue on the theme of Sudden Death*. What I had beheld from my seat upon the mail,—the scenical strife of action and passion, of anguish and fear, as I had there witnessed them moving in ghostly silence,—this duel between life and death narrowing itself to a point of such exquisite evanescence as the collision neared: all these elements of the scene blended, under the law of association, with the previous and permanent features of distinction investing the mail itself; which features at that time lay—1st, in velocity unprecedented, 2dly, in the power and beauty of the horses, 3dly, in the official connexion with the government of a great nation, and, 4thly, in the function, almost a consecrated function, of publishing and diffusing through the land the great political events, and especially the great battles, during a conflict of unparalleled grandeur. These honorary distinctions are all described circumstantially in the First or introductory Section (*The Glory of Motion*). The three first were distinctions maintained at all times; but the fourth and grandest belonged exclusively to the war with Napoleon; and this it was which most naturally introduced Waterloo into the dream. Waterloo, I understand, was the particular feature of the *Dream-Fugue* which my censors were least able to account for. Yet surely Waterloo, which, in common with every other great battle, it had been our special privilege to publish over all the land, most naturally entered the dream under the licence of our privilege. If not—if there be anything amiss—let the Dream be responsible. The Dream is a law to itself; and as well quarrel with a rainbow for showing, or for *not* showing, a secondary arch. So far as I know, every element in the shifting movements of the Dream derived itself either primarily from the incidents of the actual scene or from secondary features associated with the mail. For example, the cathedral aisle derived itself from the mimic combination of features which grouped themselves together at the point of approaching collision—viz. an arrow-like section of the road, six hundred yards long, under the solemn lights described, with lofty trees meeting overhead in arches. The guard's horn, again—a humble instrument in itself—was yet glorified as the organ of publication for so many great national events. And the incident of the Dying Trumpeter, who rises from a marble bas-relief, and carries a marble trumpet to his marble lips for the purpose of warning the female infant, was doubtless secretly suggested by my own imperfect effort to seize the guard's horn, and to blow the warning blast. But the Dream knows best; and the Dream, I say again, is the responsible party.—*De Quincey*.

What is to be taken as the predominant opinion of man, reflective and philosophic, upon SUDDEN DEATH? It is remarkable that, in different conditions of society, sudden death has been variously regarded as the consummation of an earthly career most fervently to be desired, or, again, as that consummation which is with most horror to be deprecated. Cæsar the Dictator, at his last dinner-party (*cœna*), on the very evening before his assassination, when the minutes of his earthly career were numbered, being asked what death, in *his* judgment, might be pronounced the most eligible, replied "that which should be most sudden." On the other hand, the divine Litany of our English Church, when breathing forth supplications, as if in some representative character, for the whole human race prostrate before God, places such a death in the very van of horrors: "From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from SUDDEN DEATH —*Good Lord, deliver us.*" Sudden death is here made to crown the climax in a grand ascent of calamities; it is ranked among the last of curses; and yet by the noblest of Romans it was ranked as the first of blessings. In that difference most readers will see little more than the essential difference between Christianity and Paganism. But this, on consideration, I doubt. The Christian Church may be right in its estimate of sudden death; and it is a natural feeling, though after all it may also be an infirm one, to wish for a quiet dismissal from life, as that which *seems* most reconcilable with meditation, with penitential retrospects, and with the humilities of farewell prayer. There does not, however, occur to me any direct scriptural warrant for this earnest petition of the English Litany, unless under a special construction of the word "sudden." It seems a petition indulged rather and conceded to human infirmity than exacted from human piety. It is not so much a doctrine built upon the eternities of the Christian system as a plausible opinion built upon special varieties of physical temperament. Let that, however, be as it may, two remarks suggest themselves as prudent restraints upon a doctrine which else *may* wander, and *has* wandered, into an uncharitable superstition. The first is this: that many people are likely to exaggerate the horror of a sudden death from the disposition to lay a false stress upon words or acts simply because by an accident they have become *final* words or acts. If a man dies, for instance, by some sudden death when he happens to be intoxicated, such a death is falsely regarded with peculiar horror; as though the intoxication were suddenly exalted into a blasphemy. But *that* is unphilosophic. The man was, or he was not, *habitually* a drunkard. If not, if his intoxication were a solitary accident, there can be no reason for allowing special emphasis to this act simply because through misfortune it became his final act. Nor, on the other hand, if it were no accident, but one of his *habitual* transgressions, will it be the more habitual or the more a transgression because some sudden calamity, surprising him, has caused this habitual transgression to be also a final one. Could the man have had any reason even dimly to foresee his own sudden death, there would have been a new feature in his act of intemperance—a feature of presumption and irreverence, as in one that, having known himself drawing near to the presence of God, should have suited his demeanor to an expectation so awful. But this is no part of the case supposed. And the only new element in the man's act is not any element of special immorality, but simply of special misfortune.

The other remark has reference to the meaning of the word *sudden*. Very possibly Cæsar and the Christian Church do not differ in the way supposed,—that is, do not differ by any difference of doctrine as between Pagan and Christian views of the moral temper appropriate to death; but perhaps they are contemplating different cases. Both contemplate a violent death, a βιαθανατος—death that is βιαιος, or, in other words, death that is brought about, not by internal and spontaneous change, but by active force having its origin from without. In this meaning the two authorities agree. Thus far they are in harmony. But the difference is that the Roman by the word "sudden" means *unlingering*, whereas the Christian Litany by "sudden death" means a death *without warning*, consequently without any available summons to religious preparation. The poor mutineer who kneels down to gather into his heart the bullets from twelve firelocks of his pitying comrades dies by a most sudden death in Cæsar's sense; one shock, one mighty spasm, one (possibly *not* one) groan, and all is over. But, in the sense of the Litany, the mutineer's death is far from sudden: his offence originally, his imprisonment, his trial, the interval between his sentence and its execution, having all furnished him with separate warnings of his fate—having all summoned him to meet it with solemn preparation.

Here at once, in this sharp verbal distinction,

we comprehend the faithful earnestness with which a holy Christian Church pleads on behalf of her poor departing children that God would vouchsafe to them the last great privilege and distinction possible on a death-bed, viz., the opportunity of untroubled preparation for facing this mighty trial. Sudden death, as a mere variety in the modes of dying where death in some shape is inevitable, proposes a question of choice which, equally in the Roman and the Christian sense, will be variously answered according to each man's variety of temperament. Meantime, one aspect of sudden death there is, one modification, upon which no doubt can arise, that of all martyrdoms it is the most agitating—viz., where it surprises a man under circumstances which offer (or which seem to offer) some hurrying, flying, inappreciably minute chance of evading it. Sudden as the danger which it affronts must be any effort by which such an evasion can be accomplished. Even *that*, even the sickening necessity for hurrying in extremity where all hurry seems destined to be vain,—even that anguish is liable to a hideous exasperation in one particular case: viz., where the appeal is made not exclusively to the instinct of self-preservation, but to the conscience, on behalf of some other life besides your own, accidentally thrown upon *your* protection. To fail, to collapse in a service merely your own, might seem comparatively venial; though, in fact, it is far from venial. But to fail in a case where Providence has suddenly thrown into your hands the final interests of another,—a fellow-creature shuddering between the gates of life and death: this, to a man of apprehensive conscience, would mingle the misery of an atrocious criminality with the misery of a bloody calamity. You are called upon, by the case supposed, possibly to die, but to die at the very moment when, by any even partial failure or effeminate collapse of your energies, you will be self-denounced as a murderer. You had but the twinkling of an eye for your effort, and that effort might have been unavailing; but to have risen to the level of such an effort would have rescued you, though not from dying, yet from dying as a traitor to your final and farewell duty.

The situation here contemplated exposes a dreadful ulcer, lurking far down in the depths of human nature. It is not that men generally are summoned to face such awful trials. But potentially, and in shadowy outline, such a trial is moving subterraneously in perhaps all men's natures. Upon the secret mirror of our dreams such a trial is darkly projected, perhaps, to every one of us. That dream, so familiar to childhood, of meeting a lion, and, through languishing prostration in hope and the energies of hope, that constant sequel of lying down before the lion publishes the secret frailty of human nature—reveals its deep-seated falsehood to itself—records its abysmal treachery. Perhaps not one of us escapes that dream; perhaps, as by some sorrowful doom of man, that dream repeats for every one of us, through every generation, the original temptation in Eden. Every one of us, in this dream, has a bait offered to the infirm places of his own individual will; once again a snare is presented for tempting him into captivity to a luxury of ruin; once again, as in aboriginal Paradise, the man falls by his own choice; again, by infinite iteration, the ancient earth groans to Heaven, through her secret caves, over the weakness of her child. "Nature, from her seat, sighing through all her works," again "gives signs of woe that all is lost"; and again the counter-sigh is repeated to the sorrowing heavens for the endless rebellion against God. It is not without probability that in the world of dreams every one of us ratifies for himself the original transgression. In dreams, perhaps under some secret conflict of the midnight sleeper, lighted up to the consciousness at the time, but darkened to the memory as soon as all is finished, each several child of our mysterious race completes for himself the treason of the aboriginal fall.

The incident, so memorable in itself by its features of horror, and so scenical by its grouping for the eye, which furnished the text for this reverie upon *Sudden Death* occurred to myself in the dead of night, as a solitary spectator, when seated on the box of the Manchester and Glasgow mail, in the second or third summer after Waterloo.[1] I find it necessary to relate the circumstances, because they are such as could not have occurred unless under a singular combination of accidents. In those days, the oblique and lateral communications with many rural post-offices were so arranged, either through necessity or through defect of system, as to make it requisite for the main north-western mail (*i.e.*, the *down* mail) on reaching Manchester to halt for a number of hours; how many, I do not remember; six or seven, I think; but the result was that, in the ordinary course, the mail recommenced its journey northwards about midnight. Wearied with the long detention at a gloomy hotel, I walked out about eleven o'clock at night for the sake of fresh air meaning to fall in with the

[1] which was fought in June, 1815.

mail and resume my seat at the post-office. The night, however, being yet dark, as the moon had scarcely risen, and the streets being at that hour empty, so as to offer no opportunities for asking the road, I lost my way, and did not reach the post-office until it was considerably past midnight; but, to my great relief (as it was important for me to be in Westmoreland by the morning), I saw in the huge saucer eyes of the mail, blazing through the gloom, an evidence that my chance was not yet lost. Past the time it was; but, by some rare accident, the mail was not even yet ready to start. I ascended to my seat on the box, where my cloak was still lying as it had lain at the Bridgewater Arms. I had left it there in imitation of a nautical discoverer, who leaves a bit of bunting on the shore of his discovery, by way of warning off the ground the whole human race, and notifying to the Christian and the heathen worlds, with his best compliments, that he has hoisted his pocket-handkerchief once and for ever upon that virgin soil: thenceforward claiming the *jus dominii*[2] to the top of the atmosphere above it, and also the right of driving shafts to the centre of the earth below it; so that all people found after this warning either aloft in upper chambers of the atmosphere, or groping in subterraneous shafts, or squatting audaciously on the surface of the soil, will be treated as trespassers—kicked, that is to say, or decapitated, as circumstances may suggest, by their very faithful servant, the owner of the said pocket-handkerchief. In the present case, it is probable that my cloak might not have been respected, and the *jus gentium*[3] might have been cruelly violated in my person—for, in the dark, people commit deeds of darkness, gas being a great ally of morality; but it so happened that on this night there was no other outside passenger; and thus the crime, which else was but too probable, missed fire for want of a criminal.

Having mounted the box, I took a small quantity of laudanum,[4] having already travelled two hundred and fifty miles—viz, from a point seventy miles beyond London. In the taking of laudanum there was nothing extraordinary. But by accident it drew upon me the special attention of my assessor on the box, the coachman. And in *that* also there was nothing extraordinary. But by accident, and with great delight, it drew my own attention to the fact that this coachman was a monster in point of bulk, and that he had but one eye. In fact, he had been foretold by Virgil as

"Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum."[5]

He answered to the conditions in every one of the items:—1, a monster he was; 2, dreadful; 3, shapeless; 4, huge; 5, who had lost an eye. But why should *that* delight me? Had he been one of the Calendars in the *Arabian Nights*, and had paid down his eye as the price of his criminal curiosity, what right had *I* to exult in his misfortune? I did *not* exult; I delighted in no man's punishment, though it were even merited. But these personal distinctions (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) identified in an instant an old friend of mine whom I had known in the south for some years as the most masterly of mail-coachmen. He was the man in all Europe that could (if *any* could) have driven six-in-hand full gallop over *Al Sirat*—that dreadful bridge of Mahomet, with no side battlements, and of *extra* room not enough for a razor's edge—leading right across the bottomless gulf. Under this eminent man, whom in Greek I cognominated Cyclops *Diphrélates* (Cyclops the Charioteer), I, and others known to me, studied the diphrelatic art. Excuse, reader, a word too elegant to be pedantic. As a pupil, though I paid extra fees, it is to be lamented that I did not stand high in his esteem. It showed his dogged honesty (though, observe, not his discernment) that he could not see my merits. Let us excuse his absurdity in this particular by remembering his want of an eye. Doubtless *that* made him blind to my merits. In the art of conversation, however, he admitted that I had the whip-hand of him. On the present occasion great joy was at our meeting. But what was Cyclops doing here? Had the medical men recommended northern air, or how? I collected, from such explanations as he volunteered, that he had an interest at stake in some suit-at-law now pending at Lancaster; so that probably he had got himself transferred to this station for the purpose of connecting with his professional pursuits an instant readiness for the calls of his lawsuit.

Meantime, what are we stopping for? Surely we have now waited long enough. Oh, this procrastinating mail, and this procrastinating post-office! Can't they take a lesson upon that subject from *me*? Some people have called *me* procrastinating. Yet you are witness, reader, that I was here

[2] the right of dominion. [3] law of nations

[4] For an account of De Quincey's taking of laudanum, see his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*

[5] A dreadful monster, shapeless, huge, and bereft of an eye

kept waiting for the post-office. Will the post-office lay its hand on its heart, in its moments of sobriety, and assert that ever it waited for me? What are they about? The guard tells me that there is a large extra accumulation of foreign mails this night, owing to irregularities caused by war, by wind, by weather, in the packet service, which as yet does not benefit at all by steam. For an *extra* hour, it seems, the post-office has been engaged in threshing out the pure wheaten correspondence of Glasgow, and winnowing it from the chaff of all baser intermediate towns. But at last all is finished. Sound your horn, guard! Manchester, good-bye! we've lost an hour by your criminal conduct at the post-office: which, however, though I do not mean to part with a serviceable ground of complaint, and one which really *is* such for the horses, to me secretly is an advantage, since it compels us to look sharply for this lost hour amongst the next eight or nine, and to recover it (if we can) at the rate of one mile extra per hour. Off we are at last, and at eleven miles an hour; and for the moment I detect no changes in the energy or in the skill of Cyclops.

From Manchester to Kendal, which virtually (though not in law) is the capital of Westmoreland, there were at this time seven stages of eleven miles each. The first five of these, counting from Manchester, terminate in Lancaster; which is therefore fifty-five miles north of Manchester, and the same distance exactly from Liverpool. The first three stages terminate in Preston (called, by way of distinction from other towns of that name, *Proud* Preston); at which place it is that the separate roads from Liverpool and from Manchester to the North become confluent.[6] Within these first three stages lay the foundation, the progress, and termination of our night's adventure. During the first stage, I found out that Cyclops was mortal: he was liable to the shocking affection of sleep—a thing which previously I had never suspected. If a man indulges in the vicious habit of sleeping, all the skill in aurigation of Apollo himself, with the horses of Aurora to execute his notions, avails him nothing. "Oh, Cyclops!" I exclaimed, "thou art mortal. My friend, thou snorest." Through the first eleven miles, however, this infirmity—which I grieve to say that he shared with the whole Pagan Pantheon—betrayed itself only by brief snatches. On waking up, he made an apology for himself which, instead of mending matters, laid open a gloomy vista of coming disasters. The summer assizes, he reminded me, were now going on at Lancaster: in consequence of which for three nights and three days he had not lain down on a bed. During the day he was waiting for his own summons as a witness on the trial in which he was interested, or else, lest he should be missing at the critical moment, was drinking with the other witnesses under the pastoral surveillance of the attorneys. During the night, or that part of it which at sea would form the middle watch, he was driving. This explanation certainly accounted for his drowsiness, but in a way which made it much more alarming; since now, after several days' resistance to this infirmity, at length he was steadily giving way. Throughout the second stage he grew more and more drowsy. In the second mile of the third stage he surrendered himself finally and without a struggle to his perilous temptation. All his past resistance had but deepened the weight of this final oppression. Seven atmospheres of sleep rested upon him; and, to consummate the case, our worthy guard, after singing "Love amongst the Roses" for perhaps thirty times, without invitation and without applause, had in revenge moodily resigned himself to slumber—not so deep, doubtless, as the coachman's, but deep enough for mischief. And thus at last, about ten miles from Preston, it came about that I found myself left in charge of his Majesty's London and Glasgow mail, then running at the least twelve miles an hour.

What made this negligence less criminal than else it must have been thought was the condition of the roads at night during the assizes. At that time, all the law business of populous Liverpool, and also of populous Manchester, with its vast cincture of populous rural districts, was called up by ancient usage to the tribunal of Lilliputian Lancaster.[7] To break up this old traditional usage required, 1, a conflict with powerful established interests, 2, a large system of new arrangements, and 3, a new parliamentary statute. But as yet this change was merely in contemplation. As things were at present, twice in the year so vast a body of business rolled northwards from the southern quarter of the county that for a fortnight at least it occupied the severe exertions of two judges in

[6] Suppose a capital Y (the Pythagorean letter): Lancaster is at the foot of this letter; Liverpool at the top of the *right* branch; Manchester at the top of the *left*; Proud Preston at the centre, where the two branches unite. It is thirty-three miles along either of the two branches; it is twenty-two miles along the stem,—viz., from Preston in the middle to Lancaster at the root. There's a lesson in geography for the reader!—De Quincey.

[7] tiny; for the Lilliputians, see I, p 851

its despatch. The consequence of this was that every horse available for such a service, along the whole line of road, was exhausted in carrying down the multitudes of people who were parties to the different suits. By sunset, therefore, it usually happened that, through utter exhaustion amongst men and horses, the road sank into profound silence. Except the exhaustion in the vast adjacent county of York from a contested election, no such silence succeeding to no such fiery uproar was ever witnessed in England.

On this occasion the usual silence and solitude prevailed along the road. Not a hoof nor a wheel was to be heard. And, to strengthen this false luxurious confidence in the noiseless roads, it happened also that the night was one of peculiar solemnity and peace. For my own part, though slightly alive to the possibilities of peril, I had so far yielded to the influence of the mighty calm as to sink into a profound reverie. The month was August; in the middle of which lay my own birthday—a festival to every thoughtful man suggesting solemn and often sigh-born thoughts. The county was my own native county—upon which, in its southern section, more than upon any equal area known to man past or present, had descended the original curse of labor in its heaviest form, not mastering the bodies only of men, as of slaves, or criminals in mines, but working through the fiery will. Upon no equal space of earth was, or ever had been, the same energy of human power put forth daily. At this particular season also of the assizes, that dreadful hurricane of flight and pursuit, as it might have seemed to a stranger, which swept to and from Lancaster all day long, hunting the county up and down, and regularly subsiding back into silence about sunset, could not fail (when united with this permanent distinction of Lancashire as the very metropolis and citadel of labor) to point the thoughts pathetically upon that countervision of rest, of saintly repose from strife and sorrow, towards which, as their secret haven, the profounder aspirations of man's heart are in solitude continually travelling. Obliquely upon our left we were nearing the sea; which also must, under the present circumstances, be repeating the general state of halcyon repose. The sea, the atmosphere, the light, bore each an orchestral part in this universal lull. Moonlight and the first timid tremblings of the dawn were by this time blending; and the blendings were brought into a still more exquisite state of unity by a slight silvery mist, motionless, and dreamy, that covered the woods and fields, but with a veil of equable transparency. Except the feet of our own horses,—which, running on a sandy margin of the road, made but little disturbance,—there was no sound abroad. In the clouds and on the earth prevailed the same majestic peace; and, in spite of all that the villain of a schoolmaster has done for the ruin of our sublimer thoughts, which are the thoughts of our infancy, we still believe in no such nonsense as a limited atmosphere. Whatever we may swear with our false feigning lips, in our faithful hearts we still believe, and must forever believe, in fields of air traversing the total gulf between earth and the central heavens. Still, in the confidence of children that tread without fear *every* chamber in their father's house, and to whom no door is closed, we, in that Sabbatic vision which sometimes is revealed for an hour upon nights like this, ascend with easy steps from the sorrow-stricken fields of earth upwards to the sandals of God.

Suddenly, from thoughts like these I was awakened to a sullen sound, as of some motion on the distant road. It stole upon the air for a moment; I listened in awe; but then it died away. Once roused, however, I could not but observe with alarm the quickened motion of our horses. Ten years' experience had made my eye learned in the valuing of motion; and I saw that we were now running thirteen miles an hour. I pretend to no presence of mind. On the contrary, my fear is that I am miserably and shamefully deficient in that quality as regards action. The palsy of doubt and distraction hangs like some guilty weight of dark unfathomed remembrances upon my energies when the signal is flying for *action*. But, on the other hand, this accursed gift I have, as regards *thought*, that in the first step towards the possibility of a misfortune I see its total evolution; in the radix of the series I see too certainly and too instantly its entire expansion; in the first syllable of the dreadful sentence I read already the last. It was not that I feared for ourselves. *Us* our bulk and impetus charmed against peril in any collision. And I had ridden through too many hundreds of perils that were frightful to approach, that were matter of laughter to look back upon, the first face of which was horror, the parting face a jest—for any anxiety to rest upon *our* interests. The mail was not built, I felt assured, nor bespoke, that could betray *me* who trusted to its protection. But any carriage that we could meet would be frail and light in comparison of ourselves. And I remarked this ominous accident of our situation,—we were

on the wrong side of the road. But then, it may be said, the other party, if other there was, might also be on the wrong side; and two wrongs might make a right. *That* was not likely. The same motive which had drawn *us* to the right-hand side of the road—viz., the luxury of the soft beaten sand as contrasted with the paved centre—would prove attractive to others. The two adverse carriages would therefore, to a certainty, be travelling on the same side; and from this side, as not being ours in law, the crossing over to the other would, of course, be looked for from *us*.[8] Our lamps, still lighted, would give the impression of vigilance on our part. And every creature that met us would rely upon *us* for quartering. All this, and if the separate links of the anticipation had been a thousand times more, I saw, not discursively, or by effort, or by succession, but by one flash of horrid simultaneous intuition.

Under this steady though rapid anticipation of the evil which *might* be gathering ahead, ah! what a sullen mystery of fear, what a sigh of woe, was that which stole upon the air, as again the far-off sound of a wheel was heard! A whisper it was—a whisper from, perhaps, four miles off—secretly announcing a ruin that, being foreseen, was not the less inevitable; that, being known, was not therefore healed. What could be done—who was it that could do it—to check the storm-flight of these maniacal horses? Could I not seize the reins from the grasp of the slumbering coachman? You, reader, think that it would have been in *your* power to do so. And I quarrel not with your estimate of yourself. But, from the way in which the coachman's hand was vised between his upper and lower thigh, this was impossible. Easy was it? See, then, that bronze equestrian statue. The cruel rider has kept the bit in his horse's mouth for two centuries. Unbridle him for a minute, if you please, and wash his mouth with water. Easy was it? Unhorse me, then, that imperial rider; knock me those marble feet from those marble stirrups of Charlemagne.

The sounds ahead strengthened, and were now too clearly the sounds of wheels. Who and what could it be? Was it industry in a taxed cart? Was it youthful gaiety in a gig? Was it sorrow that loitered, or joy that raced? For as yet the snatches of sound were too intermitting, from distance, to decipher the character of the motion. Whoever were the travellers, something must be done to warn them. Upon the other party rests the active responsibility, but upon *us*—and, woe is me! that *us* was reduced to my frail opium-shattered self—rests the responsibility of warning. Yet, how should this be accomplished? Might I not sound the guard's horn? Already, on the first thought, I was making my way over the roof of the guard's seat. But this, from the accident which I have mentioned, of the foreign mails being piled upon the roof, was a difficult and even dangerous attempt to one cramped by nearly three hundred miles of outside travelling. And, fortunately, before I had lost much time in the attempt, our frantic horses swept round an angle of the road which opened upon us that final stage where the collision must be accomplished and the catastrophe sealed. All was apparently finished. The court was sitting; the case was heard; the judge had finished; and only the verdict was yet in arrear.

Before us lay an avenue straight as an arrow, six hundred yards, perhaps, in length; and the umbrageous trees, which rose in a regular line from either side, meeting high overhead, gave to it the character of a cathedral aisle. These trees lent a deeper solemnity to the early light; but there was still light enough to perceive, at the further end of this Gothic aisle, a frail reedy gig, in which were seated a young man, and by his side a young lady. Ah, young sir! what are you about? If it is requisite that you should whisper your communications to this young lady—though really I see nobody, at an hour and on a road so solitary, likely to overhear you—is it therefore requisite that you should carry your lips forward to hers? The little carriage is creeping on at one mile an hour; and the parties within it, being thus tenderly engaged, are naturally bending down their heads. Between them and eternity, to all human calculation, there is but a minute and a half. Oh heavens! what is it that I shall do? Speaking or acting, what help can I offer? Strange it is, and to a mere auditor of the tale might seem laughable, that I should need a suggestion from the *Iliad* to prompt the sole resource that remained. Yet so it was. Suddenly I remembered the shout of Achilles, and its effect. But could I pretend to shout like the son of Peleus, aided by Pallas? No: but then I needed not the shout that should alarm all Asia militant; such a shout would suffice as might carry terror into the

[8] "It is true that, according to the law of the case as established by legal precedents, all carriages were required to give way before royal equipages, and therefore before the mail as one of them. But this only increased the danger, as being a regulation very imperfectly made known, very unequally enforced, and therefore often embarrassing the movements on both sides."—De Quincey.

hearts of two thoughtless young people and one gig-horse." I shouted—and the young man heard me not. A second time I shouted—and now he heard me, for now he raised his head.

Here, then, all had been done that, by me, *could* be done; more on *my* part was not possible. Mine had been the first step; the second was for the young man; the third was for God. If, said I, this stranger is a brave man, and if indeed he loves the young girl at his side—or, loving her not, if he feels the obligation, pressing upon every man worthy to be called a man, of doing his utmost for a woman confided to his protection—he will at least make some effort to save her. If *that* fails, he will not perish the more, or by a death more cruel, for having made it; and he will die as a brave man should, with his face to the danger, and with his arm about the woman that he sought in vain to save. But, if he makes no effort,—shrinking without a struggle from his duty,—he himself will not the less certainly perish for this baseness of poltroonery. He will die no less: and why not? Wherefore should we grieve that there is one craven less in the world? No; *let* him perish, without a pitying thought of ours wasted upon him; and, in that case, all our grief will be reserved for the fate of the helpless girl who now, upon the least shadow of failure in *him*, must by the fiercest of translations—must without time for a prayer—must within seventy seconds—stand before the judgment-seat of God.

But craven he was not: sudden had been the call upon him, and sudden was his answer to the call. He saw, he heard, he comprehended, the ruin that was coming down: already its gloomy shadow darkened above him; and already he was measuring his strength to deal with it. Ah! what a vulgar thing does courage seem when we see nations buying it and selling it for a shilling a-day: ah! what a sublime thing does courage seem when some fearful summons on the great deeps of life carries a man, as if running before a hurricane, up to the giddy crest of some tumultuous crisis from which lie two courses, and a voice says to him audibly, "One way lies hope; take the other, and mourn for ever!" How grand a triumph if, even then, amidst the raving of all around him, and the frenzy of the danger, the man is able to confront his situation—is able to retire for a moment into solitude with God, and to seek his counsel from *Him*!

For seven seconds, it might be, of his seventy, the stranger settled his countenance steadfastly upon us, as if to search and value every element in the conflict before him. For five seconds more of his seventy he sat immovably, like one that mused on some great purpose. For five more, perhaps, he sat with eyes upraised, like one that prayed in sorrow, under some extremity of doubt, for light that should guide him to the better choice. Then suddenly he rose; stood upright; and, by a powerful strain upon the reins, raising his horse's fore-feet from the ground, he slewed him round on the pivot of his hind-legs, so as to plant the little equipage in a position nearly at right angles to ours. Thus far his condition was not improved; except as a first step had been taken towards the possibility of a second. If no more were done, nothing was done; for the carriage still occupied the very centre of our path, though in an altered direction. Yet even now it may not be too late: fifteen of the seventy seconds may still be unexhausted; and one almighty bound may avail to clear the ground. Hurry, then, hurry! for the flying moments—*they* hurry. Oh, hurry, hurry, my brave young man! for the cruel hoofs of our horses—*they* also hurry! Fast are the flying moments, faster are the hoofs of our horses. But fear not for *him*, if human energy can suffice; faithful was he that drove to his terrific duty; faithful was the horse to *his* command. One blow, one impulse given with voice and hand, by the stranger, one rush from the horse, one bound as if in the act of rising to a fence, landed the docile creature's fore-feet upon the crown or arching centre of the road. The larger half of the little equipage had then cleared our overtowering shadow: *that* was evident even to my own agitated sight. But it mattered little that one wreck should float off in safety if upon the wreck that perished were embarked the human freightage. The rear part of the carriage—was *that* certainly beyond the line of absolute ruin? What power could answer the question? Glance of eye, thought of man, wing of angel, which of these had speed enough to sweep between the question and the answer, and divide the one from the other? Light does not tread upon the steps of light more indivisibly than did our all-conquering arrival upon the escaping efforts of the gig. *That* must the young man have felt too plainly. His back was now turned to us; not by sight could he any longer communicate with the peril; but, by the dreadful rattle of our harness, too truly had his ear been instructed that all was finished as regarded any effort of *his*. Already in resignation he had rested from his struggle; and perhaps in his heart

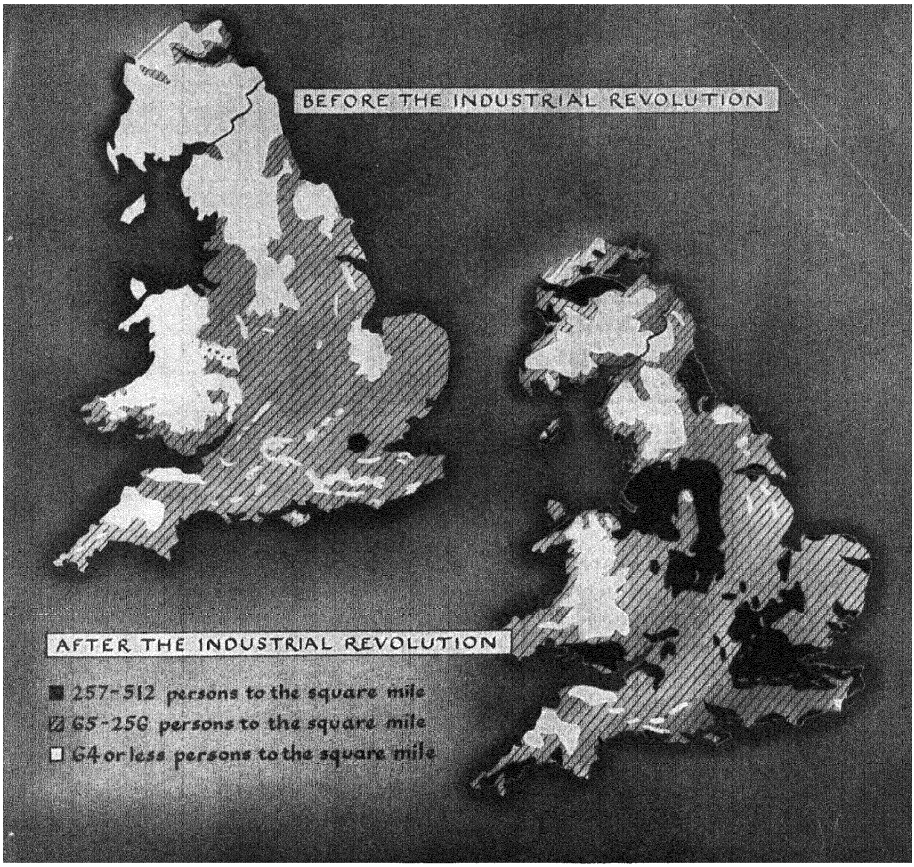
he was whispering, "Father, which are in heaven, do Thou finish above what I on earth have attempted." Faster than ever millrace we ran past them in our inexorable flight. Oh, raving of hurricanes that must have sounded in their young ears at the moment of our transit! Even in that moment the thunder of collision spoke aloud. Either with the swinglebar, or with the haunch of our near leader, we had struck the off-wheel of the little gig; which stood rather obliquely, and not quite so far advanced as to be accurately parallel with the near-wheel. The blow, from the fury of our passage, resounded terrifically. I rose in horror, to gaze upon the ruins we might have caused. From my elevated station I looked down, and looked back upon the scene; which in a moment told its own tale, and wrote all its records on my heart for ever.

Here was the map of the passion that now had finished. The horse was planted immovably, with his fore-feet upon the paved crest of the central road. He of the whole party might be supposed untouched by the passion of death. The little cany carriage—partly, perhaps, from the violent torsion of the wheels in its recent movement, partly from the thundering blow we had given to it—as if it sympathized with human horror, was all alive with tremblings and shiverings. The young man trembled not, nor shivered. He sat like a rock. But *his* was the steadiness of agitation frozen into rest by horror. As yet he dared not to look round; for he knew that, if anything remained to do, by him it could no longer be done. And as yet he knew not for certain if their safety were accomplished. But the lady——

But the lady——! Oh, heavens! will that spectacle ever depart from my dreams, as she rose and sank upon her seat, sank and rose, threw up her arms wildly to heaven, clutched at some visionary object in the air, fainting, praying, raving, despairing? Figure to yourself, reader, the elements of the case; suffer me to recall before your mind the circumstances of that unparalleled situation. From the silence and deep peace of this saintly summer night—from the pathetic blending of this sweet moonlight, dawnlight, dreamlight—from the manly tenderness of this flattering, whispering, murmuring love—suddenly as from the woods and fields—suddenly as from the chambers of the air opening in revelation—suddenly as from the ground yawning at her feet, leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death the crowned phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors, and the tiger roar of his voice.

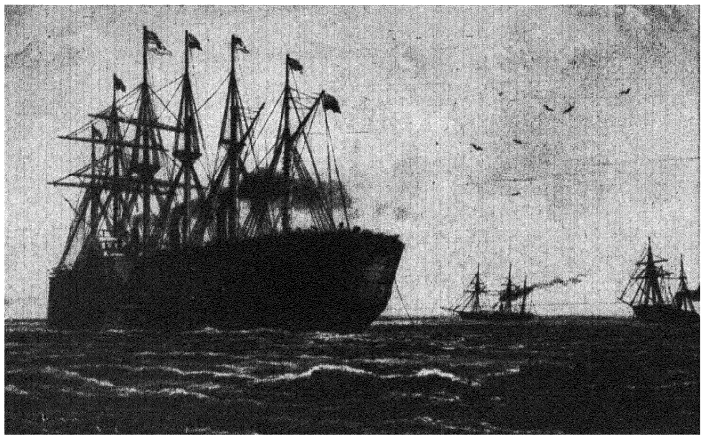
The moments were numbered; the strife was finished; the vision was closed. In the twinkling of an eye, our flying horses had carried us to the termination of the umbrageous aisle; at the right angles we wheeled into our former direction; the turn of the road carried the scene out of my eyes in an instant, and swept it into my dreams for ever.

(1849)



THE VICTORIAN AGE

(1832-1880)

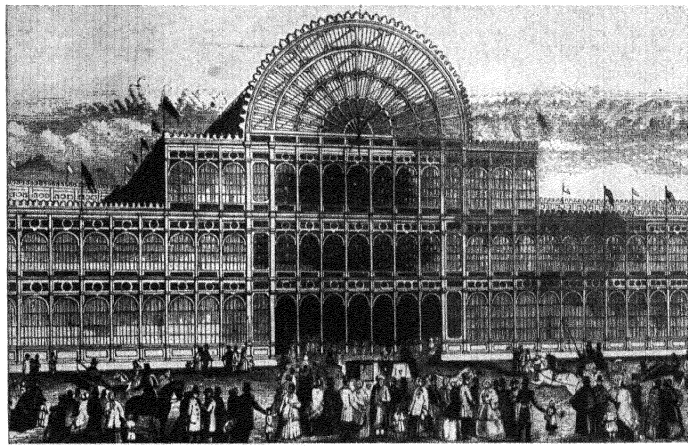


The steamship Great Eastern, *bound for the United States, July, 23, 1865. Equipped with both paddle wheels and a propeller as well as 6,000 yards of sail, the 19,000-ton* Great Eastern *was a spectacular failure commercially. She eventually helped lay the Atlantic cable.*

QUEEN VICTORIA sat on the throne of England from 1837 to 1901, the longest reign of any English sovereign. Hers has proved a convenient name by which to identify two thirds of the crowded nineteenth century, but otherwise her contribution to the life and art of her times was small. In any event, it was too late for a British monarch to have much direct influence on the swarming millions of the Empire in its period of greatest expansion. The queen's virtues were personal and domestic. "I will be good," she had said upon succeeding her rather foolish uncle, William IV—and good she was, but hardly clever. To the generation that followed her Victoria became a symbol of complacent respectability and mediocre taste, more like Queen Anne than like the brilliant Elizabeth.

The prodigious events of Queen Victoria's reign flowed unheeded round her dumpy figure. Domestic and foreign policies were handled by noted ministers: Melbourne, Peele, Palmerston, Disraeli, Gladstone, Salisbury. The triple forces of science, industrialism, and rising democracy altered the living habits of men more profoundly than in any previous period of England's history. A host of reformers, writers, artists, inventors, businessmen, and soldiers labored with such intensity and left so many records that the historian of the times may be overwhelmed by the volume of material. "The history of the Victorian Age will never be written," said one such student, Lytton Strachey. "We know too much about it."

So complex and long an era, therefore, demands to be divided into



The Crystal Palace. This monument to the execrable taste of Victorian England was built in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851. Made almost entirely of iron and glass, it measured 1,608 by 384 feet at its base. It was later moved to Sydenham, where it dominated the view for miles around London.

smaller units, if only to meet the limitations of the human mind. Most literary historians see in the final twenty years of Victoria's reign a shift in the temper of the age. Hence in this chapter we shall consider only those writers whose major work falls into the half century between the Reform Bill of 1832 and 1880, postponing the "later Victorians" to the next chapter.

We have pointed out (see pp. 113-144) how many of the best Romantics stressed the individual concerns of man. Political and social reform had almost ceased in England during the generation of the Napoleonic Wars. But in the 1830's the current moved forward once more as writers and political thinkers began to confront the forces unleashed by the industrial revolution. Victorian writers exhibited a social awareness unusual in earlier epochs. Many of them devoted themselves entirely to social problems. A few turned their eyes away, but nearly all of them must be understood in terms of the omnipresent social stimulus that inspired or influenced their literary composition.

Although it is impossible to name even the major reformers of the age, we must allude to one group, often called a "school," under whose guidance most of the great reforms of the first three quarters of the century progressed: the Utilitarians. Utilitarianism arose in the eighteenth century, first as an ethical doctrine that conduct is morally good in so far as it makes for the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. The political implications of Utilitarianism were developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832),

an eccentric philanthropist who was held in high repute everywhere except in the England of his own day. Bentham was a versatile reformer, attacking abuses in English law, government, language, political economy, prison architecture, and education. In 1824 he founded the *Westminster Review,* an organ of tremendous influence in spreading his views and those of his disciples.

Bentham's most active associate, James Mill (1773-1836), passed the leadership of the group to his son, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), sometimes called "the saint of English liberalism." The younger Mill was keenly interested in freedom: "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right." This is the very apotheosis of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*—or, as we have come to call it, "rugged individualism."

Political Reforms

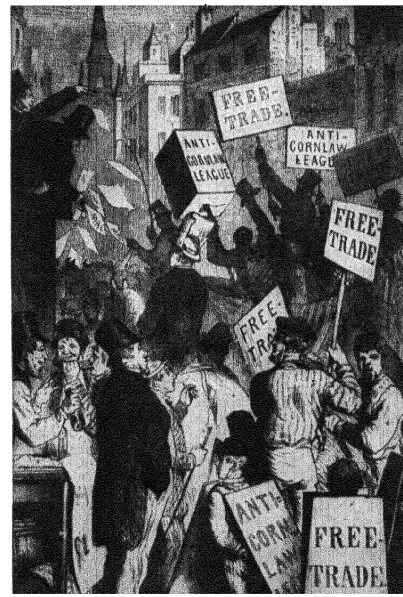
Under the proddings of Bentham and his followers, the Whigs in 1832 enacted the first Reform Bill, giving direct political power to the middle class, which had long exercised it economically. For the first time since the Tudors, England was re-districted for Parliamentary representation. Boroughs having fewer than 2000 inhabitants were wiped out; the new cities were given members; and the franchise was permitted to all men who paid an annual rental of ten pounds or had similar property qualifications. Middle-class suffrage thus became the basis of parliamentary activity and, after a pause in which they dreaded a revolution that did not occur, the merchants and industrialists reposed comfortably in the prospect of undisputed domination of the country. The old names of "Whig" and "Tory" gave place to "Liberal" and "Conservative"—parties that shared in the passage of further notable political reforms during the rest of the century. Utilitarians found themselves largely in the Liberal camp, whereas the Tories showed more tenderness for the old, aristocratic forms, which even in our own time have sentimental appeal for Englishmen.

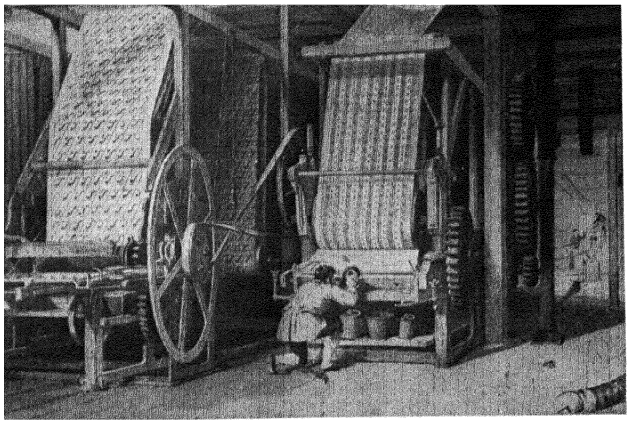
In particular the Liberals set themselves the task of effecting in the political domain Adam Smith's economic principle of competitive individualism and of striking legal shackles from various minorities. The Catholic Eman-

cipation Act had been passed (1829); slavery was abolished in 1833; the repeal of the Corn Laws (1846) made free trade a national policy; Jews were made eligible for municipal offices (1845) and later for Parliamentary membership (1858); the suppressed Roman Catholic hierarchy was restored (1850); the franchise was extended to the urban working class (1867); the Irish (Anglican) Church was disestablished (1869); provisions were made for elementary education (1870); and voting by ballot was established (1872). The chief political failure of the century in political reform lay in Ireland, where savage repression alternated with abortive attempts to placate the Irish nation. Starvation drove many Irish abroad in the 1840's; unhappy religious quarrels festered between the Protestant north and the Catholic south; the problem of Ireland wrecked successive ministries toward the end of Victoria's reign.

Imperialism

Political reforms, passed by the Liberals and Conservatives alike, helped to release vast energies in the middle class. This class increased its wealth, its power, its mechanical contrivances, its material comforts, and its market. Controlling the seas since the downfall of the French navy at Trafalgar, the British appropriated new territories around the globe and protected their already enormous gains. English naval mastery of the Mediterranean was affirmed by the Treaty of Paris (1856), by which Russian warships were barred from the Black Sea. The abortive Mutiny of 1857 in India served only to increase British administrative power. In 1875 Disraeli purchased control of the Suez Canal; in the next year Victoria was declared Empress of India. The partition of Africa proceeded apace, Britain acquiring dominance over Egypt and the Sudan and establishing a foothold in South Africa. In 1867 Canada united to become a dominion with an area larger than many of the great empires of history. Australia, claimed for England by Captain James Cook in 1770, was gradually explored. Transports of convicts from the homeland virtually ceased in 1839, but a gold rush similar in proportions to that of California brought many





The steam-powered cotton-printing machine, first used in 1852, was but one of the many substitutions of power machinery for handwork in the production of textiles in the Victorian age.

more Europeans in 1851. By 1861 a hundred thousand white settlers had established themselves in the neighboring islands of New Zealand.

The impact upon English literature of this vast expansion of territory was twofold. Throughout Victoria's reign an articulate group of "little Englanders" regarded it with disfavor; for instance, the free-trader John Bright, at the time of the Mutiny, exclaimed: "It will be a happy day when England has not an acre of territory in Continental Asia"; and in the last speech of his life he denounced imperial federation as a "dream and an absurdity." A majority of the Victorians, however, found imperialism to their taste. It was proof of their moral worth. It assured them of their superiority to the non-European world. In the words of Tennyson they counted "the grey barbarian lower than the Christian child" and agreed that "fifty years of Europe" were better than "a cycle of Cathay." In 1851 the beginnings of "unexampled prosperity" were celebrated in the Great Exhibition, sponsored by Albert, the Prince Consort, as an augury of still more wonderful days to come. The whole world was invited to attend and marvel. Newspapers and publicists argued whether free trade or colonies abroad or the now-completed net of railroads at home were most responsible for these bounties. Small wonder, then, that typical Britishers could rejoice with Macaulay at the progress being achieved, or cry with the British Liberal, Mr. Roebuck, whom Matthew Arnold stigmatized into immortality, "I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last."

The Other Side of Industrialism

But that free play of individualism in which the industrialist gloried had a hideous side which he preferred to overlook. For its policy of non-interference involved a callous unconcern for the distresses of workingmen.



A group of Manchester workers during the "famine" of 1862. This was a cotton famine, a result of the stoppage of American cotton shipments because of the Civil War.

To the factory workers, dependent upon the will of their employers for their very livelihood, the concept of economic freedom meant nothing. A high birth rate made labor cheap in a flooded market and made slum conditions progressively worse. In the "dark Satanic mills" of early industrialism, the children of the poor suffered the horrors of a very real hell. Britons could assert that Napoleon was defeated by the snows of Moscow and the child laborers of England.

For a generation thereafter Parliament scarcely intervened, except against the poor. Thus the act of 1825 subjected to punishment by three months' imprisonment at hard labor all persons "who should by violence, threats or intimidation, molestation, or obstruction, do, or endeavor to do, or aid, abet, or assist in doing or endeavoring to do," any of a large number of deeds inconsistent with the freedom of contract. This law was naturally effective in thwarting the development of trade unionism, and it was not until 1859 that "molestation" and "obstruction" were defined so as to exclude "endeavoring peaceably or in a reasonable manner . . . to persuade others to cease or abstain from work." Lacking the right to vote, the working classes were unable to change the unlawful status of their organizations.

Viewed from the position of the working populace, the Victorian Era presents the record of a long and difficult struggle to improve conditions. The first great insurgent movement, Chartism, offered a real threat to the prerogatives of the middle class. The "People's Charter," drawn up (1838) in exasperation over the intolerable wretchedness of the mass of urban population, called for universal manhood suffrage, voting by secret ballot, annual elections for Parliament, abolition of property qualifications for office in the House of Commons, payment of salaries to members of the House of Commons, and equal electoral districts. Without the first point,

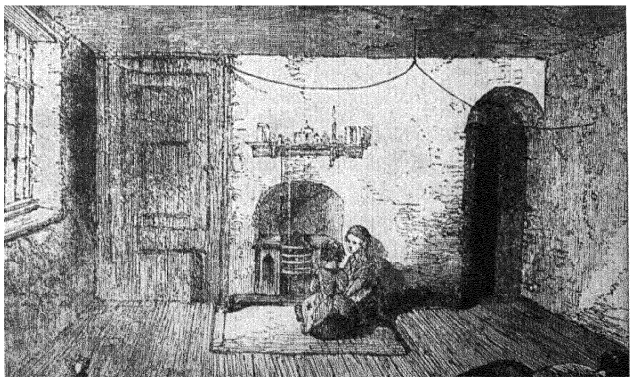
universal suffrage, no one below the middle class could hope to express himself politically. Urban workers received the vote in 1867, largely through the efforts of John Bright; rural laborers were enfranchised by Gladstone in 1885; and the point was completely won only in 1917, with the Manhood Suffrage Bill.

After three years (1839-1842) the Chartist movement failed, leaving a mark of strikes and riots in industrial centers and a deeper mark on the conscience of enlightened Englishmen. "How long," asked Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1843,

"... how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart?"

Gradually all the Chartist proposals but one (annual parliaments) were adopted. Moreover, a series of bitter reports designed to penetrate their cruel indifference turned the attention of the middle-class rulers of England to the condition of the people economically below them. Thus, in an account of the town of Bolton, Lancashire, in 1842, the common lot of handloom weavers was described in these terms: "Anything like the squalid misery, the slow, mouldering, putrefying death by which the weak and feeble of the working classes are perishing here, it never befell my eyes to behold, nor my imagination to conceive.... They sit with oriental submission, as if it were God and not the landlord that was laying his hand upon them."

Similar reports on factories, on coal mines, on unsanitary conditions, on dangerous machinery, and even on the "disposal of the bodies of the dead in poorer quarters" awoke the horror of the general public. By long and arduous protest social legislation was wrung from an unwilling Parliament. Factory Acts from 1833 to 1878 required better working conditions from employers; Ashley's Act (1847) established the ten-hour day; the Mines Act (1842) forbade the employment of women and children under-



A typical dwelling of a factory worker in the mid-nineteenth century, from a woodcut in the Illustrated London News. *Philanthropists of the time formed such societies as the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrial Classes, and the Prince Consort himself became president of the Laborers' Friend Society.*



Knife-board omnibuses at the Mansion House, around 1859. The first London omnibus, open to the general public, appeared in July, 1829, drawn by three horses abreast. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

ground; the Acts of 1867 and 1873 rescued women and children from strenuous agricultural labor; and between 1871 and 1875 various Public Health Acts became law.

In part the contest was against the principles of statesmen trained by Malthus to believe that social legislation could not help the poor. In his *Essay on Population* (1798), Malthus had argued that no remedy against "the torrents of children" could be found except war, starvation, vice, or "moral restraint." To help the poor meant, in his view, to upset "natural laws." Under such assumptions Parliament had amended the Poor Law in 1834 in order to put an end to private relief and to stimulate self-reliance. The new law provided for the herding of the poor into workhouses—blasted again and again by Dickens—where they had to surrender their freedom in exchange for the opportunity to labor.

Put to the test of experience, Malthusianism proved defective in important ways. At the opening of the century, accurate censuses of the United Kingdom began to be taken. The population did not rise geometrically, as Malthus had feared; from 15,000,000 around 1800 it went to 40,000,000 near the end of Victoria's reign. A steady fall of the death rate, rather than an increase of the birth rate, marked this growth; and, as the condition of laborers improved in the last quarter of the period, the birth rate went steadily down. On the other hand, free trade—which Malthus had not foreseen—increased the food supply.



Crowded streets in London, after Gustave Doré. In 1801 the population of London was more than a million. In 1841 it was two and a quarter million. By 1881 it had reached nearly five million. Until the twentieth century London was the largest city in the world.

Theorists less gloomy than Malthus sprang up to defend the people. Shortsighted men, such as the disciples of Cobbett (1762-1835), dreamed of a return to a patriarchal peasant society. Others, equally futile, urged a regression to the eighteenth-century system of domestic craftsmanship. Robert Owen (1771-1858), the founder of the co-operative movement, was one of the first reformers to look to the future instead of to the past. Accepting industrialism, he was convinced that the machine could be controlled for the benefit of the people. His system of "phalansteries," houses of self-supporting, self-sufficient communities operated on a socialistic basis, was tried in Ireland, the United States, Hampshire, Glasgow, and New Lanark. Though some of these experiments were temporarily successful, they all ended in failure.

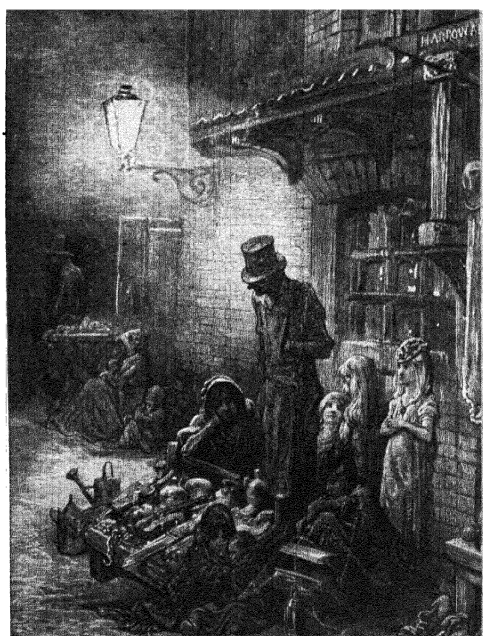
Owen's socialistic theories are noteworthy as the earliest important attempt to challenge the basis of the economic order of Victorian England. Their impact on the Utilitarians is seen in the *Autobiography* (1873) of J. S. Mill, who in the "hungry forties" rejected his former master, Bentham. Mill and his disciples now argued in favor of the welfare state: "Our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond democracy, and would class us decidedly under the general designation of socialists. . . . The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual

liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labor." Such ideas were to be carried on and modified in the trade-union movement and in the theories of Karl Marx, William Morris, and the Fabians.

Clash of Science and Traditional Doctrines

It was against this background of advance in liberalism and material prosperity on the one hand, and the growing claims of the working class to attention on the other, that the Victorians wrote and formed their attitudes. To these forces must be added another that powerfully affected their philosophies: the startling progress of science in the Victorian age. The foundations of a scientific outlook on the world had been laid in the seventeenth century (see I, p. 676). In the eighteenth century John Locke had popularized empiricism, the belief that we can find truth by experiment and systematic observation. What made the new era distinctive was the great accumulation of verified knowledge and a shift in emphasis from inanimate nature to organic life.

The noted scientific researchers of the nineteenth century profited by the labors of their predecessors. In the picturesque phrase of Bacon, they



The slums of London, after Gustave Doré. Some sections of London, until the Second World War, were among the most horrible slums in the world. Many a Londoner considered the German "Blitzkrieg" a not unmixed terror, for it wiped out some of the worst sections of the East End.

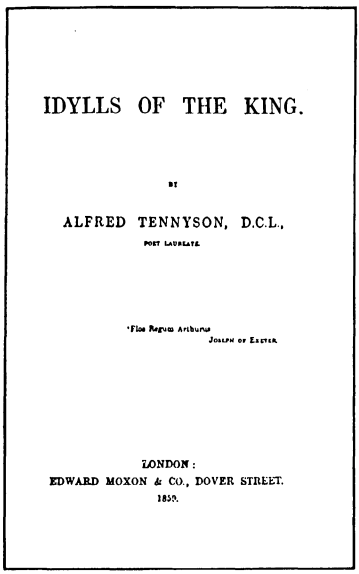
were moderns standing on the shoulders of the ancients and thus enabled to see further. We can here mention but a few outstanding names. Michael Faraday advanced the study of electricity and magnetism; Clerk Maxwell headed a brilliant new school of mathematicians; John Dalton revolutionized chemistry with his theory of atomic weights. The practical application of all these discoveries soon followed; and to discourse on the differences which the steamship, railroads, the telegraph, the telephone, and photography made in Victorian life would be to expend time on the obvious. These were the features of the age that Tennyson hailed in *Locksley Hall* (see p. 466):

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new,
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do . . .

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change.

But when scientists also took up the question of organic life, and that of man in particular, they encountered, head on and inescapably, some of the cherished beliefs of many religious groups. The ancient story of special creation—related in the first book of *Genesis*—conflicted with the account of the earth's past told by Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875), the most famous geologist of the period. Lyell's major assumption was that the present is the key to the past. Therefore he rejected the "catastrophic school" of geology popular in the early nineteenth century. Not by violent, swift changes but by the same natural forces acting today as they have done over inconceivable ages had the world come to its present state. The famous chronology of Archbishop Usher, once inserted into the margins of the King James' Bible, was contradicted at its very first point by Lyell's work, which proved immensely popular. His *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) went through twelve editions in his lifetime, and its revisions marked the progress of geology in his generation.

Ever since the days of the Greeks, men had puzzled over the strange likeness between man and the apes. They had come to note the progression of various forms of life embedded in "the records of the rocks." To account for these observed differences in related forms of life, naturalists of the romantic period—Buffon and Lamarck in France, Goethe in Germany, and Erasmus Darwin in England—had assumed that the varieties they saw about them were advances from more primitive forms. Lamarck in particular believed that these advances were brought about by the felt needs of each new generation, which then transmitted its acquired behavior to its



IDYLLS OF THE KING.

BY

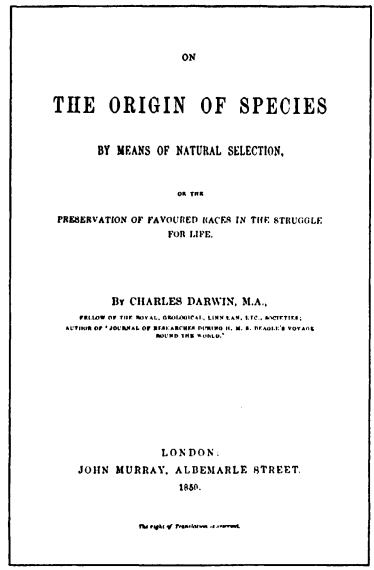
ALFRED TENNYSON, D.C.L.,

POET LAUREATE.

'Flos Regum Arthurus'

JOSEPH OF EXETER.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON & CO., DOVER STREET.
1859.



ON

THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION,

OR THE

PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

By CHARLES DARWIN, M.A.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL, GEOLOGICAL, LINNÆAN, ETC., SOCIETIES;
AUTHOR OF 'JOURNAL OF RESEARCHES DURING H. M. S. BEAGLE'S VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.'

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1859.

Both published in 1859, these books reflect the intellectual crosscurrents of the time.

offspring. The American writer Emerson, after visiting the famous *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris, condensed Lamarckism into two lines:

Striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form.

This doctrine is sometimes called "purposive evolution."

It remained for Charles Darwin (1809-1882, see p. 752) to marshal an imposing array of facts to vindicate a theory of organic evolution quite novel in its implications. His first important book, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection,* was published in 1859, one of the greatest dates in man's intellectual history. Based on half a lifetime of observation and thought, this study argued that forms of life alter in various ways by a process that biologists call *mutation,* or changes in the germ. Thereafter, nature or environment acts as a screen to select those variants best fitted to survive.

To many traditionally religious people this view seemed to shut the gates of mercy on the weak and reduce the universe to a soulless mechanism:

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life....

"So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarpéd cliff and quarried stone
She cries, "A thousand types are gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go."

This was the famous concept of "Nature, red in tooth and claw," that haunted Tennyson while he was writing *In Memoriam* (see p. 473). Its ramifications are enormous; it spread throughout fields quite unrelated to the data of Darwin's own precise observations. Thus, a spurious form of "Darwinism" was used to justify the colonial depredations of Europeans in Africa, to bolster the ego of the so-called "Nordic races" in Germany, to defend the excesses of ruthless industrialism at home, and to make plausible the bleak conclusions of "naturalistic" novelists in later nineteenth-century England and France.

Darwin and Lyell stood apart from most of the bitter controversy between their followers and such angry religious conservatives as Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford. Thomas Henry Huxley (see p. 757) defended the evolutionists in particular, and other thinkers seized the general idea of science as something on which to build imposing edifices of thought. One of these, the French writer Auguste Comte (1798-1857), taught that all branches of human thought pass through three stages: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive (or scientific); and he founded a church of Positivism, which his enemies derided as Catholicism *minus* Christianity. Comte's ideas had great influence on such major Victorians as J. S. Mill, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau (who translated him), and George Henry Lewes, one of the ablest journalists and scientific popularizers of his generation. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), also a far-ranging philosopher, tried to do for the latter part of the nineteenth century what Comte had done for the first half. Spencer formulated the belief of his age that human progress was inevitable, a belief which had been already discarded by thoughtful men. When the first World War broke out, a dozen years after his death, his shallow optimism was one of its first casualties.

From the perspective of today we can see that these Victorian attempts at a science of man were premature. The boldness of such thinkers as Comte, Spencer, and Karl Marx only proved that their speculations outran their data. Their pioneering in the "social sciences" was too early by some centuries—or perhaps forever—to match the ordered provable laws announced by Newton, Faraday, Maxwell, and others in the natural sciences. Yet to match the natural scientists was their hope. And there is one final point. Important as their role is in illustrating some of the ferment caused by



"The 'Bloomers' in Hyde Park, or an Extraordinary Exhibition for 1852," a drawing by Cruikshank. *The bloomer was designed by the American feminist Amelia Jenks Bloomer, who felt that the dress of women partly accounted for their enslavement. In 1852 the fight for women's rights was far from won.*

science in their age, as writers they lacked style. What was said of Comte applies to many of the others: they "wrote with opium on a page of lead."

Continued Growth of the Reading Public

While the pure scientists made their discoveries and the doctrinaires of scientific thought explored the consequences of their various theories, those other children of science—the inventors—made it possible for hosts of new readers to follow the arguments. Among other things they provided fresh sources of cheap paper. Esparto grass from the Mediterranean was used in the middle of the century; then came the discovery of a process to derive paper from wood pulp. After 1814 steam ran the larger London presses; in 1846 the American Robert Hoe built a new type of rotary press; in 1878 Mergenthaler took out patents on the Linotype. These and similar inventions are a key to modern life, which is impossible without literacy. The Victorian Age saw on every side a steady increase of students and readers.

In formal education notable reforms occurred. The University of London opened its doors in 1828, to be followed by the establishment of many other institutes, special schools, museums, and universities in the greater cities. Religious tests for degrees from Oxford and Cambridge were abolished in 1858 and 1871. The Elementary Education Act of 1870 was designed to raise the basic educational standards of the nation. Higher education for women—in part the theme of Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847)—became a reality. In 1878 the University of London admitted women for degrees; in 1879 Oxford established colleges for women; at about this time Cambridge permitted them to take its examinations. Much of Matthew Arnold's professional life concerned itself with secondary education; in a series of influential reports he contrasted British achievement with that of the Continent,

where, he felt, the needs of the middle class were better met. A strong movement for adult education, intended to meet the needs of industrial workers, sprang up at the outset of Victoria's reign. Britain's peculiar system of "public"—*i.e.*, private—secondary schools was gradually overhauled, the efforts of Thomas Arnold at Rugby being especially notable.

The informal agency of Victorian education was the press. Newspapers, magazines, and book publishers flourished as never before. A torrent of popular journalism, featuring instructive articles, politics, technology, science, industrial changes, etc., accompanied the news of the day. Daily and weekly journals multiplied. In 1815 the United Kingdom possessed 252 newspapers; ten years later the number had scarcely risen at all; but in 1875 there were about 1600. In 1800 a circulation of 2000 copies was thought to be phenomenal, but by the end of Victoria's reign a quarter of a million was not a remarkable figure. The London *Times,* founded in 1785, established a worldwide reputation for the authority of its writing and the accuracy of its reports, especially in foreign affairs. Nearly every major Victorian author wrote for such papers or for the reviews and magazines, which sprang up with equal vigor. George Eliot and J. S. Mill published much of their work in the *Westminster Review;* Thackeray edited the *Cornhill Magazine,* and Trollope serialized several of his novels there; Dickens edited *The Daily News* and *Household Words;* Macaulay wrote verse for the *Times.* New book firms were founded in every decade, and the business side of authorship advanced on a tide of printer's ink. "Grub Street"—that general name for poverty-stricken hack work—of course remained; but Anthony Trollope, in his *Autobiography* in 1878, proudly included a balance sheet of his earnings: "It may interest some if I state that during the last twenty years I have made by literature something near £70.000. . . . I look upon the result as comfortable, but not splendid."

A curious by-product of this enormous productivity of books, reviews, magazines, and newspapers must be mentioned—its direct competition with American authorship. The influence of Victorian literature upon our country would have been great in any case. But, in the absence of any copyright agreement between the two nations, the writings of Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Tennyson, Browning (and Byron and Scott of the earlier generation), were free for the taking. By thus robbing the most articulate Englishmen—the professional authors—American publishers added to the ill will that this country sometimes aroused in Britain. This transatlantic piracy was not cleared up until the International Copyright Agreement of 1891.

To make out of the complex of social, political, religious, and intellectual forces of the age a unity which could be called "Victorian" would require the perspective of a greater distance than we now possess. We shall be on safer ground if we examine major works of early and mid-Victorian writers in terms of their reactions to these varied stimuli.

Apostle of the new Liberalism, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) was an enthusiast for liberty, individualism, and the increasing material advance of society (see p. 671). His *Essays* (1843) and *History of England* (1848, 1855) display a clear, if not profound, mind that delights in sharp antitheses and paradoxes. The easy balance of his style mirrors perfectly his well-bred avoidance of searching problems or stress, and his buoyant optimism has wearied many readers. His *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842), though now thought fit only for juvenile reading, contain some spirited narrative verse. Both the virtues and faults of Macaulay as a writer were neatly hit off in the remark of the Whig Prime Minister, Melbourne: he wished he could be as sure of any one thing as Macaulay was of everything.

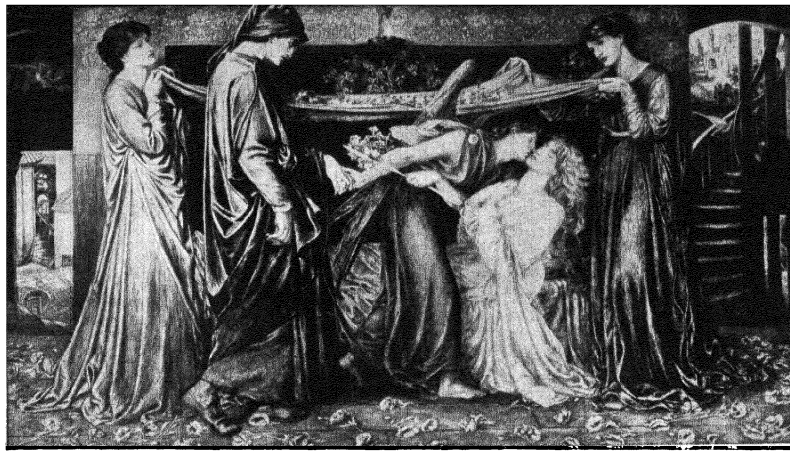
Against everything the optimistic Macaulay stood for, we behold the irascible figure of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who deliberately forged a vehement, startling style (see p. 636) in order to shock his readers into attention. Alarmed at the materialism and money-worship of his age, he branded



Thomas Carlyle, a portrait by J. A. McNeill Whistler. This painting, signed with Whistler's butterfly (his usual signature), has been facetiously called "Whistler's Father," because of its similarity in composition to the artist's portrait of his mother. Whistler's title for this painting of Carlyle was "Arrangement in Brown," just as his title for the portrait of his mother was "Arrangement in Grey and Black."

as false the cheerfulness of the Utilitarians. He pointed to the deprivations and sordid existence of the slaves of industry and lashed his contemporaries as murderers of the soul. His *Sartor Resartus* (see p. 639) pierces through the appearances of things to the hidden spirit of man. Blasting the lazy material comfort-seeking of the middle class, he preached the sacredness of labor. Because of this belief he opposed democracy (in *Past and Present,* see p. 660) as destructive of society's spiritual good. For the evils of the present order he prescribed (in *Heroes and Hero-Worship,* 1841) the leadership of the hero, under whose banner alone he felt men could escape from their present anarchy. His *French Revolution* (1837) is a stormy history of a social upheaval in terms of the great men who led it. In his last extended work, *The History of Frederick the Great* (1858-1865), Carlyle carried on the taste for things German that had begun in the Romantic generation (see p. 122). His fifty-year friendship with Emerson brought him the admiration of the American transcendental writers of the mid-century; indeed Emerson caused *Sartor Resartus* to be published in book form in the United States two years before the English edition appeared in 1836.

In search for an ideal with which to compare industrial civilization, Carlyle fell back on medieval monasticism with its consecration to the performance of humble tasks. The escape to the Middle Ages for inspiration became an insistent note of the Victorian Era. John Ruskin (1819-1900), too, in his search for moral values which make for greater art, found what he sought in Gothic architecture (see p. 705). In his *Modern Painters* (see p. 707) he gave high praise to those contemporary landscape painters who had recognized that spiritual values were of greater consequence than mere sensuous appeal. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (see p. 709) reject the Renaissance ideals in architecture and exalt the superiority of the medieval because of its spiritual sincerity. His artistic researches had brought him closer to the teaching of Carlyle, and he began to concentrate on the economic conditions which are responsible for bad art. A stalwart enemy of the Utilitarians, he denounced the ugliness of industrial society and its heavy toll of human souls. Expending his entire fortune in various endeavors to realize his ideals within his own lifetime, he became an untiring propagandist for his economic theories. His *Unto This Last* (1862), *Munera Pulveris* (1872), and *Fors Clavigera* (1871-74) expounded his beliefs and stirred public opinion. In the lecture from *Sesame and Lilies* called *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts* (see p. 712) is to be found a clear statement of his ideas. Ruskin's doctrines of the co-operative state, so different from those of his contemporary Karl Marx,



"Dante's Dream," an oil painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the presiding genius of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. This group felt that it was necessary to bring back to art the sincerity, the dignity, and the truthfulness to nature characteristic of the painters who preceded the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael.

probably help to explain the separate courses taken by British and Continental Socialism after the death of these two "Victorians." And, further to show the complexities of this tangled age, one may note that Cecil Rhodes, greatest of empire builders of the century, found in Ruskin's Oxford lectures (1870) the inspiration for his own violent imperialism!

Ruskin's preachments powerfully altered the readiness with which Englishmen had accepted the ugliness of their surroundings. A desire to find a place for beauty in everyday living became a conscious part of English thinking. Chief among the propagators of the new quest for beauty was a group of men, encouraged and inspired by Ruskin, who called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. They, too, turned to the Middle Ages for release from the Mammon-idolatry of their time. Admirers of Keats, they accepted his worship of beauty as their ideal. Like him, they wrote largely in a medieval setting, and they cultivated poets of the Middle Ages such as Dante, Villon (see p. 1170), the anonymous romance-writers of France, England, and the saga writers of Scandinavia.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), the leader of the Brotherhood (see p. 591), was a poet and painter of great gifts. He translated Dante's *Vita Nuova* (1861); and his two best-known poems, *The Blessed Damozel* (see p. 593) and *Sister Helen* (see p. 594), are wonderful recapturings of

medieval intensity of spirit. They possess, in addition, a rich sensuousness which was the heritage of Keats and the Romantics. These qualities are fused through mystical symbolism in his remarkable sonnet sequence, *The House of Life* (see p. 598). Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), his sister, achieved more perfectly than any of the group their ideal of simplicity in a series of lyrics which exhibit her deep devotion to the Anglican Church (see p. 601). William Morris (1834-1896), their friend and associate, was a man of innumerable talents (see p. 605). It is not only in his poems such as *The Eve of Crecy*, *The Defense of Guenevere* (see p. 607), and *The Earthly Paradise* (see p. 611), his romances, or his translations that we find him deriving artistic sustenance from the Middle Ages. Spurred on by Ruskin, he sought to counteract the soulless manufacture of his time by reviving in handicrafts the loving care and devotion of medieval artisans. Besides being a painter and poet, he designed tapestries, fabrics, wallpaper, furniture, and stained glass, and he founded a press for the printing of beautiful handmade books that might rival the bookmaking of olden times. These enterprises led him to the vision of a society regenerated through socialism, which he expressed in *A Dream of John Ball* (1888), *News from Nowhere* (1891), and such poems as *The Day Is Coming* (see p. 614).

It is difficult to estimate how much this yearning for the spiritual and artistic values of the Middle Ages may be attributed to the Oxford Movement. This name is given to a strenuous revival within the Anglican Church, from 1833 to 1843, of medieval practices and ideals. The writings and prestige of its chief proponent, John Henry Newman (1801-1890), did much to focus attention upon the beauty and dignity of medieval church ritual (see p. 687). Unsympathetic to industrialism, and alienated, like Carlyle and Ruskin, by the materialism of the era, he desired to wrest the Anglican Church from the grip of political and worldly domination. In his studies to re-establish beauty and dignity in the English Church, he gradually found faith in the Roman Catholicism which he had been attacking. His defense of his conversion, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (see p. 698) and his poem *The Dream of Gerontius* (see p. 552) are an expression of the triumphs of his mystical nature over the many doubts and struggles to which his generation was heir.

Prominent among these doubts, as we have said, were those raised by science. For a while scientists and theologians tried the vain expedient of seeking to rout each other from the field. Scientists grew more arrogant and theologians more dogmatic, until it became apparent that in the general scheme of things some place would have to be made for the findings

of science, Darwin's great disciple, Thomas Huxley (1825-1895), labored untiringly (see p. 757) to make the average Englishman aware of the implications of the evolutionary theory, and his career as a man of letters was directed toward that end. He did much to relieve the bitterness of the conflict between religion and science by formulating for himself a tolerant agnosticism which allowed to religion credit for its support of ethics. Largely through his influence, such agnosticism became popular among the intellectuals of England, though there remained of course, many uncompromising adherents to the letter of the Bible and equally rigid mechanists who were convinced that the universe could be explained in terms of demonstrable cause and effect.

Some poets such as Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861), were plunged for a while into despair (see p. 568) by the challenge of science to their beliefs. Clough, who had been trained to piety, was even more greatly depressed when the disciples of the Oxford Movement turned away from the problem. After a period of bitter doubt he at last won to a moral creed unsustained by religious dogma.

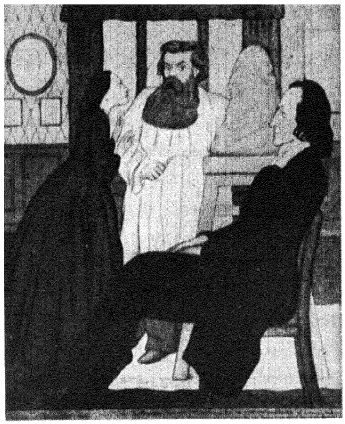
It was Clough's friend Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), however, who of all Victorians most diligently faced the religious question. In his poetry (see p. 571), which contains some of the finest reflective verse in our literature, he sought a basic discipline of life. Aware of the great prop that religion had once afforded to certainty and hope, he could not still the voice of doubt within him which was robbing him of religion's comfort. A gentle air of melancholy pervades his poetry, chiefly the product of his earlier life —a time when he could find no solution to the conflict of faith and reason.

When he came to writing his great prose (see p. 720), Arnold was ready to take a more positive stand. The spirit of Christianity was worth preserving, he decided, but Christian dogma must adapt itself to the contributions of science and enlightened thought. In *Literature and Dogma* (1873), recognizing that an "inevitable revolution" had taken place in the world of religion, he attacked middle-class morality and faith. The Bible may still be treasured as a "Book of conduct," he thought, but he refused to grant it any other authority. Conduct was the most important aspect of life to Arnold, however, and hence the Bible would be assured, in his values, a high place of respect. Arnold's philosophy was essentially humanistic, and he exerted himself to preach the potential dignity of mankind. His reaction to the materialism of his day was to attack it for depriving men of the full and best use of their faculties. He taunted his compatriots for their Philistine smugness and vulgarity in literature, art, religion, morals, and

public life. In his *Essays in Criticism* (see p. 720) and in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) he urged the cultivation of the best that had been thought and said in the world. This new humanism, as one critic has said, "which to a large extent he succeeded in founding . . . [was] an island of refuge in the religious débâcle which took place in the last half of the century."

The poet who is usually thought of as most thoroughly characteristic of his age is Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892). The popular notion of Tennyson as the typical "Victorian" is, even though we do not define our terms, accurate enough. For he made a sincere attempt to assimilate all that science, philosophy and religion had to offer the century. And he was unwilling to accept, as Macaulay accepted, a thoughtless optimism. But, unfortunately, Tennyson was not a profound thinker. Struggle though he did to understand the intellectual forces of his time, he was unequal to adventuring in untrodden paths. Inevitably he finished by celebrating things as they are, and in finding ideals in the conventions of his day. His *Idylls of the King* (1859-85), for example, transfer the pretenses of Victorian moral respectability to King Arthur's court, but all the glitter of historic perspective cannot hide their fundamental make-believe. In the soul-probings of *In Memoriam* (see p. 473), his desire to reconcile the facts of science with orthodox beliefs is motivated by such insufficient intellectual courage that he is left not much wiser than he began. It is only when Tennyson is content to be a poet rather than a teacher that he is satisfying. In such poems as *Ulysses; The Lady of Shalott; Oenone; The Lotos-Eaters; Break, Break, Break;* and the songs from *The Princess*—in which the demands made upon him are those of an artist—he is truly superb and may with reason be considered the finest poet of his era. Tennyson's unabated vitality for sixty years of creative writing has been rarely matched in English literary history. It also brought its penalties. Because he dominated the poetry of his era for so long, the reaction against him was longest. But time has already discarded his less enduring pieces and restored his reputation.

Robert Browning (1812-1889), with whom it has been customary to contrast Tennyson, may as effectively be contrasted with all his contemporaries. He was a man far more interested in human beings than in general concepts; and his writing is as alien to the optimism of Macaulay and to the lectures of Carlyle and Ruskin as to the uncertainties of Tennyson or the doubts and humanism of Arnold. Aggressively optimistic Browning undoubtedly was, but his optimism was of a species almost personal, unrelated to the glories of the British Empire or the improvements to be brought about by Liberalism and science. Although in *Why I Am a Liberal* (see





Two caricatures of Tennyson. In the one by Max Beerbohm (left), Mrs. Tennyson is saying to the sculptor, "Will you start soon to put on his halo?" The one by Rossetti (right) shows the poet reading from Maud.

p. 533) he makes plain his endorsement of social progress, he was, in comparison with his great contemporaries, almost unconcerned with the causes and results of the Victorian social milieu. Nor did the conflict between religion and science greatly disturb him. He was essentially a religious man, but he allied himself to no formal religion. Certainly no writer of his century, however, is more robust, wholesome, and full of the joy of living. The human soul and its crises, defeats, and victories were the chief objects of his curiosity. His greatest gift was his dramatic insight into the workings of the human character, and it was natural, therefore, that he should have focused his attention upon individual men and women rather than on social problems. Perhaps because he was freed from the encumbrances of those problems, he was most at home in late Renaissance Italy, where the excesses of that age's individualism afforded studies wonderfully suited to his interests—e.g., *My Last Duchess* (see p. 499), *The Bishop Orders His Tomb* (see p. 504), *Fra Lippo Lippi* (see p. 511), *Andrea del Sarto* (see p. 516), and *The Ring and the Book* (1868-69). Browning's inspiriting message is that life is worth the struggle, and that only by meeting pain and joy with courage can we prove our worth to God.

Browning's energetic courtship of the poet, Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861), who eventually became Mrs. Browning, inspired her to write the most impassioned sonnet sequence in our language, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (see p. 549). Under the influence of Carlyle she was a strong partisan of the depressed factory workers, and her *The Cry of the Children* (see p. 547) is a stirring protest against child labor.

There remains to be examined one other reaction to the social, scientific, and religious complexities of the century: a determination to cast all questions to the winds and live for beauty, pleasure, and experience. At first

glance such an attitude seems oddly at variance with the strenuous morality of the age. It did, in fact, arouse protest; the scientist Huxley once reproved the product of this attitude as "sensuous caterwauling" that mistook itself for the music of the spheres. This philosophy was to be heard in the chastened, classic measures in which Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883), adapted the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (see p. 554). But the leading propounder of hedonism was Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909). Identified for a time with the Pre-Raphaelite group and its ideals, he fell strongly under the influence of the French poet Baudelaire (see p. 1171) and became a singer of the experiences of the flesh. Later in life he turned to matters of intellectual content. But the value of Swinburne's poetry (see p. 616) is not so much in what he had to say as in the manner in which he said it. For this reason some narrow critics would exclude him from the ranks of great poets. On the other hand, he was perhaps the most astonishing musician that English verse has ever known, and his magic over sound has retained for him a wide audience.

Victorian Drama

The nineteenth century finds English drama following two parallel currents: plays fit only to be read ("closet dramas") and plays intended only for the stage. By now it is a platitude that the test of a play as such is the way it *acts*. But it is too often overlooked that the test of a piece of literature is the way it *reads*. It is safe to say that the world's greatest drama can be both read and acted; certainly that is true of the best of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Molière, and Ibsen. The incredibly stupid nineteenth-century plays which held the boards during the greater part of Victoria's reign are now revived, if revived at all, only to be mocked and ridiculed. We are today amazed that any audiences could ever have taken them seriously. The low ebb of public taste in the drama is well illustrated by the appallingly melodramatic and insincere "serious plays" which W. S. Gilbert, the great comic genius, authored before he joined forces with the composer Arthur Sullivan to write the libretti for their infectious comic operas.

On the other hand, at least three major Victorian poets—Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne—wrote closet dramas (just as Byron and Shelley had done earlier in the century). None of their dramas could be presented with any hope of success on the stage today, though Tennyson had some success in the theater for a while because his pieces were acted by the best performers of his day—and people went to see the performers. As for Browning, he was encouraged to write plays by the great actor Macready,

who mistook the dramatic energy of Browning's early poems for proof that the poet was born for the theater. But Browning was incapable of dealing with the problems of a full-length drama for the stage. After the failure of his plays, Browning and Macready had a misunderstanding which determined Browning to write no more for the theater. Finally, Swinburne, although his *Atalanta in Calydon* is an exquisite imitation of the manner of Aeschylus, never wrote a part in any play which could seriously tempt an actor or actress. The plays of all three poets, however, are excellent in the library, and it is there that they can be fully enjoyed.

The Victorian Novel

In numbers and vitality and variety of its examples, the Victorian novel is a literature in itself. This form was particularly adapted to the needs of the age, with its vast growth of new readers of every sort. Later critics have sometimes blamed the Victorians for stuffing into this form whatever came to mind — essays, digressions, moral lectures, chats with the reader, etc. The American analyst of fiction Henry James once said that the English novel of this time could not be discussed: "It had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison." This may be only another way of saying that many of the novels of the age were turned out hurriedly, in installments, to be serialized in magazines, then dispatched to lending libraries in "three-decker" (*i.e.*, three-volume) form. Such were the methods of Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, and other leading practitioners—tempestuous, overworked men, all of them, with a hundred interests and demands on their energy.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873) attempted every kind of novel fashionable in his day. Animated by the brilliance of the Byronic hero, he made two pictures of dandies, *Falkland* (1827) and *Pelham* (1832), and two of fascinating criminals, *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832). Under the influence of Scott's historical novels he wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi* (1835), *The Last of the Barons* (1843), and *Harold* (1848). When public interest turned to the domestic novel, he composed *The Caxtons* (1850), *My Novel* (1853), and *What Will He Do With It?* (1858). These are but a portion of his total output of novels, not one of which is either poor or excellent. His greatest gift is an ability to carry his reader along; his weaknesses include theatricality, false rhetoric, and a general lack of sincerity. He wrote also poetry and plays, and his drama *Richelieu* (1838) is still performed.

The novels of Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), later Lord Beaconsfield, seem destined better to withstand the ravages of time. His early successes, dealing, like Lytton's, with society life, though excessively showy, have a greater ease and certainty of tone: *Vivian Grey* (1826), *The Young Duke* (1831), *Contarini Fleming* (1832) *Alroy* (1833), and *Venetia* (1837). Perhaps the most engaging of these, however, is the satirical extravaganza, *Ixion in Heaven* (1828). After his entrance into Parliament as a democratic Tory, Disraeli devoted himself to pointing out the need for ameliorating the conditions of labor. *Coningsby* (1844) has been called "the best novel of politics ever written." *Sybil* (1845), composed under the influence of Carlyle, presents a picture of society divided into "two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy." Disraeli's fault is that of Lytton — an air of unreality, in his case due to his tendency to create characters to illustrate a thesis; but his wit is still fresh and welcome.

The writer who enjoyed a wider and more enthusiastic popularity than any other Englishman of his century was Charles Dickens (1812-1870). There was a time when that unparalleled popularity was regarded by the esthetes as proof of Dickens' merely transitory importance. But despite the vitiating element of sentimentalism in many of his pages, his genius was of a high order. Dozens of his characters—Sam Weller, Mrs. Gamp, Mr. Micawber, Scrooge, Chadband, Pecksniff, Joe Gargery, Dora Copperfield, to mention but a very few—are as familiar to our imagination as Don Quixote, and Dickens' immortality is fairly assured. He began his career with *Sketches by Boz* (1833-36). His first novel, of the picaresque type, *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-37), was begun as an engagement to write the text to accompany a series of cartoons on sporting life; the death of the artist left Dickens free to compose a character-crammed book, formless, and masterful in its humor, in which he disclosed his wonderful gifts to the world. The immediately ensuing years witnessed the development of the Chartist movement, and during them Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge* (1840-41)—in all of which he takes an optimistic view of society. *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), and *Dombey and Son* (1848) are largely overcast by the depression consequent upon the social upheaval connected with the last sputterings of Chartism. Thereafter, through the years 1849-1865, a period in which reaction triumphed all over Europe, Dickens' pen became increasingly bitter and increasingly radical. This period saw the publication of *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865).



A woodcut illustration for Dickens' Old Curiosity Shop. The works of Dickens were illustrated by a number of artists, but this is typical of the style of most of them.

A son of the lower middle class, Dickens was convinced "that it is in the lower ranks of life that the really interesting and worthwhile people are to be found." Such an outlook enabled him to paint a vital picture of what life is like to everyday people. As for upper-class "society," his feelings about it were well expressed in a letter to a friend: "The more I see of its extraordinary conceit, and its stupendous ignorance of what is passing out of doors, the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when being incapable of reforming itself it will have to submit to being reformed by others off the face of the earth." Most of his books attack some social evil: *Nicholas Nickleby*, the private schools; *The Old Curiosity Shop*, child labor; *Bleak House*, the cumbersome workings of the law; *Dombey and Son*, the egotism of the capitalist; *Oliver Twist*, the workhouse system; and so on. His later books seem to have been definitely influenced by Carlyle—particularly *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Hard Times*. In the latter, the whole immorality of what he called "Gradgrind" economics (*i.e., laissez-faire* economics) is indicated, as may be seen by this passage: "It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase. . . . Every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter."

Dickens's energies were enormous; in addition to continuously writing, he gave public lectures and readings, and indeed killed himself by overwork. There is something of the torrential profusion of Nature itself about him and all that he did—for he was compounded of tenderness, anger, deep humanity, a little vulgarity, and almost as many qualities as could be named. If his shortcomings were many, so were his gifts. He was addicted in his novels to happy endings, theatricalism, extravagant coincidences, caricatures,

and Sunday-school lessons. On the other hand, his power to create physical reality in his pages, his ability to enter into the minds of children and young people, his generous indignation at social abuses, his incomparable pictures of London and England, his outbursts of sheer poetic insight—these leave him without peers among novelists. To do him justice it is necessary to read all of him, and if he never created a book without flaws, he wrote none without great rewards for his reader.

Dickens had few warmer admirers than the only man who could lay claim to a share of Dickens' supremacy during his lifetime. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was not only a great novelist but a great essayist as well, and that side of his career is discussed elsewhere (see p. 701). Thackeray took as his sphere of interest the upper classes and deliberately narrowed his subject to the behavior of individuals within the family circle. Temperamentally a satirist like Fielding, he wrote *Barry Lyndon* (1844) much in the vein of *Jonathan Wild* (see I, p. 788). But his greatest works deal with life in the drawing room, and he took upon himself to expose the shallowness, cruelty, hypocrisy, and greed of the socially privileged. In this objective his greatest success was in *Vanity Fair* (1847-48), the novel that brought him fame. Set against the background of the Napoleonic wars, this "novel without a hero" has as its central character the incomparable, wicked, witty, half-tragic Becky Sharp, through whom Thackeray showed the stupidities of aristocratic society. It is probable that no discriminating critic would think of listing the greatest English novels without including *Vanity Fair*; the large canvas is handled with unfailing brilliance and power, and every quality from wit to pathos and grandeur is represented with the certain touch of the master. *Henry Esmond* (1853) marked a break with the Scott tradition by proving that a historical novel could be written in realistic terms. A picture of the times of Sir Richard Steele, who figures in it, this has been often called Thackeray's finest piece of artistry in narration. It was followed by the scarcely less engrossing *The Newcomes* (1854-55), and *The Virginians* (1858-59). *Pendennis* (1848-50), containing much autobiography, is likely to remind one again of Thackeray's master's *Tom Jones*.

Thackeray thoroughly knew the class he depicted. But it would be inaccurate to describe him as only a satirist, for he had profound sympathies for goodness, kindliness, and sincerity wherever he found them. Fundamentally he was a humanist and an artist, a man who took pleasure in the human pageant and had no excessive hope and no despair over mankind's progress. He was a far more careful artist than Dickens, and his



Christmas dinner in mid-Victorian England. This illustration reminds one of all the occasions of cheer in the pages of Dickens. There are many passages of poverty and distress in his works, but no English writer is so fond of evoking scenes of conviviality in town, farmhouse, and tavern.

prose is admirable for its clarity, raciness, and wit. It has been said that he never wrote a dull page in his life. His fine historical sense and cultivation enabled him to recreate with fidelity the manners and speech of the past. More than any of his contemporaries he had a strong sense of the literary form of the novel. But it is his skill in portraying the psychology of his characters—an ability unshared by Dickens—that, above all, places him in the front rank of novelists.

Among other Victorian novelists, high praise must be given to Emily Brontë (1818-1848), a woman with considerable poetic gifts (see p. 563), for her remarkable *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a novel of tense, dark power. Her sister, Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855), was the author of four novels, *The Professor* (published 1857), *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), and *Villette* (1853); a writer of impassioned eloquence, she often marred her work by false rhetoric. *Jane Eyre* is important as the first portrait of a "plain" heroine and is remarkable for its sincere characterization.

Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), Anglican minister and founder of the Christian Socialists, incorporated his ideals of reform in *Yeast* (1848) and *Alton Locke* (1850); he was at his best as a historical novelist in *Hypatia* (1853), a picture of early Christianity, and in *Westward Ho!* (1855), which deals with the Elizabethan navigators. Charles Reade (1814-1884), who had a taste for documentation, wrote several novels with a social purpose: *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1853), on the horrors of prison life; *Hard Cash* (1863), on the abuses of insane asylums; and *Put Yourself in His Place*

(1870), on trade unions. His best book, however, is the historical novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1867), which depicts the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. Wilkie Collins (1824-1889), the most masterful constructor of plots among the Victorians, composed an interesting series of terror novels, of which the most famous are *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868).

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) wrote some fifty novels in an unexuberant, leisurely style which seems to impart the quality of truth to his studies of provincial life; his best are those dealing with communities of cathedral towns in his Barctshire novels, *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), etc. Trollope came by his industry naturally enough; when his mother was over fifty, she started on a writing career that led to the production of more than a hundred volumes. His own *Autobiography* (1878), published after his death, is a fascinating book for a writer to read, although its blunt honesty probably helped to shatter Trollope's vogue in the latter years of the century. His revival is an interesting feature of contemporary literature.

The authentic pictures of gipsy life reproduced in the novels of George Borrow (1803-1881)—*The Bible in Spain* (1843), *Lavengro* (1851), *The Romany Rye* (1857), and *Wild Wales* (1862)—are full of autobiographical reminiscense and abound in the freshness of the out-of-doors.

George Eliot (1819-1880), a pseudonym for Mary Ann Evans, enjoyed during her lifetime a reputation somewhat out of proportion to her gifts. She seemed to be giving to the novel a new depth and, although she had broken with orthodox religion, she possessed a strong moral bent. Most of her studies were made of rural society, among farmers, small landowners, and clergymen. Instead of using irony, like Thackeray, she approached the psychology of her characters with pity and sympathy. She was able to make powerful appeals to the conscience by her striking pictures of the consequences of evil and hypocrisy. But her novels suffer from an overweight of didactic reflection and endless inquiry into moral issues, and her plots are retarded and smothered by the author's insistent "philosophizing." She suffers, also, from a certain insensitiveness to style, and she is guilty of long stretches of dull writing. Her novels, however, had an enormous ethical influence on her age. The best of them are *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1859), *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Middlemarch* (1872), and *Daniel Deronda* (1874-76).

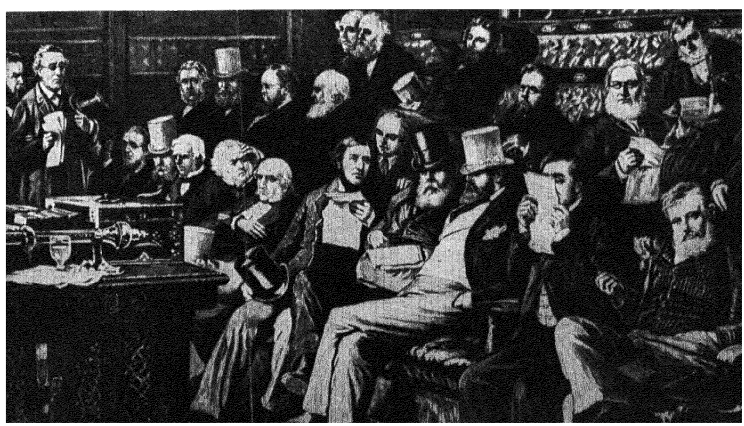
The course of novel writing in the later generation of Victorians will be outlined in the next chapter.

Early and Mid-Victorians in Retrospect

For at least a full generation after the period, "Victorianism" was an object of attack. This many-sided, bustling, high-hatted, and bearded age wearied its descendants, who underestimated Victorian problems as they faced their own. In the opinion of such critics, Victorians talked and wrote excellently—but so unendingly! The remark about Carlyle that his golden gospel of silence was compressed into thirty volumes, underscores the volubility of the age forever. It is not a mere coincidence that so many of the eminent writers were lecturers as well; the tone of the public platform is in a great deal of what they wrote. Rhetoric, observed J. S. Mill, is to be heard; poetry to be overheard. This separation between the private and public uses of literature is relevant here; Victorian literature did sacrifice some of the subtlety, the quiet implication, the polish and inwardness possessed by narrower, more aristocratic writings of the past. It did so in order to teach a new section of the people—the triumphant middle class now in the seats of power—a multitude of new facts about themselves and a rapidly changing world.

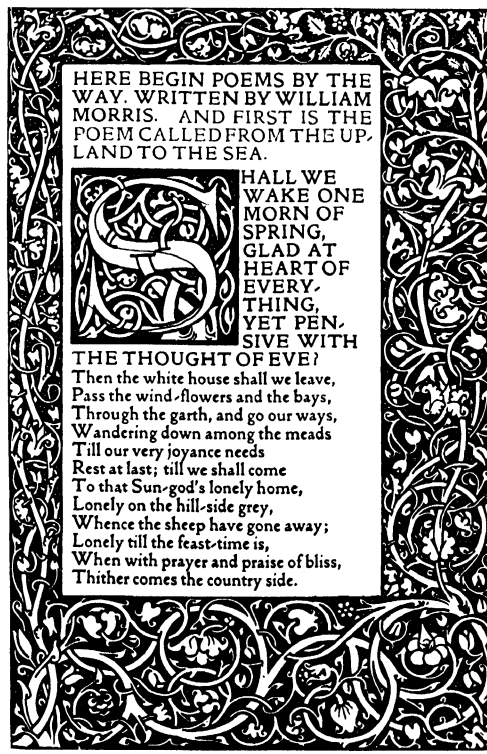
This middle class was poised between an older aristocracy, whose strictures stung them, and a rising lower class, whose claims to power they feared. By their energy and good luck, combined with the bad luck of their neighbors, they had acquired a large fraction of the earth's habitable surface. This empire they were attempting to rule, aided by science, whose powers rose like a genie from a magic lamp. Predominantly optimistic, they

The front opposition bench of the House of Commons, during the late sitting in the 1880 session. By this time the destinies of the nation were firmly in the hands of the solid middle class. The new Liberal Party was then in power, and the men shown here are the Conservatives.



also listened to powerful voices of doubt and disaster. They had a passion for information and so turned increasingly to realism.

In 1848, Thomas De Quincey had made a famous distinction between the literature of knowledge and that of power, the first intended to teach and the second to move mankind. It was this first kind of literature that flourished in Victorian England beyond all precedent; and in journalism, history, science, and scholarly work, the Victorians surpassed all their predecessors. In the novel and essay they were also richly productive. In poetry they continued, and at last exhausted, the specific romantic tradition of their immediate predecessors. Only in the drama did they fail—but despite this failure so much remains that we now account their age as one of the greatest in all English literature.



Alfred, Lord Tennyson

(1809-1892)

Alfred Tennyson was born in the rectory of Somersby, Lincolnshire, the fourth son of the Reverend George Tennyson's large family. The misty wolds, spacious fields, and gray hillsides of the Lincolnshire countryside, sometimes swept by the faint murmur of the sea or overcast by threatening clouds—sights and sounds which recur in his poetry—made a profound impression on the sensitive boy. From 1816 to 1820 he attended the Grammar School at Louth. But his dislike of the place gained him permission to return to the rectory to study under his father's tutelage. Home life was intimate, and literary productivity common among the children. His brothers Frederick and Charles both wrote verse, but it was Alfred who was understood to be the poet. When still a child he was imitating Pope, Thomson, Scott, and Moore; at fourteen he was striving for the gloomy rhetorical effects of Byron. In 1827 he and Charles published a volume, *Poems by Two Brothers,* which also included a few by Frederick. The next year Charles and Alfred entered Trinity College, Cambridge, for which their father had prepared them.

Tennyson's excessive shyness, unusual in so handsome a youth, blighted his first year at college. Under pressure from his father, he revised an old poem, named it *Timbuctoo,* and won the Newdigate Prize for 1829 with it. Unequal to the strain of presenting it publicly, he relied upon a fellow student to read it for him. In his second year he joined a debating society, the "Apostles," with the members of which he became a great favorite, a prestige that did much to encourage him in his writing. The most significant of his relationships at Cambridge, however, was the warm friendship he formed with Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the historian, a vivacious lad who helped draw Tennyson out of his shell of reserve and whose certainty on religious questions evoked the admiration of his friend, then sunk in doubts of agnosticism. In 1830 Tennyson issued a volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical,* containing a few excellent and a number of puerile pieces. During the summer of the same year, Hallam and he went on a brief trip to Spain to take the revolutionists there the funds which had been raised for the cause.

His father's illness ended his career at the university in February 1831. A few weeks later the elder Tennyson died. The poet remained in the bosom of his family for the next six years. Thus far, outside of the stir raised among the "Apostles," he was largely unknown to the literary world. Rewriting the poems already printed and composing new ones, he prepared a volume which appeared in 1832 as *Poems by Alfred Tennyson.* In it were early versions of such beautiful works as *The Lady of Shalott, Œnone, The Palace of Art,* and *The Lotos-Eaters.* The influence of Spenser and the romantics was patent in every line. Like Keats, he had tried to "load every rift" of his subject "with ore." Here too was the romantic heritage of absorption in distant times and lands. But the disciplining works of Homer (see I, p. 1099), Theocritus (see I, p. 1068), Ovid, Catullus (see I, p. 1092), and Virgil (see I, p. 1072) were better known to him than to the romantic poets of the earlier years of the century. Homer inspired *The Lotos-Eaters,* and there is something authentically Sicilian in *Œnone.* But despite the manifold signs of a great poet in these poems, the volume of 1832 was attacked by the critics. Croker, in the *Quarterly Review,* set the tone of its reception by his derisive welcome to "another and a brighter star of that galaxy

or Milky Way of poetry of which the Lamented Keats was the harbinger." The sale of the edition was small, but the hostility of the reviewers was so general as to make Tennyson quite notorious. If none of this mockery was justified, some criticism was, however, certainly in order. There was in some of the poems an excess of what Saintsbury calls the "mawkishness and gush which Keats had learnt from Leigh Hunt." And even those masterpieces we have named had not attained that perfection which Tennyson was later to give them.

That this discouraging attention was partly responsible for the ten years' silence the poet maintained is undoubtedly true. But there were other reasons. He had recently fallen in love with Emily Sellwood, and his small income and her parents' disapproval made marriage impossible to a man of his ethics. In fact, he was in his early forties before he felt justified in undertaking the responsibilities of matrimony. But the greatest shock of his life came in September 1833, when Arthur Hallam died. His grief over the loss of his best and dearest friend was with him for many years, as is proved by the series of elegies he composed upon Hallam, arranged in 1850 as the poem *In Memoriam*. In these stanzas, while searching for a faith that could bring him consolation, he voiced the doubts and hopes of his generation.

His long silence, however, was only public. The attacks of the reviewers and Hallam's death moved him to immerse himself in the study of literature, philosophy, geology, and astronomy. Thomas Carlyle's vivid description of him as "a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos," is graphic. By 1842 he had evidently achieved his Cosmos, for in that year he appeared in print again with two volumes of *Poems*, containing *Morte d'Arthur; Ulysses; Locksley Hall; Break, Break, Break;* and revisions of many earlier pieces. The years of incubation now justified themselves, for Tennyson came into his own. He was at once recognized as a master technician, a poet at home in all lands of the imagination and equal to all the esthetic requirements of his art. He was thereafter read avidly in England, the colonies, and America. Even Wordsworth, ever slow to recognize abilities in others, called him "the first of our living poets."

But whatever satisfaction this success must have brought Tennyson, happiness was not yet for him. He had parted with his small inheritance to invest it in a financial scheme the failure of which left him penniless. His mental reaction to this newest defeat required the attendance of a physician for months. In 1845, however, the government came to his rescue with a pension of £200 a year. With his confidence restored, he began to write again, and in 1847 published *The Princess*, a "medley" on the question of higher education for women. Soon after the appearance of *In Memoriam* (1850) Tennyson married Miss Sellwood, and in November of the same year he was appointed to the Laureateship to succeed Wordsworth.

The forty-two years of life still remaining to Tennyson were rich in happiness, security, and poetic accomplishment. His worries over, he issued a steady stream of poetry, uniformly of high quality: *Maud* (1855), *Idylls of the King* (1859, 1869, 1872, 1885), *Enoch Arden* (1864), *Ballads and Other Poems* (1880), *Tiresias* (1885), *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1886), *Demeter* (1889), and *The Death of Œnone* (1892). In addition to these he wrote the dramatic trilogy, *Queen Mary* (1875), *Harold* (1877), and *Becket* (1884)—all of which are excellent "closet dramas," though *Becket*, adapted by Henry Irving, had a momentary stage success. In 1883 Queen Victoria honored him with a peerage, and two years later Oxford made him a Doctor of Civil Law. Among his close friends he came to number Browning, Huxley, Ruskin, and Gladstone.

There was a period in our own century when it was fashionable to sneer at Tennyson because of his "Victorianism." It is true that Tennyson tried to understand his time while many of his fellow poets were busy escaping from it. It is also true that his was not a profound intellect, and that he was not able to penetrate very deeply below the surfaces of things. The facile prophecies of *Locksley Hall* no longer exhilarate a century that has seen

two world wars; the accomplishment of women puts to shame the conservatism of *The Princess*; and the meditations of *In Memoriam*, once thought profound, now seem rather hollow. He was not a seer, was too easily disturbed by the confusion in which real social progress is always involved, and given to easy compromise. He was perhaps unconscious of revealing his limitations as a thinker when he said in *In Memoriam*:

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er. . . .

And it is for his words, rather than for his ideas, that the world will always turn to Tennyson. No English poet excels him, despite occasional lapses, in mastery over the resources of his art. He is at his best when his genius for music and painting in language is all that is required of the subject. For this reason he has been most wisely loved for his lyrics, which are beyond praise for their perfection.

The Lady of Shalott

Tennyson took the idea for this poem from Malory's account of the love of Elaine for Launcelot in the *Morte Darthur*. Later he expanded the story as part of the *Idylls of the King*. The pictorial power of Tennyson is wonderfully exhibited in this, one of the most perfect of literary ballads.

Part 1

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold[1] and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot;[2]
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to towered Camelot;
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

Part 2

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.

[1] upland plain.
[2] the seat of King Arthur's court, in Cornwall.

She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror[3] clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot;
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,[4]
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot;
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
"I am half-sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part 3

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A redcross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.[5]

[3] The mirror hangs before her so as to reflect the finished tapestry which she weaves from the reverse side
[4] an easy-paced horse.
[5] the Milky Way.

The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot;
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part 4

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance

Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turned to towered Camelot;
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

(1832, 1842, 1873)

Œnone

To tell the famous story of the Judgment of Paris, Tennyson chose a highly original and dramatic point of view. We learn of that fatal interview through the musical lament of Paris's deserted love, Œnone, and at the end hear forebodings of catastrophe hovering over Troy, as yet unsacked by the Greeks. The description of Aphrodite is achieved through such art as a painter might envy. Tennyson took the occasion to put into the mouth of Pallas much of his own philosophy.

There lies a vale in Ida,[1] lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapor slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the cloven ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning; but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's columned citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful Œnone, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

"O mother Ida, many-fountained[2] Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill;
The grasshopper is silent in the grass;
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flowers droop, the golden bee
Is lily-cradled; I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

"O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crowned snake! O mountain brooks,

[1] Mount Ida, near Troy, where Paris, son of King Priam, passed his time as a shepherd. Here he lived with Œnone until he was visited by three goddesses to discover which of them was most beautiful. After Aphrodite promised him the love of Helen he deserted Œnone.

[2] Homer's epithet for Mount Ida.

I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,[3]
A cloud that gathered shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

"O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine.
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horned, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent called me from the cleft;
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone; white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Drooped from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Clustered about his temples like a God's;
And his cheek brightened as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I looked
And listened, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

"'My own Œnone,
Beautiful-browed Œnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingraven
'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
As loveher than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added 'This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus[4]; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due;
But light-foot Iris[5] brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnoon; one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies; and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops, a crested peacock[6] lit,
And o'er him flowed a golden cloud, and leaned
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her[7] to whom
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestioned, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, 'from many a vale
And river-sundered champaign clothed with corn,
Or labored mines undrainable of ore.
Honor,' she said, 'and homage, tax and toll,
From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-thronged beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers.'

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.

[3] The walls of Troy were raised by the music of Apollo.

[4] At the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis, the Goddess of Discord, who had not been invited, threw into the assembly a golden apple inscribed "To the Fairest." When the three goddesses, Hera, Pallas Athena, and Aphrodite, each claimed it, Zeus sent them to Paris and ordered him to decide.

[5] a messenger of the gods.

[6] Hera's sacred bird.

[7] Hera.

Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
'Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbor crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, heaven's queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attained
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats,
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's length, so much the thought of power
Flattered his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

" 'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncalled for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: 'I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.
Yet, indeed,
If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbiased by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigor, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinewed with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom.'

"Here she ceased,
And Paris pondered, and I cried, 'O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!' but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

"O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian[8] wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder; from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whispered in his ear, 'I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.'[9]
She spoke and laughed; I shut my sight for fear:
But when I looked, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

"Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouched fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Fostered the callow eaglet—from beneath

[8] Idalium and Paphos in Cyprus were sacred to Aphrodite.
[9] Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta.

Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Œnone see the morning mist
Sweep thro' them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruined folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her,
The Abominable,[10] that uninvited came
Into the fair Pelcian banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this great valley, under this green hill,
Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Sealed it with kisses? watered it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live;
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids; let me die.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born. Her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra,[11] for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.[12]
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire."

(1832, 1842, 1884)

[10] Eris, the Goddess of Discord.

The Palace of Art

Spedding described this poem as an allegory on "the condition of mind which, in love of beauty and the triumphant consciousness of knowledge and intellectual supremacy, in the intense enjoyment of its own power and glory, has lost sight of its relation to man and God." The poet may very well have thus posed an abstract situation which, considering the function of the artist, never actually exists. However, even if this be the case, the magnificence of Tennyson's picture-gallery in itself has justified the poem.

I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
  Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, "O Soul, make merry and carouse,
  Dear soul, for all is well."

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnished brass,
  I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
From level meadow-bases of deep grass
  Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf
  The rock rose clear, or winding stair.
My soul would live alone unto herself
  In her high palace there.

And "while the world runs round and round," I said,
  "Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
  Sleeps on his luminous ring."

To which my soul made answer readily:

[11] daughter of Priam, king of Troy and beloved by Apollo who, being repulsed by her, gave her power of prophecy, but caused her never to be believed.

[12] foretelling the war resulting from the carrying off of Helen.

"Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me,
So royal-rich and wide."

. . . . . .

Four courts I made, East, West and South and North,
In each a squared lawn, wherefrom
The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth
A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran a row
Of cloisters, branched like mighty woods,
Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
Of spouted fountain-floods;

And round the roofs a gilded gallery
That lent broad verge to distant lands,
Far as the wild swan wings, to where the sky
Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one swell
Across the mountain streamed below
In misty folds, that floating as they fell
Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seemed
To hang on tiptoe, tossing up
A cloud of incense of all odor steamed
From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, "And who shall gaze upon
My palace with unblinded eyes,
While this great bow will waver in the sun,
And that sweet incense rise?"

For that sweet incense rose and never failed,
And, while day sank or mounted higher,
The light aërial gallery, golden-railed,
Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stained and traced,
Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
From shadowed grots of arches interlaced,
And tipt with frost-like spires.

. . . . . .

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
Thro' which the livelong day my soul did pass,
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,
All various, each a perfect whole
From living Nature, fit for every mood
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and blue,
Showing a gaudy summer morn,
Where with puffed cheek the belted hunter blew
His wreathed bugle-horn.

One seemed all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One showed an iron coast and angry waves.
You seemed to hear them climb and fall
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,[1]
And hoary to the wind.

And one, a foreground black with stones and slags;
Beyond, a line of heights; and higher
All barred with long white cloud the scornful crags;
And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight poured
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
As fit for every mood of mind,
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there,
Not less than truth designed.

. . . . . .

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx
Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair

[1] olive trees.

Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;[2]
An angel looked at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise,
A group of Houris bowed to see
The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son[3]
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watched by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,
To list a foot-fall, ere he saw
The wood-nymph,[4] stayed the Ausonian king to hear
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrailed,
And many a tract of palm and rice,
The throne of Indian Cama[5] slowly sailed
A summer fanned with spice.

Or sweet Europa's[6] mantle blew unclasped,
From off her shoulder backward borne;
From one hand drooped a crocus; one hand grasped
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flushed Ganymede,[7] his rosy thigh
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot thro' the sky
Above the pillared town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, designed.

. . . . .

Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung,
Moved of themselves, with silver sound;
And with choice paintings of wise men I hung
The royal dais round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father[8] of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snowed upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely planned
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toiled onward, pricked with goads and stings;
Here played, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or bind
All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man declined,
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod; and those great bells
Began to chime. She took her throne;
She sat betwixt the shining oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

And thro' the topmost oriels' colored flame
Two godlike faces gazed below;
Plato the wise, and large-browed Verulam,[9]
The first of those who know.

And all those names that in their motion were
Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazoned fair
In diverse raiment strange;

[2] St. Cecilia, patron saint of music and reputed inventor of the organ. See Dryden's *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day* and *Alexander's Feast*, I, pp. 698, 699.

[3] King Arthur. See Malory's *Morte Darthur*, I, pp. 208 ff.

[4] The wood-nymph Egeria instructed King Numa Pompilius of Rome (Ausonia).

[5] the Hindu god of love.

[6] carried off by Zeus who had assumed the form of a bull.

[7] Trojan boy carried off to Olympus by Zeus, who had assumed the form of an eagle. He became cup-bearer to the gods.

[8] Homer.

[9] Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam; see I, p. 377.

Thro' which the lights, rose, amber, emerald, blue,
Flushed in her temples and her eyes,
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon,[10] drew
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong
Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echoed song
Throb thro' the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible earth,
Lord of the senses five;

Communing with herself: "All these are mine,
And let the world have peace or wars,
'Tis one to me." She—when young night divine
Crowned dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollowed moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapt her hands and cried,
"I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich and wide
Be flattered to the height.

"O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
O shapes and hues that please me well!
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

"O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

"In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep."[11]

Then of the moral instinct would she prate,
And of the rising from the dead,

As hers by right of full-accomplished Fate;
And at the last she said:

"I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all."

. . . . . .

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flashed thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prospered; so three years
She prospered; on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
Struck thro' with pangs of hell.[12]

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turned her sight
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote "Mene, mene,"[13] and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was born
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
Laughter at her self-scorn.

"What! is not this my place of strength," she said,
"My spacious mansion built for me,
Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid
Since my first memory?"

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; and unawares
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,
And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,
And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,
That stood against the wall.

[10] the large statue near Thebes in Egypt which was supposed to give forth music when first struck by the morning rays.

[11] See *Matthew*, 8·28-33, where the story is told of the herd of swine who were possessed by devils and ran down into the sea and perished.

[12] See *Acts*, 12 21-23

[13] The mysterious warning written on the wall at the Feast of Belshazzar, foretelling the end of his kingdom. See *Daniel*, 5 24-27

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
  Or power of movement, seemed my soul,
'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
  Making for one sure goal;

A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand,
  Left on the shore, that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
  Their moon-led waters white;

A star that with the choral starry dance
  Joined not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
  Rolled round by one fixed law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curled.
  "No voice," she shrieked in that lone hall,
"No voice breaks thro' the stillness of this world;
  One deep, deep silence all!"

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,
  Inwrapt tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,
  Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
  And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
  No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
  And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,
  And all alone in crime.

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
  With blackness as a solid wall,
Far off she seemed to hear the dully sound
  Of human footsteps fall:

As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,
  In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
  Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
  Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry
Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, "I have found
  A new land, but I die."

She howled aloud, "I am on fire within,
  There comes no murmur of reply.
What is it that will take away my sin,
  And save me lest I die?"

So when four years were wholly finished,
  She threw her royal robes away.
"Make me a cottage in the vale," she said,
  "Where I may mourn and pray.

"Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
  So lightly, beautifully built;
Perchance I may return with others there
  When I have purged my guilt." (1832, 1842)

The Lotos-Eaters

This poem is based on the ninth book of the *Odyssey*, which tells of Ulysses' visit to the enchanting land of the Lotophagi, where the sailors who had tasted the sweet fruit called the lotos lost all desire to return to their native Greece.

The opening stanzas constitute another notable nineteenth-century example of the Spenserian stanza.

"Courage!" he[1] said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed; and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset lingered low adown
In the red West; thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seemed the same!

[1] Ulysses (Odysseus).

And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more;"
And all at once they sang, "Our island home[2]
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

Choric Song

1

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

2

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"—
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

3

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

4

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labor be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

5

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,

[2] Ithaca, a small island west of Greece

And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

6

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears; but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile;
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

7

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelid still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colored water falling
Thro' many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

8

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak,
The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone;
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

(1832, 1842)

Morte d'Arthur[1]

This poem was later incorporated into *The Passing of Arthur* in the *Idylls of the King*.

So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea,
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonness about their lord,
King Arthur; then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot,[2] as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin[3] sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride; for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known.
But now delay not; take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere;
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."
To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."
So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.
There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw; but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."
To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight;
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief[4] and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."
Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:
"And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost forever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.

[1] Cf. Malory's account of the same incidents, I, pp. 213 ff.
[2] Arthur's capital.
[3] the magician in the legends of Arthur.
[4] beloved.

Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the lake;
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence;
But now much honor and much fame were lost."
So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.
Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."
To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence;
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."
Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles[5] of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur;
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

[5] icebergs

And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.
Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out; what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I looked again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."
And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight.
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."
So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.
But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lol the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.
Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,

Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.
Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge."
And to the barge they came. There those three queens
Put forth their hands, and took the king, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood; for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parched with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the king;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.
Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."
And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."
So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

(1842)

Ulysses

This dramatic monologue is one of Tennyson's most admired poems. Ulysses, the speaker, is represented as having finished the travels described in the *Odyssey*. Now living idly on his island of barren crags with his aged wife, Penelope, he longs to set out once more upon the waters. The fiction of his discontent is derived not from Homer but from a hint in Dante's *Inferno* (Canto XXVI).

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel. I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades[1]
Vexed the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met.
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains. But every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all. But something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,[2]
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

(1842)

[1] a group of stars associated with the rainy season.

Locksley Hall

In this romantic dramatic monologue the speaker, still a young man, revisits Locksley Hall, the home of his youth. Embittered by memories of an unhappy love affair, he eventually consoles himself by recalling his youthful vision of a peaceful and prosperous future world. There are absurdities in the poem, but they are such as might be expected of an impulsive young man. If criticism is to be brutally frank, it must be admitted that some of the passages in the poem are themselves as poetically dreary as the landscape; many others, however, are justly famous for their beauty.

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn;
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

[2] the Islands of the Blessed, where heroes went after death.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion[1] sloping slowly to the west.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed;

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.—

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;
In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

[1] Orion and the Pleiads are among the brightest of the groups of stars.

And she turned—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong;"
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper thronged my pulses with the fullness of the spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be; thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is; thou art mated with a clown,

And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy; think not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him, it is thy duty; kiss him, take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought;
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead of the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years should come
As the many-wintered crow that leads the clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak and move;
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly; love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widowed marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whispered by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow; get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine, a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down; my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his; it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffered"—Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?
Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is thronged with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy; what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are rolled in vapor, and the winds are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honor feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do.

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder storm;

Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumphed, ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint.
Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point;

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn.

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moldered string?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain.

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, matched with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat,

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starred;—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing-space;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive, and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon![2]

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.[3]

Mother-Age,—for mine I knew not,—help me as when life begun;
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapor from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

(1842)

Break, Break, Break

This lyric was composed "in a Lincolnshire lane at five o'clock in the morning between blossoming hedges." Like *In Memoriam* it was inspired by Tennyson's grief on the death of Arthur Henry Hallam.

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

(1842)

Songs from *The Princess*

These songs are justly considered to be among the finest in our literature. It is, perhaps, possible to enjoy them more thus detached from the main body of the larger work; *The Princess*, for all its element of comedy, is vexing in its shortsighted conviction that woman, because of her biological function, is necessarily unfit for the larger enterprises of the world.

Tennyson's wonderful artistry is nowhere better illustrated than in the third, sixth, and seventh songs, where the lyric mood is perfectly sustained despite the absence of rhyme.

[2] See *Joshua*, 10:12-13, for the story of his causing the moon to stand still in Ajalon.
[3] China.

1

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon;
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

2

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O, hark, O, hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O, sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

3

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

4

Home they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swooned, nor uttered cry.
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Called him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."

5

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape,
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answered thee?
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are sealed;
I strove against the stream and all in vain;
Let the great river take me to the main.
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.

6

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The fire-fly wakens; waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë[1] to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake.
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

7

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold, the splendor of the hills?
But cease to move so near the heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirited purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the Silver Horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors.
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air.
So waste not thou, but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

(1847-50)

From *In Memoriam A. H. H.*

Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's intimate friend, who was engaged to marry the poet's sister, died in Vienna in 1833. This loss plunged Tennyson only deeper into the mood of depression into which he had begun to fall. Upon the appearance of a volume (1832) containing such exquisite creations as *The Lady of Shalott, Œnone,* and *The Lotos-Eaters,* he had been mercilessly attacked in the *Quarterly Review.* Broken-hearted at Hallam's death, too poor to marry the girl he loved, and advised by some persons to give up writing poetry, Tennyson was discouraged, and published almost nothing until 1842. But during these years he was still busy working, and he composed among other poems a series of elegies, recording his great grief over his bereavement. Until some time before their appearance in 1850, when he decided to arrange them as a single composition under the title of *In Memoriam,* he continued to add to their number. In order to give them unity he abandoned the order in which they had been written.

Despite their agreement in tone and metre, however, the various sections of *In Memoriam* fall into individual groups—an inevitable result of the manner in which

[1] The earth is compared to Danae, whom Zeus in the form of a shower of gold visited in her tower, where her father had confined her to keep her from access to men

they had been conceived. This failure to achieve an artistic entity prevents *In Memoriam* from being ranked with *Lycidas* and *Adonais*, though it has been rather more widely admired by the general public. The quality of the verse itself, moreover, is uneven, for *In Memoriam* contains some of Tennyson's best and poorest poetry. The poet ranges through the various shades of fear and doubt that beset him in his sorrow and ultimately finds relief through a deeper faith in God and in humanity. *In Memoriam* is a testimonial of Tennyson's religious belief, important for its reflecting a tendency of the age. It is an argument against the rejection of the soul's immortality. Without subscribing to any orthodoxy, Tennyson feels that upon the conviction of the soul's deathlessness all of mankind's hopes must be based.

I

I held it truth, with him[1] who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
And find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned,
Let darkness keep her raven gloss.
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with Death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
The long result of love, and boast,
"Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn."

5

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

6

One writes, that "other friends remain,"
That "loss is common to the race"—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more.
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
That pledgest now thy gallant son,
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor,—while thy head is bowed,
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, "here to-day,"
Or, "here to-morrow will he come."

O, somewhere, meek unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;
And thinking "this will please him best,"
She takes a riband or a rose;

For he will see them on to-night;
And with the thought her color burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

[1] Goethe, the great German poet (1749-1832).

And, even when she turned, the curse
Had fallen, and her future lord
Was drowned in passing thro' the ford,
Or killed in falling from his horse.

O, what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me, no second friend.

7

Dark house,[2] by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

11

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

[2] Hallam's house in Wimpole Street, London.

15

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day:
The last red leaf is whirled away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest cracked, the waters curled,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dashed on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver
That all thy motions[3] gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags the laboring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

16

What words are these have fall'n from me?
Can calm despair and wild unrest
Be tenants of a single breast,
Or sorrow such a changeling be?

Or doth she only seem to take
The touch of change in calm or storm;
But knows no more of transient form
In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark
Hung in the shadow of a heaven?
Or has the shock, so harshly given,
Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
And staggers blindly ere she sink?
And stunned me from my power to think
And all my knowledge of myself;

And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,
And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan?

[3] motions of the ship bearing Hallam's body back to England.

29

With such compelling cause to grieve
As daily vexes household peace,
And chains regret to his decease,
How dare we keep our Christmas-eve,

Which brings no more a welcome guest
To enrich the threshold of the night
With showered largess of delight
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
Entwine the cold baptismal font,
Make one wreath more for Use and Wont,
That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
Gray nurses, loving nothing new—
Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They too will die.

30

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
A rainy cloud possessed the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gamboled, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech;
We heard them sweep the winter land;
And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang;
We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year; impetuously we sang.

We ceased; a gentler feeling crept
Upon us: surely rest is meet.
"They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet,"
And silence followed, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang: "They do not die
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;

"Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gathered power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil."

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

54

O, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

55

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

78

Again at Christmas[4] did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve.

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who showed a token of distress?
No single tear, no type of pain—
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

96

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true;

Perplext in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,[5]
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

99

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
So loud with voices of the birds,
So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red
On yon swollen brook that bubbles fast
By meadows breathing of the past,
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves
A song that slights the coming care,
And Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
To myriads on the genial earth,
Memories of bridal, or of birth,
And unto myriads more, of death.

O wheresoever those may be,
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
To-day they count as kindred souls;
They know me not, but mourn with me.

[4] The second Christmas after Hallam's death. See sections 30 and 105 for other Christmases.

[5] Moses saw God in the cloud of fire and smoke on Mount Sinai. Meantime the Israelites below, not seeing him, were worshiping a golden calf. See *Exodus*, 19:16-25; 32:1-6.

106

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

107

It is the day when he was born,
A bitter day that early sank
Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapor, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpened eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
Above the wood which grides and clangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
To darken on the rolling brine
That breaks the coast. But fetch the wine,
Arrange the board and brim the glass;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
To make a solid core of heat;
Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
Of all things ev'n as he were by;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
With books and music, surely we
Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
And sing the songs he loved to hear.

108

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, tho' with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies:
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

116

Is it, then, regret for buried time
That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
And meets the year, and gives and takes
The colors of the crescent prime?

Not all: the songs, the stirring air,
The life re-orient out of dust,
Cry thro' the sense to hearten trust
In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret: the face will shine
Upon me, while I muse alone,
And that dear voice, I once have known
Still speak to me of me and mine.

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
For days of happy commune dead,
Less yearning for the friendship fled
Than some strong bond which is to be.

117

O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after bliss;

That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet,
And unto meeting, when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
And every span of shade that steals,
And every kiss of toothed wheels,
And all the courses of the suns.

118

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant laboring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branched from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crowned with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

126

Love is and was my lord and king,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my king and lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
That moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

127

And all is well, tho' faith and form
Be sundered in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, even tho' thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine[6]
Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar, in his rags!
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
The fortress crashes from on high,
The brute earth lightens to the sky,
And the great Æon sinks in blood,

[6] The French Revolution of 1848 was the third, others having occurred in 1789 and 1830.

And compassed by the fires of hell;
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
And smilest, knowing all is well.

130

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What are thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mixed with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

131

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears
A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

(written 1833-1850)

The Charge of the Light Brigade

Tennyson's famous ode to duty-despite-semantic-confusion perpetuates the memory of an incident of glorious folly in the Crimean War. At Balaclava, on September 26, 1854, Lord Lucan, misunderstanding an order of Lord Raglan's, directed Lord Cardogan to charge with his Light Cavalry directly into the fiery jaws of the Russian artillery. Of 673 officers and men taking part, 247 were killed or wounded. For years a favorite with schoolboy elocutionists, the poem has become in a less reverent age notorious as an illustration of "muddling through."

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league, onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabers bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabering the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the saber stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not,
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,

Cannon behind them
  Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
  Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
  All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
  Noble six hundred!

(1854, 1855)

Lyric from *Maud*

Come into the garden, Maud,
  For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
  I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
  And the musk of the rose is blown.

For a breeze of morning moves,
  And the planet of Love[1] is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
  On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
  To faint in his light, and to die.

All night have the roses heard
  The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirred
  To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
  And a hush with the setting moon.

I said to the lily, "There is but one,
  With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
  She is weary of dance and play."
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
  And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
  The last wheel echoes away.

I said to the rose, "The brief night goes
  In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
  For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine," so I sware to the rose,
  "For ever and ever, mine."

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
  As the music clashed in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
  For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
  Our wood, that is dearer than all;

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
  That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
  In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
  And the valleys of Paradise.

The slender acacia would not shake
  One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
  As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
  Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
  They sighed for the dawn and thee.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
  Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
  Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
  To the flowers, and be their sun.

There has fallen a splendid tear
  From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
  She is coming, my life, my fate.
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near";
  And the white rose weeps, "She is late";
The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear";
  And the lily whispers, "I wait."

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
  Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
  Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
  Had I lain for a century dead,
Would start and tremble under her feet,
  And blossom in purple and red.

(1855)

[1] Venus.

Milton

(Alcaics)[1]

O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starred from Jehovah's gorgeous armories,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset!
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

(1863)

The Higher Pantheism

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He, though He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why,
For is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel "I am I"?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams and stifled splendor and gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some; no God at all, says the fool,
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?

(1869)

[1] Alcaic verse invented by Alcaeus, a Greek lyric poet about 600 B.C. This is as close an imitation of the movement as seems possible in English.

Flower in the Crannied Wall

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

(1869)

The Revenge

A Ballad of the Fleet

Sir Richard Grenville, who had been commissioned, with Lord Howard, to capture the gold from Spanish vessels returning from the Americas, battled against an overwhelming number of Spanish ships off the Azores in 1591, and there received his death-wound. The account of this brave exploit of the *Revenge* and its men Tennyson found in Sir Walter Ralegh (See I, p. 365).

I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a fluttered bird, came flying from far away:

"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!"
Then swore Lord Thomas Howard: "'Fore God I am no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?"

2

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: "I know you are no coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain."

3

So Lord Howard passed away with five ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down below;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blessed him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain,
To the thumb-screw and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

4

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather bow.
"Shall we fight or shall we fly?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die!
There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set."
And Sir Richard said again: "We be all good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turned my back upon Don or devil yet."

5

Sir Richard spoke and he laughed, and we roared a hurrah, and so
The little *Revenge* ran on sheer into the heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick below;
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left were seen,
And the little *Revenge* ran on through the long sea-lane between.

6

Thousands of their soldiers looked down from their decks and laughed,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little craft
Running on and on, till delayed
By their mountain-like *San Philip* that, of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stayed.

7

And while now the great *San Philip* hung above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

8

But anon the great *San Philip*, she bethought herself and went,
Having that within her womb that had left her ill content:
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us hand to hand.

For a dozen times they came with their pikes and musketeers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

9

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shattered, and so could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?

10

For he said, "Fight on! fight on!"
Though his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer night was gone,
With a grisly wound to be dressed he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the head,
And he said, "Fight on! fight on!"

11

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far over the summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us all in a ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they feared that we still could sting,
So they watched what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maimed for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate strife;
And the sick men down in the hold were most of them stark and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder was all of it spent;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride:
"We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!"

12

And the gunner said, "Ay, ay," but the seamen made reply:
"We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let us go;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow."
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the foe.

13

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly foreign grace;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
"I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man and true;
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do.
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!"
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

14

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap

That he dared her with one little ship and his English few;
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew,
But they sank his body with honor down into the deep,
And they manned the *Revenge* with a swarthier alien crew,
And away she sailed with her loss and longed for her own;
When a wind from the lands they had ruined awoke from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to moan,
And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shattered navy of Spain,
And the little *Revenge* herself went down by the island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

(1878)

Rizpah

17—

Stirred by the analogy of a story he had read in a popular magazine with the Biblical tale of Rizpah (2 *Samuel* 21·1-14), Tennyson wrote this dramatic monologue. In the Bible story Rizpah's two sons were hanged by the Gibeonites to remove a famine from the land, and she kept a watch over their bodies until the rain fell.

1

Wailing, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother, come out to me!"
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon stares at the snow.

2

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself drenched with the rain.

3

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to fall?
I have taken them home, I have numbered the bones, I have hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you?* do you come as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so must it lie.

4

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what have you heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their spies—
But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to darken my eyes.

5

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you* know of the night,
The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost and the fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only made for the day.
I have gathered my baby together—and now you may go your way.

6

Nay—for it's kind of you, madam, to sit by an old dying wife.
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour of life.
I kissed my boy in the prison, before he went out to die.
"They dared me to do it," he said, and he never has told me a lie.
I whipped him for robbing an orchard once when he was but a child—

"The farmer dared me to do it," he said; he was always so wild—
And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never could rest.
The King should have made him a soldier, he would have been one of his best.

7

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never would let him be good;
They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he swore that he would;
And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when all was done
He flung it among his fellows—"I'll none of it," said my son.

8

I came into court to the judge and the lawyers. I told them my tale,
God's own truth—but they killed him, they killed him for robbing the mail.
They hanged him in chains for a show—we had always borne a good name—
To be hanged for a thief—and then put away—isn't that enough shame?
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set him so high
That all the ships of the world could stare at him, passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer who killed him and hanged him there.

9

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last good-bye;
They had fastened the door of his cell. "O mother!" I heard him cry.
I couldn't get back though I tried, he had something further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me away.

10

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that was dead,
They seized me and shut me up: they fastened me down on my bed.
"Mother, O mother!"—he called in the dark to me year after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that I couldn't but hear;
And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid and still
They let me abroad again—but the creatures had worked their will.

11

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it a theft?—
My baby, the bones that had sucked me, the bones that had laughed and had cried—
Theirs? O, no! they are mine—not theirs—they had moved in my side.

12

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kissed 'em, I buried 'em all—
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the churchyard wall.
My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment 'ill sound,
But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.

13

They would scratch him up—they would hang him again on the cursed tree.
Sin? O, yes, we are sinners, I know—let all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's goodwill toward men—
"Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord"—let me hear it again;
"Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering."
Yes, O, yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Savior lives but to bless.
He'll never put on the black cap[1] except for the worst of the worst,
And the first may be last—I have heard it in church—and the last may be first.
Suffering—O, long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind and the shower and the snow.

[1] to be worn by the judge when condemning the prisoner to death.

14

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never repented his sin.
How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you* of his kin?
Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the downs began,
The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that 'ill moan like a man?

15

Election, Election, and Reprobation[2]—it's all very well.
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in hell.
For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has looked into my care,
And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy, I know not where.

16

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your desire—
Do you think I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone to the fire?
I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me alone—
You have never borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.

17

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean to be kind,
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice in the wind—
The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call in the dark,
And he calls to me now from the church and not from the gibbet—for hark!
Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the walls—
Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

(1880)

[2] Theological terms: acceptance or rejection by God's decree.

Locksley Hall Sixty Years After

In *Locksley Hall* Tennyson presents a young man who, although he has lost his loved one, is still confident in his optimistic vision of human progress. In the sequel the young man has grown old and has come to view the contemporary world more darkly. In the interim of forty-four years between publication of the two poems, Tennyson had seen his early faith in a "great world" that would "spin forever down the ringing grooves of change" overshadowed by fear of democracy, ugly industrialism, and the materialism which he ascribed to Darwinian Evolution.

Late, my grandson! half the morning have I paced these sandy tracts,
Watched again the hollow ridges roaring into cataracts,

Wandered back to living boyhood while I heard the curlews call,
I myself so close on death, and death itself in Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless, the divine;
And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish past;
Babble, babble; our old England may go down in babble at last.

"Curse him!" curse your fellow-victim? call him dotard in your rage?
Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool a dotard's age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps she was not wise;
I remember how you kissed the miniature with those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms about my neck—
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasped my neck had flown;
I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment; will you sicken for her sake?
You, not you! your modern amorist is of easier, earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy failed me, Amy was a timid child;
But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never driven me wild

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn of spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer lease of life,
While she vows "till death shall part us," she, the would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings—father, mother—be content,
Even the homely farm can teach us there is something in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the ground,
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon the hound.

Crossed![1] for once he sailed the sea to crush the Moslem in his pride;
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the moldering aisle have stood,
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of our blood.

There again I stood today, and where of old we knelt in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in childbirth, dead the mother, dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged husband now—
I, this old white-headed dreamer, stooped and kissed her marble brow.

[1] The crossed feet showed he had been a Crusader

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses, passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the planet's dawning years—

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes fallen away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white above his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight against the foe,
Some through age and slow diseases, gone as all on earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, yet so lowly-sweet,
Woman to her inmost heart, and woman to her tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body and mind,
She that linked again the broken chain that bound me to my kind.

Here today was Amy with me, while I wandered down the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost at sea;
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art left to me

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be left alone,
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat beside her own.

Truth, for truth is truth, he worshiped, being true as he was brave;
Good, for good is good, he followed, yet he looked beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death as lord of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the pall!

Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death, but kept the deck,
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with the sinking wreck,

Gone forever! Ever? No—for since our dying race began,
Ever, ever, and forever was the leading light of man.

Those that in barbarian burials killed the slave, and slew the wife,
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds beyond the night;
Even the black Australian dying hopes he shall return, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The good, the true, the pure, the just—
Take the Charm "Forever" from them, and they crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of "Forward, forward," lost within a growing gloom;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,
Staled by frequence, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace!

"Forward" rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of "Forward" till ten thousand years have gone.

Far among the vanished races, old Assyrian kings would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted victors they.

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild Moguls,
Timur[2] built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand human skulls;

[2] Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1336?-1405), the savage Mongolian conqueror.

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquered Christian into flames.[3]

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Greatest[4] of the great;
Christian love among the Churches looked the twin of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coined himself a curse:
Rome of Caesar, Rome of Peter, which was crueler? which was worse?

France had shown a light to all men, preached a Gospel, all men's good;
Celtic Demos[5] rose a Demon, shrieked and slaked the light with blood.[6]

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the day begun—
Crowned with sunlight—over darkness—from the still unrisen sun.

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the primal clan?
"Kill your enemy, for you hate him," still, "your enemy" was a man.

Have we sunk below them? Peasants maim the helpless horse, and drive
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burned at midnight, found at morn,
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring, born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent mother! Are we devils? are we men?
Sweet Saint Francis of Assisi, would that he were here again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beast—whose pains are hardly less than ours!

[3] the religious persecutions of the Tudors
[4] Christ
[5] the "people" (Greek).
[6] (during the Reign of Terror).

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how all will end?
Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter of the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not that the hour will last.

Aye, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be wise—
When was age so crammed with menace? madness? written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober fact to scorn,
Cries to weakest as to strongest, "Ye are equals, equal-born."

Equal-born? Oh, yes, if yonder hill be level with the flat.
Charm us, orator, till the lion look no larger than the cat,

Till the cat through that mirage of overheated language loom
Larger than the lion—Demos end in working its own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier;[7] shall we fight her? shall we yield?
Pause! before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices from the field.[8]

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial scepter now,
Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take the suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only you and you,
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were wholly true.

Plowmen, shepherds, have I found, and more than once, and still could find,
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practiced hustings[9]-liar;
So the higher wields the lower, while the lower is the higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by right divine;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the sickening game;
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they shout her name.

Step by step we gained a freedom known to Europe, known to all;
Step by step we rose to greatness—through the tongueasters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them "old experience is a fool,"
Teach your flattered kings that only those who cannot read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek ones in their place;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal at her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith, without the hope,
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll their ruins down the slope.

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rimester, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues of art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—forward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage of your sewer;

[7] Russia was trying to assume control of Afghanistan
[8] (i.e. of the common people).
[9] platforms for political addresses.

Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism—
Forward, forward, aye, and backward, downward too into the abysm!

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising race of men;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into the beast again?

Only "dust to dust" for me that sicken at your lawless din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer world begin.

Heated am I? you—you wonder—well, it scarce becomes mine age—
Patience! let the dying actor mouth his last upon the stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall asleep?
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a deep?

Aye, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts, for I am gray;
After all the stormy changes shall we find a changeless May?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism[10] and Jacquerie,[11]
Some diviner force to guide us through the days I shall not see?

When the schemes and all the systems, kingdoms and republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love, and Truth;
All the millions one at length with all the visions of my youth?

All diseases quenched by Science, no man halt, or deaf, or blind;
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger mind?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue—
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion killed,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert tilled,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thousands millions, then—
All her harvests all too narrow—who can fancy warless men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever? late or soon?
Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her.—On this day and at this hour,
In this gap between the sand hills, whence you see the Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years ago—
She and I—the moon was falling greenish through a rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you see her now—
Here we stood and clasped each other, swore the seeming-deathless vow.—

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the dune, the grass!
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun himself will pass.

Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier earth of ours,
Closer on the sun, perhaps a world of never fading flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet[12] called the bringer home of all good things—

[10] extreme radicalism.
[11] a revolt of the French peasantry (1358).
[12] Sappho, Greek lyric poetess (about 600 B C.)

All good things may move in Hesper,[13] perfect peoples, perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendor or in Mars,
We should see the globe we groan in, fairest of their evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and madness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, "Would to God that we were there"?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the immeasurable sea,
Swayed by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well, be grateful for the sounding watchword "Evolution" here,

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us?[14] cried the king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong,

While the silent heavens roll, and suns along their fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

Many an aeon molded earth before her highest, man, was born,
Many an aeon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt, and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand!

Only That which made us meant us to be mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless heavens within the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, through the human soul;
Boundless inward in the atom, boundless outward in the Whole.

. . . . . .

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-guarded gate.
Not tonight in Locksley Hall—tomorrow—you, you come so late.

Wrecked—your train—or all but wrecked? a shattered wheel? a vicious boy!
Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well to wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

There the master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.

There the smoldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens[15] of the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry your "Forward," yours are hope and youth, but I—
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow with the cry,

[13] the evening star. [14] *Psalms*, 8.4.

[15] breeding places (usually for rabbits).

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now into the night;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for the light.

Light the fading gleam of even? light the glimmer of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly worst, or if she gain her earthly best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course of Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming curve.

Not the Hall tonight, my grandson! Death and Silence hold their own.
Leave the master[16] in the first dark hour of his last sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest, rustic squire,
Kindly landlord, boon companion—youthful jealousy is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the madness from your brain.
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have not lived in vain.

Youthful! youth and age are scholars yet but in the lower school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace are less and less;
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated hideousness!

There is one old hostel left us where they swing the Locksley shield,
Till the peasant cow shall butt the "lion[17] passant"[18] from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old Poetry, passing hence,
In the common deluge drowning old political common sense!

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that have fled!
All I loved are vanished voices, all my steps are on the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom disappears,
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of eighty years.

. . . . . .

In this hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his grave—
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all the moldering bricks—
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of six—

While I sheltered in this archway from a day of driving showers—
Peeped the winsome face of Edith like a flower among the flowers.

Here tonight! the Hall tomorrow, when they toll the chapel bell!
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, "I have loved thee well"?

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come to claim his bride,
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shrieked, and started from my side—

Silent echoes! You, my Leonard, use and not abuse your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him[19] who led the way,

[16] (of the Hall), Amy's deceased husband.

[17] the national emblem of Great Britain.
[18] walking (heraldry)
[19] see footnote 16.

Strove for sixty widowed years to help his homelier brother men,
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the school, and drained the fen.

Hears he now the voice that wronged him? who shall swear it cannot be?
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her heavenly best, a god must mingle with the game.
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains of the will.

Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the Highest Human Nature is divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.[20]

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with the past.
I that loathed have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will bear the pall;
Then I leave thee lord and master, latest lord of Locksley Hall.

(1886)

By an Evolutionist

The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
And the man said "Am I your debtor?"
And the Lord—"Not yet: but make it as clean as you can,
And then I will let you a better."

[20] (of the risen Christ).

I

If my body come from brutes, my soul uncertain, or a fable,
Why not bask amid the senses while the sun of morning shines,
I, the finer brute rejoicing in my hounds, and in my stable,
Youth and health, and birth and wealth, and choice of women and of wines?

II

What hast thou done for me, grim Old Age, save breaking my bones on the rack?
Would I had past in the morning that looks so bright from afar!

Old Age

Done for thee? starved the wild beast that was linkt with thee eighty years back.
Less weight now for the ladder-of-heaven that hangs on a star.

I

If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer than their own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the brute.

II

I have climbed to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire,
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher.

(1889)

Crossing the Bar

Tennyson requested that this poem be placed as the final one in editions of his works. A comparison of this with Browning's *Prospice* (see p. 533) affords an interesting study of the temperamental differences between the two poets.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

(1889)

Robert Browning

(1812-1889)

One of the healthiest and most virile of English poets, Robert Browning was born May 7, 1812, in Camberwell, then a suburb of London, where he lived for his first twenty-eight years. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England and himself somewhat gifted in the fine arts and letters. Though the fact that his parents were Nonconformists prevented their son's attendance at either of the great universities, the young Browning did not lack for cultural opportunities. The family library with its rich collection of curious and erudite books afforded him an education supplementary to what he could obtain at near-by schools. The elder Browning, who remained a sympathetic friend throughout his son's career (he lived until the poet's sixty-fifth year), was a devotee of medieval legend, and the boy came to know "Paracelsus, Faustus, and even Talmudic personages, personally." His mother was a skilled musician who developed Robert's taste so well that music was ever dear to him. Not far from the Camberwell home, too, stood the Dulwich Art Gallery, with which the lad became thoroughly familiar. Although he attended London University for a few months (1829-30), it was his home environment which equipped him with a varied and scholarly knowledge of the classics, music, history, art, and philosophy. His athletic physique and his wholesomely sociable nature prevented all this learning from becoming pedantry, and converted it into something alive and zestful.

His love for the poetry of Keats and Shelley (see *Memorabilia*, p. 507) made Browning resolve to become a poet too. In 1833 he published *Pauline* without selling a copy. Besides the interest attaching to its being his first opus, the poem is important for announcing Browning's conception of the poet as a historian of the human soul. To give expression to the human character, he felt that poetry must break the restraints of form and aim at naturalness of idiom. After a trip to Russia (1833), he for a while fluctuated in his choice of music, letters, or diplomacy as a career. *Paracelsus* (1835), though the reviewers ignored it, made him known as a poet to the literati of London. A social being, if ever there was one born, Browning soon got to know everyone. Carlyle, Landor, Leigh Hunt became his friends, and, later, Dickens and Wordsworth.

Paracelsus revealed the cornerstone of Browning's faith: that the striving for good, rather than the achieving it, is the test of spiritual strength. (To this idea he was later to give magnificent expression in *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*) Among his new friends was the actor Macready, the leading interpreter of Shakespeare. Believing Browning to possess dramatic gifts of a high order, he urged him to write plays for stage production. The poet's *Strafford* was performed unsuccessfully at Covent Garden in May, 1837. Thereafter he wrote several other dramas: *King Victor and King Charles* (1842); *The Return of the Druses* (1843); *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843)—the best of them; *Colombe's Birthday* (1844); *Luria* (1846); and *A Soul's Tragedy* (1846). A misunderstanding with Macready over the performance of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* resulted in Browning's gradual loss of interest in the theatre. His genius for dramatic expression was indeed great, but was not at home in the full-length play. It was in the shorter dramatic work, the closet-play *In a Balcony* (see p. 534) and in the dramatic monologues that he best displayed this side of his gifts.

In the meantime, from 1841 to 1846, he published a series of *Bells and Pomegranates* —eight in all; the name was intended to convey his "endeavor towards something like an alternation, or mixture, of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought." Number One contained *Pippa Passes* (1841), a poem in dramatic form, the product of a visit to Italy in 1838. This, his first completely successful work, is built upon a delightful idea. Pippa, a simple factory girl of Asolo, decides to spend her holiday by imagining herself in the situation of the four happiest people in town; she passes by the window of each, singing an innocent song, unaware that behind each window is occurring an intense soul-struggle. It is her song that decides the crisis of these beings whose fates she little dreams of having affected so profoundly. At the end of the day, not knowing that she has been the means of saving the souls of those she supposed more fortunate than herself, she goes home feeling that her holiday has slipped through her fingers.

Pippa Passes indicated the bent of Browning's genius in the four distinct dramatic episodes in which the soul-states of the characters come vividly alive. In 1842 appeared *Bells and Pomegranates, No. III,* the *Dramatic Lyrics.* These were shorter poems which included *Cavalier Tunes, My Last Duchess,* and *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.* It was in the two last-named masterpieces that he discovered the form perfect for his dramatic and psychological interests: the dramatic monologue. In these compressed fragments of drama, we meet at a crucial moment of his life some individual, historical or imaginary, who reveals to us the secrets of his soul. Browning was concerned with achieving complete veracity, and his keen sympathies and lively imagination enabled him to picture villains with as full a sense of fact as men of beautiful character. His skill in portraiture is that of the master novelist; but this concentrated kind of composition often compresses a life history into a hundred lines.

In 1845 appeared the seventh series of *Bells and Pomegranates,* the *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics,* containing *The Lost Leader, The Bishop Orders His Tomb,* and the first part of *Saul.* Early in the same year he began his correspondence with the invalid poet, Elizabeth Barrett, with whom he was already in love by the time he met her five months later. For many years she had not left her room where she was virtually imprisoned by her father's fear for her life. She, on her part, was in love with him, too, but she dreaded to burden his vigorous manhood with a tubercular wife. After a whirlwind courtship, during which she took a new interest in life and seemed to collect new resources of strength within herself, he proposed marriage to her. Her father was adamant in his refusal to give his consent to what he was certain would hasten his daughter's impending death. Browning, confident that his love could rescue her from her couch of illness, insisted on an elopement. Secretly they were married in September 1846 and ran off to Italy. In Florence they took apartments at the Casa Guidi, and made their home there for the rest of Mrs. Browning's life.

They were extremely happy in their devotion to each other, and Mrs. Browning enjoyed fifteen years of better health than she had known since her childhood. Her love for him is immortalized in her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, as his for her is recorded in *One Word More, Prospice*, and the end of the first book of *The Ring and the Book*. They traveled over Italy and even revisited London. Their life together was filled with joy and accomplishment. They genuinely revered each other's gifts; he, indeed, though much her superior, felt her talent greater than his own. He produced now his two splendid volumes of *Men and Women* (1855), which contained *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Andrea del Sarto*—both inspired by his reading of the Renaissance biographer Vasari (see p. 1165)—*The Statue and the Bust, The Last Ride Together, Memorabilia,* and *Saul.*

In June 1861 Mrs. Browning died, and Browning's perfect life was broken. What her death meant to him can be sensed in *Prospice*, which appeared in his volume of *Dramatis Personae* (1864). He left Florence forever and returned to London. But though Browning lived constantly with the memories of his wife, he was too healthy to disintegrate after even so great a loss. For a year he nursed his grief and saw few people. Such behavior, he at last decided, would have never been approved by the woman he mourned, and so he began once more to mix with the world, and before long had found his circle of friends. But whatever peace he knew came not from the world but from his work, to which he now applied himself with greater energy than ever.

Recognition had been accorded him very slowly. Alienated by the novelty of Browning's poetic manner, the public preferred the less muscular art of Tennyson. Among the élite Browning's reputation had indeed steadily grown. His first book to have anything like a real sale, however, was the *Dramatis Personae* of 1864. From then on his readers appreciably increased in number. But even as late as 1871 he considered the twenty-five hundred copies which *Balaustion's Adventure* had sold in five months as very good "for the likes of me." The year before Tennyson had sold forty thousand copies of the *Idylls of the King!*

It was his most ambitious work, *The Ring and the Book* (1868-69), which really won him general acclaim. One day in June 1860, the year before his wife's death, he had come across an "old yellow book," bound in vellum, on a street bookstall in Florence. It was a dry, factual account of an old murder trial. For some reason the outline of the story appealed deeply to his imagination. At first he did nothing with it. But after his wife's death, he sought relief in plunging into work on his "murder poem," an epical poem in twelve books. Toward the end of 1864 he began the actual writing, and by 1869 it was finished. This masterwork is the triumph of Browning's method as employed earlier in the dramatic monologues. The plot itself is not complicated. Guido, a cruel patrician of Arezzo, tortures his innocent wife Pompilia until she escapes, under the protection of Caponsacchi, a young monk, to the home of her parents in Rome. Her husband follows her, and murders her and her parents. In the end Guido is condemned to death. It is the technique of storytelling which makes *The Ring and the Book* remarkable. From every point of view the narrative is told, each character shedding new light upon the others and the facts of the case, until we realize how elusive human truth really is.

Accolades of praise were now heaped upon Browning for this profound achievement. He was a public figure to whom long-delayed awards were freely given. Some of them, such as the founding of many Browning Societies in England and America, were not entirely to his taste. In 1871 he returned to Italy, where he remained for most of his last years. The most important of his later volumes are *Dramatic Idyls* (1879, 1880), *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance* (1887), and *Asolando* (1889). He enjoyed robust health until the end. On December 12, 1889, he died at the home of his son Pen, in Venice. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

When the "Browning cult" began to subside it was for a while fashionable to consider him not truly a poet. Compared with his great contemporary, Tennyson, he may

indeed seem boisterous. His verse sometimes has not the ring of true poetry. But that is not because of any admixture of prose in his conceptions. His head was perhaps too full of exciting impressions. Everything that pulsed with life stirred him deeply, and he poured forth in superabundance his zest for living. He himself admitted that he was less interested in the contemplation of nature than of human beings. And everything that concerned human beings was vital to him; hence his wide knowledge of history, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. He found subjects for his poetry in all times and climes, but the Italian Renaissance, with its brilliant record of strong personalities, suggested some of his luckiest themes. His own buoyant health of mind and body kept him sane and sound; as a poet he could with the same objectivity adventure into the criminal, the sordid, the vulgar, the holy, the saintly, and the innocent. Browning will be remembered, said Oscar Wilde, "as the most supreme writer of fiction, it may be, that we have ever had. His sense of dramatic situation was unrivaled." Moreover, his art as a poet is so subtle and unobtrusive that it has too often been overlooked. He could turn a beautiful lyric or a rollicking piece of light verse with equal skill, and in his dramatic monologues he could interweave the authentic rhythms of human speech masterfully with the regular meter of the line. As for his philosophy, it is, like Plato's and Shelley's, based upon love as man's chief test of soul. Unlike Tennyson and Arnold, Browning was confident that the very incompleteness of human desires was a testimony to the existence of a life hereafter. Energy, courage, and love were the great virtues for him and "sloth of living" the chief vice.

Cavalier Tunes

These songs are intended to capture the devil-may-care spirit of the Cavaliers who remained loyal to King Charles I (1625-49) during his struggle against the Puritans.

Marching Along

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament[1] swing:
And, pressing[2] a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym[3] and such carles[4]
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles![5]
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're—

Chorus.—Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry[6] as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert[7] is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,
Cho.—Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!

[1] The members of the Parliament of 1640 who opposed the king wore their hair short as a protest against the long curled hair of the Cavaliers.
[2] pressing into service.
[3] John Pym (1584-1643), leader of Parliament.
[4] churls. [5] debates.
[6] Sir Arthur Hazelrigg, Nathaniel Fiennes, and Sir Henry Vane, the younger, all of the Parliamentary party. Vane was once governor of Massachusetts.
[7] Prince Rupert of Bavaria, nephew of Charles I and commander of his cavalry.

Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,
Cho.—March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

Give a Rouse

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!
Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found[1] me in wine you drank once?
Cho.—King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's[2] damned troopers shot him?
Cho.—King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

Boot and Saddle

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

(1842)

My Last Duchess

This famous dramatic monologue, whose setting is Ferrara, shows Browning's gift for compressing drama into a comparatively few lines. The characterization is admirable. The duke is talking to an envoy from the count whose daughter he plans to wed. As he speaks of his former wife's portrait, we see into the cold materialism of his heart and sense the sweetness and graciousness of the woman who could not please him. Browning seems to reflect that it is possible for a man to have, like the duke, refined artistic tastes and still be inhuman.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now. Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned—since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I—
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek. Perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat"; such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the west,

[1] furnished.
[2] Oliver Cromwell's.

The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed, the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands[1];
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

(1842)

Incident of the French Camp

After Napoleon's remains had been brought from St. Helena and his second funeral had been held at Paris in December 1841, there was a great revival of interest in his career. This poem, one of Browning's most popular works, was composed in the following year. It is based on an actual incident in 1809, though the hero was a man, not a boy.

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused, "My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes[1]
Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon!
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes;
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

(1842)

[1] Browning said that "the commands were that she should be put to death, or he might have had her shut up in a convent."

[1] celebrated marshal under Napoleon.

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

As in *My Last Duchess*, we understand the baseness of the speaker, despite his good opinion of himself. His hated fellow monk is equally vivid to us as a man of beautiful character. Perhaps no poet before him would have dreamed of opening and closing a poem with such phrases as Browning here employs.

Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi![1] I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian[2] frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp.

Oh, those melons! If he's able
We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?[3]

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On gray paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine* . . .
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ,*
Ave, Virgo![4] Gr-r-r—you swine!

(1842)

[1] Greetings to you. The monks conversed in Latin.

[2] The Arians believed that Christ was inferior to God, who had created Him. The monk wants to show his belief in the Trinity.

[3] a sect whose religion was a combination of Christianity and the Persian Zoroastrianism.

[4] Hail, Virgin, full of grace.

How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix

Browning wrote of this poem: "There is no sort of historical foundation about 'Good News from Ghent.' I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel, off

the African Coast, after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home." Although the circuitous route of the riders reveals that the poet did not have an open atlas by his side, the poem was intended to convey a "general impression of the characteristic warfare and besieging which abound in the Annals of Flanders."

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gatebolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique[1] right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Duffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray;

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

(1845)

[1] the pommel of the saddle

The Lost Leader

Browning's note on this poem is interesting

19 Warwick-Crescent, W., Feb. 24, '75

DEAR MR. GROSART,—I have been asked the question you now address me with, and as duly answered it, I can't remember how many times; there is no sort of objection to one more assurance or rather confession, on my part, that I *did* in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account; had I intended more, above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about "handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon." These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet, whose defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was by a regular face-about of his special party, was to my juvenile apprehension, and even mature consideration, an event to deplore. But just as in the tapestry on my wall I can recognize figures which have *struck out* a fancy, on occasion, that though truly enough thus derived, yet would be preposterous as a copy, so, though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the "very effigies" of such a moral and intellectual superiority.

Faithfully yours,

ROBERT BROWNING

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,—
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not through his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation, and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

(1845)

Home-Thoughts, From Abroad

This poem in praise of the English spring was actually written in England.

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
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!

And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower—
Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!
(1845)

Home-Thoughts, From the Sea

This poem reflects the author's patriotic sentiments on passing the Bay of Trafalgar.

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the northwest died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest northeast distance dawned Gibraltar grand and gray;
"Here and here did England help me; how can I help England?"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.
(1845)

Meeting at Night

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!
(1845)

Parting at Morning

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,[1]
And the need of a world of men for me.
(1845)

[1] the sun

The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church

ROME, 15—

"I know no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit,—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice*, put into as many lines, Browning's being also the antecedent work. The worst of it is that this kind of concentrated writing needs so much solution before the reader can fairly get the good of it, that people's patience fails them, and they give the thing up as insoluble, though, truly, it ought to be to the current of common thought like Saladin's talisman, dipped in clear water, not soluble altogether, but making the element medicinal."—*Ruskin.*

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not!
Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened[1] me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,[2]
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:

[1] cheated.
[2] the right-hand side as one faces the altar

Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,[3]
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,[4]
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Savior at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables[5] . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's moldy travertine[6]
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's[7] every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian[8] serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,[9]
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vişor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it!
Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!

[3] a cheap marble that splits into layers like an onion.
[4] a rush-basket.
[5] Note the incongruous mixture of pagan and Christian images.
[6] a cheap limestone much used in building at Rome.
[7] Cicero's. His Latin was the standard for purity.
[8] A Roman jurist (170-228) whose Latin style was inferior to Cicero's.
[9] in the sacrament of the Mass.

Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf—at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

(1845)

Garden Fancies

These two poems are brilliant studies in contrast. The first, probably inspired by the poet's mother's garden, deals with a place where a lover finds every growing thing sacred because of the looks and the touch of the beloved who has wandered in it. The second garden is without romance. Here a student walking through with a pedantic old volume, crabbed and dull in content as in title, impatiently throws it into a crevice of a decaying tree and comforts himself with bread, cheese, and the book of jolly Rabelais.

I. The Flower's Name

Here's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you, noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! Was it love or praise?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved forever!
Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II. Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis[1]

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime,
Just when the birds sang all together.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;

[1] Elizabeth Barrett wrote. "This poem is a great favorite with me—it is so new, and full of creeping, crawling, grotesque life."

For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
  In a castle of the Middle Age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
  When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
  Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
  —At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate;
Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
  To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
  Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
  Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
  And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
  And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
  And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake;
  And up I fished his delectable treatise.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
  With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
  And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
  Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
  Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

How did he like it when the live creatures
  Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft,[2] with serious features,
  Came in, each one, for his right of trover?[3]
—When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
  Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
  As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

All that life and fun and romping,
  All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
  And clasps were cracking and covers suppling!
As if you had carried sour John Knox
  To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
  And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
  Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit!*
  See the snug niche I have made on my shelf!
A's book shall prop you up, B's shall cover you,
  Here's C to be grave with, or D to be gay,
And with E on each side, and F right over you,
  Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

(1844, 1845)

Memorabilia

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
  And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
  How strange it seems and new!

But you were living before that,
  And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
  My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
  And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
  'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather,
  And there I put inside my breast,
A molted feather, an eagle feather!
  Well, I forget the rest.

(1855)

The Last Ride Together

I said—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
  Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
  Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,

[2] newt. [3] gaining possession of goods (legal).

Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end tonight?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this?
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed, my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labor, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for us who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And place them in rhyme, so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy. For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life forever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

(1855)

"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"

Browning often denied that this grotesque fantasy had any source other than the line which serves for its title, originally spoken by Edgar in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (III, iv). He pleaded not guilty to any allegorical intentions. "'Twas like this: one year in Florence, I had been very lazy; I resolved that I would write something every day. Well, the first day I wrote about some roses, suggested by a magnificent basket that some one had sent my wife. The next day Childe Roland came upon me as a kind of dream. I had to write it, then and there, and I finished it the same day, I believe. But it was simply that I had to do it. I did not know then what I meant beyond that, and I'm sure I don't know now. But I am very fond of it." The poet agreed, however, that if the meaning had to be capsulated in a phrase, something like "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" summed it up pretty well.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travelers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed—neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out through years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring—
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears, and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend"),

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves, and staves;
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.[1]

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; gray plain all round—
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; naught else remained to do.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve;
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
But cockle,[2] spurge,[2] according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove.

No! penury, inertness, and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills—I cannot help my case;
'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
Calcine[3] its clods, and set my prisoners free."

[1] one who has strayed.
[2] wild shrubs. [3] pulverize.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents[4]
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's[5] harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk
All hope of greenness? 'Tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud,
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there—
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

Alive? He might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped[6] neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draft of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art;
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

Giles then, the soul of honor—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and cursed!

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked—when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate[7] with flakes and spumes.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng;
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

Which, while I forded—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash?[8] Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No footprint leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's[9] tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

[4] wild grass.
[5] dock is a kind of weed.
[6] ridged
[7] spattered.
[8] puddle.
[9] Hell's (Old Testament).

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with—so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!—within a rood,
Bog, clay, and rubble, sand, and stark black dearth.

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

And just as far as ever from the end!
Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
To point my footstep further! At the thought
A great black bird, Apollyon's[10] bosom friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me—solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
In a bad dream, perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

Not see? because of night, perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft;
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay—
"Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!"

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*"

(1855)

[10] the devil's ("the angel of the bottomless pit," *Rev* 9:11)

Fra Lippo Lippi

Browning based this dramatic monologue about the fifteenth-century Florentine painter monk on the account in Vasari's *Lives of the Painters,* which is reprinted on page 1165.

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?

Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,[1]
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbors me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair[2]
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . Zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence,[3] hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father,
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—
"To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?" thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.

[1] a rich Florentine banker and ruler (1389-1464).

[2] He would like to use the officer as a model for his painting.

[3] The church of San Lorenzo in Florence.

Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books;
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is "amo," I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight[4] and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's[5] marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars,[6] to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried "'Tis ask and have;
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—"That's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
It's vapor done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!
Here's Giotto,[7] with his Saint a-praising God,
That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colors, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?

[4] the magistrates who governed Florence.
[5] the margin of the book he used in the choir.
[6] the Dominicans.
[7] Giotto (1267?-1337), famous Florentine artist and architect.

A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks naught.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old;
Brother Angelico's[8] the man, you'll find;
Brother Lorenzo[9] stands his single peer:
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi[10]—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works

[8] Fra Angelico (1387-1455), painter of religious subjects.
[9] Lorenzo Monaco, monk and painter.
[10] Tommaso Guidi, or Masaccio (1401-1428), really Lippo's master, not his pupil.

Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folk—remember matins,
Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence[11] six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.

[11] Saint Lawrence being roasted to death.

I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
. . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's![12] Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz[13] (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner[14] when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless, and moonstruck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
He made you and devised you, after all,
Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw—
His camel-hair[15] make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!"[16] So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,

[12] This refers to a picture painted for Saint Ambrose's Church in Florence, *The Coronation of the Virgin.*
[13] Job.
[14] Lippo's own head appears in a corner of the picture
[15] John the Baptist was clothed in camel's hair. See *Mark* 1:6.
[16] "This one did the work." Inscription on a scroll in the picture.

Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-by: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks!

(1855)

Andrea del Sarto

Called "The Faultless Painter"

For Vasari's account of Del Sarto (1486-1531), on which Browning based this monologue, see p. 1167.

John Kenyon, a friend of Browning's, asked the poet to purchase for him a copy of the picture of Andrea del Sarto and his wife which hangs in the Pitti Palace in Florence. Unable to find one, Browning sent Kenyon this poem in lieu of the picture.

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,[1]
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common grayness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such thing should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
I do what many dream of all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt

[1] a suburb on a hill above Florence.

This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's[2] outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate[3] who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari[4] sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo![5]
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Besides, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis,[6] that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.

[2] a mountain peak north of Florence.
[3] Raphael (1483-1520).
[4] See p 1165.
[5] Michelangelo (1475-1564), painter, sculptor, architect, and poet.
[6] Francis I of France had employed Andrea to paint for him at his palace of Fontainebleau. The king gave him money to buy pictures and statues in Italy, but Andrea bought a house for Lucrezia instead.

The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have labored somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard,[7] Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

(1855)

[7] Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).

Saul[1]

I

Said Abner,[2] "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he: "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harpstrings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The Tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion; and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the center, that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has weight

[1] Founded on *I Samuel*, 16:14-23, which tells the story of how David, the shepherd boy, drove out the evil spirit from King Saul of Israel by playing on his harp

[2] commander of Saul's army.

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand-house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here
To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang:—

IX

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draft of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest
I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all was for best?'
Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true:
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine:
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go),
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul."

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the center, was struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest
For their food in the ardors of summer. One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt hope and despair;
Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 't was Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For awhile there was trouble within me) what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put by?
He saith, "It is good"; still he drinks not: he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,

Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

"Yea, my King,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too, in turn,
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was to learn,
E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons; who in turn, fill the South and the North
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.
No! Again a long draft of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er the years!
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's!
Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid arise
A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!"

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on, and complete an adventure,—my shield and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavor
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep.
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron[3] upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron[4] retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and, ever more strong,
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile
Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: through my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
At this moment,—had love but the warrant love's heart to dispense!"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! outbroke—

XVII

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again

[3] a city in Palestine. [4] a brook near Jerusalem.

His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw,
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law.
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
In the king I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvelous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest),
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's day-spring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
To be run and continued, and ended—who knows? —or endure?
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure:
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
I will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth

To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my despair?
This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as struglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,
For the hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still,
Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers:
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it is so!"

(1845, 1855)

Love Among the Ruins

This exquisite poem recreates a landscape in melodiously soothing words carefully fitted to the subject. The chime of the unusual meter evokes the tinkle of a sheep's bells. To the spectator of a landscape of moldering ruins, there comes a girl aglow with love; her presence reminds him that one moment of human affection has more meaning than centuries of human vanity.

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep

Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop
Was the site once of a city great and gay
(So they say),
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to (else they run
Into one),
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.
And I know—while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys,[1] bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

(1855)

Up at a Villa — Down in the City

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

The speaker, very much the Italian gentleman, prefers city living, where all day long life is a feast. He looks contemptuously on life in the country, where he is forced to live because of his meager income. The bustle of life in town is dearer to him than anything nature has to offer.

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,

[1] causeways.

The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.
Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool!

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive-trees.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete, with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade, it sings and springs; in the shine, such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see, though you linger!
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons! I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessèd church-bells begin.
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By-and-by there's the traveling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet[1] breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office, such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves[2] were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so,
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,[3]
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming), "the skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than ever he preached."

[1] the prelude to a Punch-and-Judy show.
[2] (i.e. radicals).
[3] (i.e. all the abilities of these great men united in one man).

Noon strikes—here sweeps the procession! our
Lady borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven
swords[4] stuck in her heart!
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle*
the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest
pleasure in life.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls, wine, at
double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what
oil pays passing the gate[5]
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me,
not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the
pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks
with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-hold-
ing the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a
cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the
better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle*
the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such
pleasure in life!

(1855)

A Toccata of Galuppi's

In one of his daintiest poems, Browning recreates Venice with its charming combination of gaiety and decay. The old Venetians sought jollity, lovemaking, or knowledge; but all alike went to dusty death, unheedful of the higher thirsts of the soul. A toccata is a musical composition, usually for organ or harpsichord; Baldassare Galuppi (1706-85) was a Venetian composer. Browning uses the title to capture the Venetian spirit, not to refer to any specific musical piece.

Oh Galuppi, Baldassare, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me
deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such
a heavy mind!

Here you come with your old music, and here's all
the good it brings.

[4] symbolizing the seven sorrows of Mary.
[5] (of the city, and hence taxable)

What, they lived once thus at Venice where the
merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's[1] is, where the Doges used to
wed the sea with rings?[2]

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 't is
arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they
kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

Did young people take their pleasure when the
sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever
to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the mor-
row, do you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips
so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-
flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man
might base his head?

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break
talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger
on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the
clavichord?[3]

What? Those lesser thirds[4] so plaintive, sixths
diminished,[4] sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those
solutions—"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last!
we can but try!"

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still
as happy?"—"Yes. And you?"
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did I stop them, when
a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence[5] till it must be
answered to!

[1] the great cathedral in Venice.
[2] The Doge of Venice threw a ring into the sea annually in commemoration of the victory of the Venetian fleet over Frederick Barbarossa.
[3] prototype of the modern piano.
[4] The minor third is a common interval; the diminished sixth is quite uncommon.
[5] The dominant, the chord built on the fifth note of the scale, is the most "insistent" harmony in any musical composition.

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep through every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

"Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot be!

"As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

(1855)

Pippa's Song

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

(1841)

Misconceptions

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

(1855)

Two in the Campagna[1]

In this poem the man laments the inevitable imperfection of love: two human beings can never become one. He is forever finding and losing again the perfect union he desires with his beloved.

I wonder do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,

[1] the country outside Rome

(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
  Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

Help me to hold it! First it left
  The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
  Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

Where one small orange cup amassed
  Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
  Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece
  Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
  An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
  Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
  Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
  Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
  How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

I would that you were all to me,
  You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
  Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

I would I could adopt your will,
  See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
  At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

No, I yearn upward, touch you close,
  Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
  And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far
  Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
  Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

Just when I seemed about to learn!
  Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
  Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

(1855)

Rabbi Ben Ezra

Ibn Ezra was a medieval Jewish poet, physician, and philosopher, who was born at Toledo toward the close of the eleventh century and lived nearly one hundred years. His philosophy was one highly sympathetic to Browning, for which reason the poet chose to deliver one of the clearest expressions of his own philosophy through the person of the Rabbi.

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned;
Youth shows but half. Trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate; folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast.
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail.
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me;
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use.
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn;
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn!"

Not once beat "Praise be thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too.
Perfect I call thy plan;
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete—I trust what thou shalt do."?

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest.
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh today
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term.
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god, though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new;
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapon to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold.
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame.
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray.
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth. Here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain;
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act tomorrow what he learns today.
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age; wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me. We all surmise,
They this thing, and I that; whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice.

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Aye, note that Potter's wheel,[1]
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize today!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure.
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be.
Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance;
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest;
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,

[1] See *Isaiah* 64:8. Also Fitzgerald's *Rubáiyát* (p. 561), lines 325-360.

Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake thy thirst.
So, take and use thy work;
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

(1864)

Prospice

Written shortly after Mrs. Browning's death, this poem shows the rugged virility of Browning's character. It offers an interesting comparison with Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar* (see p. 495). The closing lines refer to the poet's wife. The title means *look forward*.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go;
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

(1864)

Why I Am a Liberal

"Why?" Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be,—
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid man- each in his degree
Also God-guided—bear, and gayly, too?

But little do or can the best of us:
That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

(1885)

Summum Bonum

This poem reflects Browning's conviction that human love is the most perfect reflection of the love of God. The title is an old Latin phrase often employed in ethics to denote the highest end for which human beings can strive. Medieval scholasticism argued that the *summum bonum* (the ultimate good) for man was the love of God.

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:
Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and—how far above them—
Truth, that's brighter than gem,
Trust, that's purer than pearl,—
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me
In the kiss of one girl.

(1889)

Epilogue to Asolando

The concluding poem in Browning's last volume, this *Epilogue* appeared on the day the poet died.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me?

Oh, to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel!
—Being—who?

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.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed—fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

(1889)

Now

This late poem deals once more with a favorite theme of the author's—the grasping of "the good minute."

Out of your whole life give but a moment!
All of your life that has gone before,
All to come after it,—so you ignore,
So you make perfect the present,—condense,
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,
Thought and feeling and soul and sense—
Merged in a moment which gives me at last
You around me for once, you beneath me, above me—
Me—sure that despite of time future, time past,—
This tick of our life-time's one moment you love me!
How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet—
The moment eternal—just that and no more—
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet!

(1889)

In a Balcony

It is easy to see why Browning should have been tempted to write for the theater. No poet of his century excels him in dramatic power and subtle delineation of human character. Even the great actor of the day, Macready, was deceived into believing that Browning's plays would be triumphant on the stage. Encouraged by Macready and others, Browning, in the early part of his career, made several unsuccessful attempts to write for theatrical presentation; but even his one "success," *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon,* had a very brief run. To lovers of Browning, however, most of his closet dramas are full of exciting rewards. *In a Balcony,* a favorite of the author's, was his last attempt in that form and is probably his play best suited to the theater. It was first published in *Men and Women* in 1855. Although Browning never intended it for the stage, it was performed under the auspices of the Browning Society in London in 1884 and has been presented several times since in both England and America.

This fragment of a drama, quite complete in itself, presents a situation both simple

and subtle, its three characters painted with wonderful vividness. In one hour upon a balcony of a palace is concentrated the destiny of three lives.

The aging queen, whose parched heart still thirsts for the love she has not found in marriage, is tragic, intense, and terrible. Norbert, a gentleman in her service, has served her so well that she has permitted herself to fall in love with him and is convinced that in him at last her unhappiness will find peace. Norbert, strong, noble, direct, and passionate, is actually in love with the Queen's cousin, a girl bewitchingly and exasperatingly feminine. Constance returns his love, but out of devotion to the Queen is prepared to sacrifice it—and herself. But the Queen, at the very point of surrendering herself to visions of perfect happiness, discovers the truth, and in a fury of passion summons the guards. Even as the lovers realize their impending doom, they are united in the passionate moment allotted them as they are led off to death.

Persons

NORBERT.
CONSTANCE
THE QUEEN.

CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT.

NORBERT. Now!
CONSTANCE. Not now!
NOR. Give me them again, those hands:
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through!
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me! The Queen must grant whate'er I ask—
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you;
Some time or other this was to be asked;
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain:
Let me ask now, Love!
CON. Do, and ruin us!
NOR. Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you! Give my love its way!
A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—
Grant me my heaven now! Let me know you mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
Hold you and have you, and then die away,
If God please, with completion in my soul!
CON. I am not yours then? How content this man!
I am not his—who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,
Give all that was of me away to him—
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
Takes part with him against the woman here
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
As caring that the world be cognizant
How he loves her and how she worships him.
You have this woman, not as yet that world.
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
By saying what I cease to care about,
The courtly name and pride of circumstance—
The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with
Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;
Just that the world may slip from under you—
Just that the world may cry, "So much for him—
The man predestined to the heap of crowns:
There goes his chance of winning one, at least!"
NOR. The world!
CON. You love it! Love me quite as well,
And see if I shall pray for this in vain!
Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?
NOR. You pray for—what, in vain?
CON. Oh my heart's heart,
How I do love you, Norbert! That is right:
But listen, or I take my hands away!
You say, "let it be now:" you would go now
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
You love me—so you do, thank God!
NOR. Thank God!
CON. Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,
And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
Listening to me. You are the minister,
The Queen's first favorite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,
Her house had only dreamed of anciently:
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?

Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate, your minute's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. "Name your own reward!"
With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,—
You choose the single thing she will not grant;
Nay, very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralize your work:
At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

NOR. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

CON. There, there!
So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
You that are just and generous beside.
Make it your own case! For example now,
I'll say—I let you kiss me, hold my hands—
Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—
The kiss, because you have a name at court;
This hand and this, that you may shut in each
A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible? Apply it to the Queen—
Suppose I am the Queen to whom you speak.
"I was a nameless man; you needed me:
Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood
A certain pretty cousin at your side.
Why did I make such common cause with you?
Access to her had not been easy else.
You give my labor here abundant praise?
'Faith, labor, which she overlooked, grew play.
How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
Give me her hand!"

NOR. And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

CON. Yes, just. You love a rose: no harm in that:
But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—
Then, mine you still must say or else be false.
You told the Queen you served her for herself;
If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures: there 's a life
Better than life, and yet no life at all.
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,
Can recognize its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chases and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
And who shall question that she knows them all,
In better semblance than the things outside?
Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion, with the painted lion there—
You think she'll understand composedly?
—Say, "that's his fellow in the hunting-piece
Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?"
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her·
How should it, with that life in these four walls,
That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother—friends, a heap,
Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
And every one of them alike a lie!
Things painted by a Rubens out of naught
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
All better, all more grandiose than the life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint,
You feel, while you admire. How should she feel?
Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—
She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?
You only have to say, "So men are made,
For this they act; the thing has many names,
But this the right one: and now, Queen, be just!"
Your life slips back; you lose her at the word:
You do not even for amends gain me.
He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Norbert,
Do you not understand?

NOR. The Queen 's the Queen.
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window o'er the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow:
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love; what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one voice—
"The woman yonder, there's no use of life
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one
And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys

And spurn them, as they help or help not this:
Only, obtain her!" How was it to be?
I found you were the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I, by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul,
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,
Helped, did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,—
I therefore name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause
In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too;
I worked because I want you with my soul:
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!

CON. Had I not loved you from the very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might become impatient. What's conceived
Of us without here, by the folk within?
Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—
Where am I now? intent on festal robes—
We two, embracing under death's spread hand!
What was this thought for, what that scruple of yours
Which broke the council up?—to bring about
One minute's meeting in the corridor!
And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,
Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,
"Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"
A year of this compression's ecstasy
All goes for nothing! you would give this up
For the old way, the open way, the world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife!
What tempts you?—their notorious happiness
Makes you ashamed of ours? The best you'll gain
Will be—the Queen grants all that you require,
Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
And me at once, and gives us ample leave
To live like our five hundred happy friends.
The world will show us with officious hand
Our chamber-entry, and stand sentinel
Where we so oft have stolen across its traps!
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet,
And make it duty to be bold and swift,
Which long ago was nature. Have it so!
We never hawked by rights till flung from fists?
Oh, the man's thought! no woman's such a fool.

NOR. Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more—
One made to love you, let the world take note!
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!
Set free my love, and see what love can do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men' mouth.
So, good: but let my low ground shame their high!
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!
I choose to wear you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off.
Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now 't is all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,
That long endeavor, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result:
Then think of this revulsion! I resume
Life after death, (it is no less than life,
After such long unlovely laboring days,)
And liberate to beauty life's great need
O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time,
This eve intense with yon first trembling star
We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught between
The earth that rises and the heaven that bends;
All nature self-abandoned, every tree
Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat;
All under God, each measured by itself.
These statues round us stand abrupt, distinct,
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,

The Muse forever wedded to her lyre,
Nymph to her fawn, and Silence to her rose:
See God's approval on his universe!
Let us do so—aspire to live as these
In harmony with truth, ourselves being true!
Take the first way, and let the second come!
My first is to possess myself of you;
The music sets the march-step—forward, then!
And there 's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!
CON. And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone:
You do not know her, were not born to it,
To feel what she can see or cannot see.
Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,
Generous as you are: for, in that thin frame
Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,
There lived a lavish soul until it starved,
Debarred of healthy food. Look to the soul—
Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
(The true man's-way) on justice and your rights,
Exactions and acquittance of the past!
Begin so—see what justice she will deal!
We women hate a debt as men a gift.
Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
Whose business is to sit through summer months
And dole our children leave to go and play,
Herself superior to such lightness—she
In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp—
To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside:
We wonder such a face looks black on us?
I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
(That were vain truly—none is left to wake,)
But, let her think her justice is engaged
To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
If she'll not coldly pay its warmest debt!
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit:
Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
Did more on that bare ground than other loves
Would do on greater argument. For me,
I have no equivalent of such cold kind
To pay her with, but love alone to give
If I give anything. I give her love:
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
Declaring my success was recompense;
It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
And then, once loose her generosity,—
Oh, how I see it! then, were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it offer what I really take,
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—
Since none love Queens directly, none dare that
And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo
Suffices those who miss the name and thing!
You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—
Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand,)
You'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,
Which, if you make the least show to extort . . .
—You'll see! and when you have ruined both of us,
Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!
NOR. Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?
'T is not my way; I have more hope in truth:
Still, if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
Were scarcely false, as I'd express the sense.
Will you remain here?
CON. O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take my way?
Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?
I owe that withered woman everything—
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part—
Help me to pay her! Stand upon your rights?
You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?
Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.
NOR. Remain here. How you know me!
CON. Ah, but still—
[*He breaks from her; she remains. Dance-music from within.*

[*Enter the* QUEEN.]

QUEEN. Constance? She is here as he said. Speak quick!
Is it so? Is it true or false? One word!
CON. True.
QUEEN. Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!
CON. Madam?
QUEEN. I love you, Constance, from my soul.
Now say once more, with any words you will,
'T is true, all true, as true as that I speak.
CON. Why should you doubt it?
QUEEN. Ah, why doubt? why doubt?
Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?

None see themselves; another sees them best.
You say "why doubt it?"—you see him and me.
It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—
Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;
Yet still we let our whims prescribe despair,
Our fancies thwart and cramp our will and power,
And while accepting life, abjure its use.
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
And being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.
CON. Heaven!
QUEEN. But it was so, Constance, it was so!
Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—
"Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
Too late—no love for you, too late for love—
Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance love!"
One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
"Oh love, true, never think of love again!
I am a queen: I rule, not love, forsooth."
So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!
CON. I cannot understand—
QUEEN. The happier you!
Constance, I know not how it is with men:
For women (I am a woman now like you)
There is no good of life but love—but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
O Constance, how I love you!
CON. I love you.
QUEEN. I do believe that all is come through you.
I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;
I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.
Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
Not so! it is true and it shall be true!
CON. Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.
QUEEN. Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me
And say, "she's old, she's grown unlovely quite
Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still."
Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure!
CON. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?
QUEEN. Constance, he came,—the coming was not strange—
Do not I stand and see men come and go?
I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—"one young man the more!
He will love some one; that is naught to me:
What would he with my marble stateliness?"
Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
And I still older, with less flesh to change—
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.
It seemed still harder when he first began
To labor at those state-affairs, absorbed
The old way for the old end—interest.
Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
Professing they've no care but for your cause,
Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,—
And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred to life,
Yet leave for the first breathing woman's smile,
First dancer's, gypsy's, or street baladine's!
Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech
Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,
Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect.
Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,
Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand!
There have been moments, if the sentinel
Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.
CON. Who could have comprehended?
QUEEN. Ay, who—who?
Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.
CON. I wait to tell it.
QUEEN. Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year
Exceeds in value all was ever done,
You know—it is not I who say it—all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—
Souls need a finer aim to light and lure!
I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 't was you he loved.

CON. Me, madam?
QUEEN. It did seem to me, your face
Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you
Was such a man to love? It seemed to me,
You saw he loved you, and approved his love,
And both of you were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in that garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
And forced to understand. It seemed so true,
So right, so beautiful, so like you both,
That all this work should have been done by him
Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose, some night like this—
Borne on to claim his due reward of me,
He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."
And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)
I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
—"And he shall have it. I will make her blest,
My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,
My happiest woman's self that might have been!
These two shall have their joy and leave me here."
Yes—yes!
CON. Thanks!
QUEEN. And the word was on my lips
When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
A mere calm statement of his just desire
For payment of his labor. When—O heaven,
How can I tell you? lightning on my eyes
And thunder in my ears proved that first word
Which told 't was love of me, of me, did all—
He loved me—from the first step to the last,
Loved me!
CON. You hardly saw, scarce heard him speak
Of love: what if you should mistake?
QUEEN. No, no—
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!
He had not dared to hint the love he felt—
You were my reflex—(how I understood!)
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
And love, love came at end of every phrase.
Love is begun; this much is come to pass:
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours!
I will learn, I will place my life on you,
Teach me but how to keep what I have won!
Am I so old? This hair was early gray;
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,
Beautiful—for the last French painter did!
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out
And set her by their side to take the eye:
I must have felt that good would come from you.
I am not generous—like him—like you!
But he is not your lover after all:
It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?
You have not been mistaking words or looks?
He said you were the reflex of myself.
And yet he is not such a paragon
To you, to younger women who may choose
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!
You know you never named his name to me:
You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,
Not up now, even to you!
CON. Then calm yourself.
QUEEN. See, I am old—look here, you happy girl!
I will not play the fool, deceive—ah, whom?
'T is all gone: put your cheek beside my cheek
And what a contrast does the moon behold!
But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am *I* not left,
My soul, myself? All women love great men
If young or old; it is in all the tales:
Young beauties love old poets who can love—
Why should not he, the poems in my soul,
The passionate faith, the pride of sacrifice,
Life-long, death-long? I throw them at his feet.
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,
Whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?
You could not praise indeed the empty conch;
But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.
How will I love him! Cannot men love love?
Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!
Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.
They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they please!
And yet the best of them confide to friends
That 't is not beauty makes the lasting love—
They spend a day with such and tire the next:
They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,
Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,
Horrible thought it be, that prejudice,
Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.
They will, they do: and will not, does not—he?
CON. How can he? You are wedded: 't is a name

We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,
His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled
As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favorite, shame and all?
QUEEN. Hear her! There, there now—could she love like me?
What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?
See all it does or could do! so youth loves!
Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do
What I will—you, it was not born in! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the moon.
I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
His own in the eyes alike of God and man.
CON. You will do—dare do . . . pause on what you say!
QUEEN. Hear her! I thank you, sweet, for that surprise.
You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!
I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.
I think I have borne enough and long enough,
And patiently enough, the world remarks,
To have my own way now, unblamed by all.
It does so happen (I rejoice for it)
This most unhoped-for issue cuts the knot.
There's not a better way of settling claims
Than this; God sends the accident express:
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
'T were best thus ordered. I am thankful now,
Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost fear
To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!
How strong I am! Could Norbert see me now!
CON. Let me consider. It is all too strange.
QUEEN. You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me!
You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl,
You will have many lovers, and love one—
Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,
Taller than he is, since yourself are tall.
Love him, like me! Give all away to him;
Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,
Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,
And love him simply for his very self.
Remember, I (and what am I to you?)
Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,
Do all but just unlove him! He loves me.
CON. He shall.
QUEEN. You, step inside my inmost heart!
Give me your own heart: let us have one heart!
I'll come to you for counsel; "this he says,
This he does; what should this amount to, pray?
Beseech you, change it into current coin!
Is that worth kisses? Shall I please him there?"
And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else?
Your love, according to your beauty's worth,
For you shall have some noble love, all gold:
Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.
—Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,
I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours:
Now, I would face the world with my new life,
Wear my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,
And then come back and tell you how it feels.
How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are made for happiness—how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years: what then?
Many remain: God has been very good.
You, stay here! 'T is as different from dreams,
From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

[*She goes out, leaving* CONSTANCE. *Dance-music from within.*

[NORBERT *enters.*]

NOR. Well? we have but one minute and one word!
CON. I am yours, Norbert!
NOR. Yes, mine.
CON. Not till now!
You were mine. Now I give myself to you.
NOR. Constance?
CON. Your own! I know the thriftier way
Of giving—haply, 't is the wiser way.
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed, preserve
Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
My giving and your taking; both our joys
Dying together. Is it the wiser way?
I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon!
Use it, abuse it,—anything but think
Hereafter, "Had I known she loved me so,
And what my means, I might have thriven with it."
This is your means. I give you all myself.

NOR. I take you and thank God.
CON. Look on through years!
We cannot kiss, a second day like this;
Else were this earth no earth.
NOR. With this day's heat
We shall go on through years of cold.
CON. So best!
—I try to see those years—I think I see.
You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back
And lay all to the first glow—not sit down
Forever brooding on a day like this
While seeing embers whiten and love die.
Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,
Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.
NOR. Just so. I take and know you all at once.
Your soul is disengaged so easily.
Your face is there, I know you; give me time,
Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
My soul is slower: in a life I roll
The minute out whereto you condense yours—
The whole slow circle round you I must move,
To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
'T is the sparks' long succession one by one
Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed
In that mere stone you struck: how could you know,
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide
Its coldness, were it cold.
CON. But how prove, how?
NOR. Prove in my life, you ask?
CON. Quick, Norbert—how?
NOR. That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve
As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike:
So must I seize and task all means to prove
And show this soul of mine, you crown as yours,
And justify us both.
CON. Could you write books,
Paint pictures! One sits down in poverty
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.
NOR. And loves one's painting and one's writing, then.
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,
And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take your face
And write of it and paint it—to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised forever? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
The cold calm power to see how fair you look.
I come to you; I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am: let Rubens there
Paint us!
CON. So, best!
NOR. I understand your soul,
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
With action, power, success. This way is straight;
And time were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives, and force thence fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one soul,
Through ways of work appointed by the world.
I am not bid create—men see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But find and bind and bring to bear their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, power's first outbreak here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?
What if the people have discerned at length
The dawn of the next nature, novel brain
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,
Whose work, they trust, shall find them as novel ways
To untried heights which yet he only sees?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,
This people—in our phrase this mass of men—
See how the mass lies passive to my hand
Now that my hand is plastic, with you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first!
My will be on the people! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the success
And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shape to the curl of the god's lip,
While rounded fair for human sense to see
The Graces in a dance men recognize
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!
So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,

Ever begin . . .
CON. I ever helping?
NOR. Thus!
[*As he embraces her, the* QUEEN *enters.*]
CON. Hist, madam! So have I performed my part.
You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert? A little slow in seeing it!
Begin, to end the sooner! What 's a kiss?
NOR. Constance?
CON. Why, must I teach it you again?
You want a witness to your dulness, sir?
What was I saying these ten minutes long?
Then I repeat—when some young handsome man
Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,
So very far beyond him, as he says—
So hopelessly in love that but to speak
Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,
And makes some insignificant good soul,
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,
And very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not face—
When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?)
When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,
—May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope,
And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of her
The confidant who brought the same about—
Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,
I do hold that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,
Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"
Forget it, show his back unmannerly;
But like a liberal heart will rather turn
And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours;
Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two lived
A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:
The confidant, the Constance, served not ill.
And though I shall forget her in good time,
Her use being answered now, as reason bids,
Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,—
Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,
The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,
And the first—which is the last—rewarding kiss."
NOR. Constance, it is a dream—ah, see, you smile!
CON. So, now his part being properly performed,
Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly; I do justice in my turn.
Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well;
He could not hope to tell you so—'t was I
Who served to prove your soul accessible,
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place
When they had wandered else into despair,
And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
Enough, my part is played; you stoop half-way
And meet us royally and spare our fears:
'T is like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.
Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised
By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
Yourself—the only one on earth who can—
Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
Which though warm is not useful in its warmth
As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—
For him,—he knows his own part!
NOR. Have you done?
I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,
Or did you but accept it? Well—at least
You lose by it.
CON. Nay, madam, 't is your turn!
Restrain him still from speech a little more,
And make him happier as more confident!
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!
Mark, Norbert! Do not shrink now! Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!
With her go put in practice the great schemes
You teem with, follow the career else closed—
Be all you cannot be except by her!
Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake
Anything—frankly say you love him! Else
He'll not believe it: there 's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive: I know the man!
NOR. I know the woman somewhat, and confess
I thought she had jested better: she begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?
QUEEN. Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognize
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)
—May still be right: I may do well to speak
And make authentic what appears a dream
To even myself. For, what she says is true.
Yes, Norbert—what you spoke just now of love,
Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
But justified a warmth felt long before.
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say:
Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 't is said.
Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak
To-night, the night that crowns your twelve-months' toil:

But still I had not waited to discern
Your heart so long, believe me! From the first
The source of so much zeal was almost plain,
In absence even of your own words just now
Which hazarded the truth. 'T is very strange,
But takes a happy ending—in your love
Which mine meets: be it so! as you chose me,
So I choose you.

NOR. And worthily you choose.
I will not be unworthy your esteem,
No, madam. I do love you; I will meet
Your nature, now I know it. This was well.
I see,—you dare and you are justified:
But none had ventured such experiment,
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
Less confident of finding such in me.
I joy that thus you test me ere you grant
The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best
Of women to my arms 't is like yourself.
So—back again into my part's set words—
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
Create in me the love our Constance does.
Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
Invites a certain insect—that 's myself—
But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.
I take this lady.

CON. Stay—not hers, the trap—
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all!
He is too cunning, madam! It was I,
I, Norbert, who . . .

NOR. You, was it, Constance? Then,
But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I might not pardon here!
I am the Queen's; she only knows my brain:
She may experiment upon my heart
And I instruct her too by the result.
But you, Sweet, you who know me, who so long
Have told my heartbeats over, held my life
In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

CON. Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?
The life, for her—the heartbeats, for her sake!

NOR. Enough! my cheek grows red, I think.
Your test?
There 's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, had love proved itself,
I dare insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
"Take back the soul you offer, I keep mine!"
But—"Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some playful friend,
For—what 's the trifle he requites me with?"
I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it succumb?
No: fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,
I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the world,
And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

CON. Norbert!

NOR. I love once as I live but once.
What case is this to think or talk about?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all
If such a step as this killed love in me?
Your part were done: account to God for it!
But mine—could murdered love get up again,
And kneel to whom you please to designate,
And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance? now you know
That body and soul have each one life, but one:
And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

CON. See the Queen! Norbert—this one more last word—
If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus
Loved me in earnest . . .

NOR. Ah, no jest holds here!
Where is the laughter in which jests break up,
And what this horror that grows palpable?
Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?
Have I done ill? Have I not spoken truth?
How could I other? Was it not your test,
To try me, what my love for Constance meant?
Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes
A beggar,—asks him, what would buy his child?
And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
Returned as something noble from the rags.
Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?
You two glare each at each like panthers now.
Constance, the world fades; only you stand there!
You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of things,
Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price?
No—no—'t is easy to believe in you!
Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still—
Though I might curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change: love's self is at your feet!

[*The* QUEEN *goes out.*

CON. Feel my heart; let it die against your own!

NOR. Against my own. Explain not; let this be!
This is life's height.

CON. Yours, yours, yours!

NOR. You and I—
Why care by what meanders we are here

I' the centre of the labyrinth? Men have died
Trying to find this place, which we have found.
CON. Found, found!
NOR. Sweet, never fear what she can do!
We are past harm now.
CON. On the breast of God.
I thought of men—as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown!
NOR. This must end here:
It is too perfect.
CON. There's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread? It is one blaze
About me and within me.
NOR. Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark
And sever us from the rest!
CON. And so do well.
Now the doors open.
NOR 'T is the guard comes.
CON. Kiss!

(1855)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

(1806-1861)

Elizabeth Barrett was born March 6, 1806, the eldest of a family of eleven children. Her childhood was spent happily on a fine estate in Herefordshire. When she was thirteen she had composed an "epic" on the *Battle of Marathon*, published privately by her wealthy father. Two years later she injured her spine, and for the rest of her life was never in complete health. After a few years' residence in Devonshire, her father settled in London, eventually in the famous house at 50 Wimpole Street, which to Elizabeth became a veritable prison. The climate of London proved unwholesome to her, and she developed tuberculosis. Her brother Edward, convinced that she required a milder atmosphere, took her to Torquay. But his attempt ended tragically, for he was accidentally drowned, and Elizabeth's mental suffering so completely prostrated her that her life was in serious danger. Her well-meaning but self-willed father now kept her confined for years to her room under the illusion that he was safeguarding her from death. She found some relief in her studies and her writing, and in 1844 an edition of her poems was issued with a dedication to her father. Of them the most famous is *The Cry of the Children* (see p 547), a stirring protest against child labor. During the same year she wrote an essay on Carlyle which makes plain her ardent admiration of his teachings.

Lady Geraldine's Courtship, a romantic poem in her collection of 1844, paid tribute to Robert Browning as a great poet. Among her many readers, for she had rapidly established a reputation for herself, was Browning, who, grateful for her notice, wrote to her on his return to England. "I love you with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett," he began abruptly in his letter of January 10, 1845, "—and this is no off-hand complimentary letter that I shall write,—whatever else, no prompt matter-of-course recognition of your genius, and there a graceful and natural end of the thing. Since the day last week when I first read your poems, I quite laugh how I have been turning and turning again in my mind what I should be able to tell you of their effect upon me. . . . I do, as I say, love these books with all my heart—and I love you too." Her answer to him on the next day said: "Sympathy is dear—very dear to me: but the sympathy of a poet, and of such a poet, is the quintessence of sympathy to me!" And in answer to his hint that he would like to visit her she responded: "Winters shut me up as they do dormouse's eyes; in the spring, *we shall see.*"

He was soon pressing her to hasten their meeting but she, fearfully, reminded him that it was still winter. On March 20, 1845, she wrote him: "There will be both a May and a June if we live to see such things, and perhaps, after all, we may, and as to seeing *you* besides, I observe that you distrust me, and that perhaps you penetrate my morbidity and guess how when the moment comes to see a living human face to which

I am not accustomed, I shrink. . . . I shall be afraid of you at first. . . . You are Paracelsus, and I am a recluse, with nerves that have been broken on the rack. . . . You seem to have drunken of the cup of life full, with the sun shining on it. I have lived only inwardly. . . . When my illness came and I seemed to stand on the edge of the world with all done, and no prospect . . . of ever passing the threshold of one room again; why then, I turned to thinking with some bitterness . . . that I had stood blind in this temple I was about to leave—that I had seen no Human nature, that my brothers and sisters of the earth were *names* to me, that I had beheld no great mountain or river, nothing in fact." By May he had seen her, and on the twenty-first of that month he wrote: "I trust to you for a true account of how you are—if tired, if not tired, if I did wrong in any thing,—or, if you please, *right* in any thing. . . . For an instance . . . they all say here I speak very loud—(a trick caught from having often to talk with a deaf relative of mine). And did I stay too long?"

Upon her writing to Browning that her father had refused to allow her to go to Italy for her health, he answered on September 25, 1845: "I think I ought to understand what a father may exact, and a child should comply with. . . . You ask whether you ought to obey this no-reason? I will tell you. All passive obedience and implicit submission of will and intellect is by far too easy . . . to be the course prescribed by God to Man. . . . When I first saw you—you know what followed. I supposed you to labor under an incurable complaint—and, of course, to be completely dependent on your father. . . . When you told me lately that 'you could never be poor'—all my solicitude was at an end—I had but myself to care about, and I told you, what I believed and believe, that I can at any time amply provide for that. . . . Now again the circumstances shift—and you are in what I should wonder at as the veriest slavery—and I who *could* free you from it. . . . Now while I *dream,* let me once dream! I would marry you now and thus—I would come when you let me, and go when you bade me—I would be no more than one of your brothers—'*no more*'—that is, instead of getting tomorrow for Saturday, I should get Saturday as well." For a while she dreaded accepting her happiness from him. Her father, she wrote, "would rather see me dead at his foot than yield the point." On September 12, 1846, they were married in secret. The next week found them out of England, from which they had fled to avoid the elder Barrett's fury.

The fruit of his affection, which seized her out of the hands of Death, was a series of wonderful love sonnets, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (see p. 549), which she published in 1850. It is to explain the background of this, her masterpiece, that we have quoted the correspondence which reflects the condition of mind under which she wrote. Theirs was one of the most dramatic love stories in literary history and certainly was productive of the most moving series of sonnets any courtship ever produced. Some years later Browning offered his poetic contribution on their love, *One Word More.*

Via Paris they went to Pisa, and from Pisa to Florence. At the Casa Guidi they settled until her death fifteen years later. His love gave her a renewed lease on life, and their marriage was one of the happiest on record. *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) contained in poetry her impressions of Italy. *Aurora Leigh* (1857), a novel in verse, has a certain autobiographical interest in some of its passages; more important, it makes plain her profound sympathy for the poor and economically downtrodden; as poetry, however, it is too prosaic and full of moralizing to be considered great. A last collection of her poems was issued in 1862.

With the exception of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, and some individual shorter poems like *A Musical Instrument* (see p. 551), Mrs. Browning's poetry suffers from occasional carelessness of rhythm and rhyme, and her poetic output in consequence is not all of equal literary importance. Her sincerity, her sensitivity to social injustice and her affection for the beauties of nature, however, raise her best creations to a high place in our poetry. She made, moreover, several excellent translations—among them, from Theocritus (see I, p. 1068) and the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus.

The Cry of the Children

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows:
The young birds are chirping in the nest;
The young fawns are playing with the shadows;
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in their sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old:

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For a smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life as best to have:
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling:
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day the iron wheels are droning:
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember;
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words, except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone:
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"Up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find:
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun:
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
And slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath."

(1843)

From *Sonnets from the Portuguese*

After their marriage, Mrs. Browning disclosed to her husband that she had written a sequence of forty-five sonnets inspired by their love for each other. It was he who gave them their present title so that, despite their autobiographical import, they could be published under the guise of their being translations. Because of her dark complexion he had jokingly called her his "little Portuguese." As a sequence they stand unrivaled among English sonnets for their fervor and impassioned sincerity. The conventions of the Petrarchan school (see I, p. 1063) are in them quite forgotten. It is true that the Italian sonnet form has been managed with greater skill and finer music by other poets than Mrs. Browning, but no sonneteer has spoken more directly to the heart than she.

1

I thought once how Theocritus[1] had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young.
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove—
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death,"[2] I said.
But, there,
The silver answer rang—"Not Death, but Love."

3

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages[1] from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

[1] For Theocritus, see I, p. 1068.
[2] She had been an invalid for many years.
[1] pledges.

4

Thou hast thy calling to some palace floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems, where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps—as thou must sing—alone, aloof.

7

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this—this lute and song—loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

14

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day;"—
For these things in themselves, beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on through love's eternity.

22

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curved point,—What bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, beloved,—where the unfit,
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

26

I lived with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendors—better, yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into fonts—
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame

28

My letters all dead paper, mute and white!
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said, he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend; this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand—a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this—the paper's light—
Said, "*Dear,* I love thee"; and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past:
This said, "I am thine"—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast:
And this—O Love, thy words have ill availed,
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

35

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors, another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest! If to conquer love has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove;
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as men turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

(1850)

A Musical Instrument

What was he doing, the great god Pan,
  Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
  With the dragon-fly on the river?

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
  From the deep cool bed of the river,
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
  Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
  While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great god can
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
  To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
  (How tall it stood in the river!),
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
  In holes as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan,
  (Laughed while he sat by the river)
"The only way since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
  He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
  Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
  Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan
  To laugh, as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain—
For the reed which grows never more again
  As a reed with the reeds of the river.

(written 1860)

John Henry Newman

(1801-1890)

The Pillar of the Cloud

Although Cardinal Newman's prose (see p. 687) has overshadowed his verse, he was the author of many fine poems. Of these the best-known is one of the best-loved hymns of the Christian church. *The Pillar of the Cloud* was written as a prayer for guidance when the young clergyman was returning to England from Italy in 1833 to begin the long spiritual struggle which eventually ended in his conversion to Roman Catholicism. For an account of Newman's life, see page 687.

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
  Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
  Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
  Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
  Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will; remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
  Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
  The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

(written 1833)

From *The Dream of Gerontius*

Newman's most ambitious poetical work, *The Dream of Gerontius*, maintains a high level of lyric utterance. A series of connected stanzas, in which the rhythm changes with the thought, the poem, presented in dialogue, is a meditation on death and on the state of the soul after death. It is an inspired expression of Newman's hard-won Catholicism.

GERONTIUS

Jesu, Maria—I am near to death,
And Thou art calling me; I know it now—
Not by the token of this faltering breath,
This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow,
(Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!)—
'Tis this new feeling, never felt before,
(Be with me, Lord, in my extremity!)
That I am going, that I am no more.
'Tis this strange innermost abandonment,
(Lover of souls! great God! I look to Thee,)
This emptying out of each constituent
And natural force, by which I come to be.
Pray for me, O my friends; a visitant
Is knocking his dire summons at my door,
The like of whom, to scare me and to daunt,
Has never, never come to me before;
'Tis death,—O loving friends, your prayers!—'tis he! . . .
As though my very being had given way,
As though I was no more a substance now,
And could fall back on nought to be my stay,
(Help, loving Lord! Thou my sole Refuge, Thou,)
And turn no whither, but must needs decay
And drop from out the universal frame
Into that shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss,
That utter nothingness, of which I came:
This is it that has come to pass in me;
O horror! this it is, my dearest, this;
So pray for me, my friends, who have not strength to pray. . . .

I can no more; for now it comes again,
That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,
That masterful negation and collapse
Of all that makes me man; as though I bent
Over the dizzy brink
Of some sheer infinite descent;
Or worse, as though
Down, down for ever I was falling through
The solid framework of created things,
And needs must sink and sink
Into the vast abyss. And, crueller still,
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and worse,
Some bodily form of ill
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps
Its hideous wings,
And makes me wild with horror and dismay.
O Jesu, help! pray for me Mary, pray!
Some angel, Jesu! such as came to Thee
In Thine own agony. . . .
Mary, pray for me. Joseph, pray for me.
Mary, pray for me. . . .

SOUL OF GERONTIUS

I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed.
A strange refreshment: for I feel in me
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
And ne'er had been before. How still it is!
I hear no more the busy beat of time,
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse;
Nor does one moment differ from the next.
I had a dream; yes:—some one softly said
"He's gone"; and then a sigh went round the room.
And then I surely heard a priestly voice
Cry "Subvenite"[1]; and they knelt in prayer.
I seem to hear him still; but thin and low,
And fainter and more faint the accents come,
As at an ever-widening interval.
Ah! whence is this? What is this severance?
This silence pours a solitariness
Into the very essence of my soul;
And the deep rest, so soothing and so sweet,
Hath something too of sternness and of pain,
For it drives back my thoughts upon their spring
By a strange introversion, and perforce
I now begin to feed upon myself,
Because I have nought else to feed upon.

[1] come to our assistance.

Am I alive or dead? I am not dead,
But in the body still; for I possess
A sort of confidence which clings to me,
That each particular organ holds its place
As heretofore, combining with the rest
Into one symmetry, that wraps me round,
And makes me man; and surely I could move,
Did I but will it, every part of me.
And yet I cannot to my sense bring home,
By very trial, that I have the power.
'Tis strange; I cannot stir a hand or foot,
I cannot make my fingers or my lips
By mutual pressure witness each to each,
Nor by the eyelid's instantaneous stroke
Assure myself I have a body still.
Nor do I know my very attitude,
Nor if I stand, or lie, or sit, or kneel.

So much I know, not knowing how I know,
That the vast universe, where I have dwelt,
Is quitting me, or I am quitting it
Or I or it is rushing on the wings
Of light or lightning on an onward course,
And we e'en now are million miles apart.
Yet . . . is this peremptory severance
Wrought out in lengthening measurements of space,
Which grow and multiply by speed and me?
Or am I traversing infinity
By endless subdivision, hurrying back
From finite towards infinitesimal,
Thus dying out of the expansed world? . . .

ANGEL

. . . Praise to His Name!
The eager spirit has darted from my hold,
And, with the intemperate energy of love,
Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel;
But, ere it reach them, the keen sanctity,
Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothes
And circles round the Crucified, has seized,
And scorched, and shrivelled it; and now it lies
Passive and still before the awful Throne.
O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,
Consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God.

SOUL

Take me away, and in the lowest deep
There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,
Told out for me.
There, motionless and happy in my pain,
Lone, not forlorn,—
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,
Until the morn.
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
Which ne'er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possest
Of its Sole Peace.
There will I sing my absent Lord and Love:—
Take me away,
That sooner I may rise, and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.

ANGEL

Now let the golden prison ope its gates,
Making sweet music, as each fold revolves
Upon its ready hinge. And ye great powers,
Angels of Purgatory, receive from me
My charge, a precious soul, until the day,
When, from all bond and forfeiture released,
I shall reclaim it for the courts of light. . .

ANGEL

Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul,
In my most loving arms I now enfold thee,
And, o'er the penal waters, as they roll,
I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.

And carefully I dip thee in the lake,
And thou, without a sob or a resistance,
Dost through the flood thy rapid passage take,
Sinking deep, deeper into the dim distance.

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;
And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest.

Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear,
Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
And I will come and wake thee on the morrow.

THE END (1866)

Edward FitzGerald

(1809-1883)

It would be hard to find an English writer who lived a less eventful life than Edward FitzGerald. His biography consists primarily of a record of friendships, punctuated at long intervals by some literary activity.

He was born on March 31, 1809, into a family of considerable wealth and social prestige. On his mother's side he belonged to the family of FitzGeralds, Earls of Kildare. In 1818 his father, John Purcell, assumed his wife's surname on the occasion of her inheriting the vast FitzGerald estates. The financial independence thus secured to Edward FitzGerald was of very great importance in directing the whole course of his life. He never felt the spur of necessity and, as a consequence, passed years of relative inactivity without other directing forces than his mere whim or the influence of some friend.

FitzGerald's education, first at Bury St. Edmunds and later at Trinity College, Cambridge, is interesting chiefly for the remarkable group of men whom he came to know. Many of these were to be lifelong friends, and to a man of FitzGerald's temperament, friendship was the most valuable possession a man could have. His close friends were not always chosen from among the great, but he numbered among his intimates such persons as Tennyson, Thackeray, and Carlyle.

For its influence on his most significant life work, the friendship with E. B. Cowell, the Orientalist, was second to none. With Cowell, in 1853, he learned to read Persian and became acquainted with some of the important literary works in that language. In 1856 he published a translation of Jami's *Sálámán and Absál.* Soon afterward he was at work reading the rubáiyát (quatrains) of Omar Khayyám from a manuscript which Cowell had transcribed for him in the British Museum. After much experimenting, FitzGerald began to work out English translations of the quatrains. But he took considerable liberties with his original, so that FitzGerald's poem, which did not attain its final form until 1879, is more a free paraphrase than a translation.

Omar Khayyám, the author of the original verses, lived in Persia around the year 1100. The date of his death is usually given as 1123. There are few records of his life, but we know that he held repute as an astronomer and mathematician and that he helped reform the Persian calendar. He is represented as being a combination of philosopher and epicurean: indeed, some legends represent him as almost wholly given over in his later years to gross self-indulgence. He left behind him some five hundred quatrains expressive of his attitude toward life. These were arranged quite without logical order and many of them were repetitious. In making his translation, FitzGerald freely rearranged his material and had no hesitancy in combining ideas from various quatrains or in separating nonunified stanzas into their logical divisions. Moreover, he has even brought in a few stanzas from other Persian writers and has boldly added several of his own.

Whatever violence FitzGerald may have done to the letter of the poem, he appears to have successfully retained its spirit. There were many points of view shared in common between FitzGerald and Omar. As Arthur Christopher Benson has said, "FitzGerald happened to light upon an ancient poet, through whose writings, in spite of much tedious iteration and dreary moralizing, much sensual imagery and commonplace Epicureanism, ran a vein of thought strangely familiar to his own temperament. Omar was a sentimentalist, and a lover of beauty, both human and natural; so was FitzGerald. Omar tended to linger over golden memories of the past, and was acutely alive to the pathos of sweet things that have an ending; and such was FitzGerald. Omar was pene-

trated with a certain dark philosophy, the philosophy of the human spirit at bay, when all refuge has failed; and this was the case with FitzGerald.

"The result was that out of the ore which was afforded him, FitzGerald, by this time a practised craftsman without a subject, was enabled to chase and chisel his delicate stanzas, like little dainty vessels of pure gold. He brought to the task a rich and stately vocabulary, and a style adapted to solemn and somewhat rhetorical musings of a philosophical kind. FitzGerald's love of slow-moving verse adorned by beautiful touches of natural observation and of pathetic presentment stood him in good stead. The result was that a man of high literary taste found for once a subject precisely adapted to his best faculty; a subject, the strength of which was his own strength, and the limitations of which were his own limitations."

The poem is filled with expressions of several philosophies, some of them quite inconsistent with one another. Mingled with a profound skepticism are found traces of pantheism, of predestination, and of epicureanism. Though the public paid absolutely no attention to the book when it first appeared, it was eventually discovered by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and introduced to his friends of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. To such men as Rossetti and Swinburne the poem came as almost magically representative of poetic ideals. They were especially attracted to the stanzas expressive of man's inability to know the answer to the riddle of existence, and likewise to the lusciously seductive quatrains urging us to enjoy the short day that lies before us. For the generation toward the close of the nineteenth century the *Rubáiyát* was the most popular of all English poems, since it seemed to its readers to be a great voice from the past giving validity to their own thoughts and their own attitudes.

FitzGerald began his publishing with *Selections from the Poems and Letters of Bernard Barton* in 1849. In this volume he writes a memoir of Barton, an old Quaker friend who had recently died, and whose daughter FitzGerald subsequently married. In 1851 appeared his *Euphranor*, a Platonic dialogue. And this was followed in 1852 by *Polonius*, a collection of aphorisms. Thereafter all his output consisted of translations and editorial work. In 1853 he published English versions of six plays of the Spanish dramatist Calderón. He also made free adaptations of Greek tragedies by Aeschylus and Sophocles. In his last years he published a selection from the poet George Crabbe, which he did as a labor of love, since he had been a lifelong friend of both the poet's son and grandson.

Except for the *Omar Khayyám*, nothing of FitzGerald seems destined to be of permanent value. He was not a great creative genius, but needed the initial effort of someone else to act as a guide for all that he wrote. But he produced one of the most influential poems of the century.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám of Naishápúr

1

Wake! For the Sun who scattered into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
  Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

2

Before the phantom of False morning[1] died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
  "When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

[1] a transient light on the horizon shortly before dawn.

3

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

4

Now the New Year[2] reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES[3] on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.[4]

5

Iram[5] indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's[6] Sev'n-ringed Cup[7] where no one knows;
But still a Ruby gushes from the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

6

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Péhlevi,[8] with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to incarnadine.

7

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

8

Whether at Naishápúr[9] or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

9

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád[10] away.

10

Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum thunder as they will,
Or Hátim[11] call to Supper—heed not you.

11

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Máhmúd[12] on his golden Throne!

12

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

13

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

14

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

15

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,[13]
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turned
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

[2] The Persian New Year came in the Spring.
[3] The hand of Moses miraculously turned white (*Exodus* 4:6). Here the metaphor refers to the blossoming of flowers.
[4] From the belief that the healing power of Jesus resided in his breath.
[5] an ancient Persian garden.
[6] legendary king of Persia.
[7] a ring for each planet.
[8] ancient Persian language.
[9] Omar's native village, contrasted with Babylon, the great city.
[10] an ancient Persian king.
[11] all Persian legendary heroes.
[12] the Sultan.
[13] wealth.

16

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
  Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

17

Think, in this battered Caravanserai[14]
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day.
  How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

18

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
  And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

19

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
  That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

20

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
  Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

21

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the cup that clears
To-DAY of past Regret and future Fears:
  To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.[15]

22

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time has prest,
  Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

[14] inn, where caravans stop overnight.
[15] a thousand years for each planet.

23

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
  Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

24

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
  Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans[16] Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

25

Alike for those who for To-DAY prepare,
And those that after some To-MORROW stare,
  A Muezzín[17] from the Tower of Darkness cries
"Fools, your Reward is neither Here nor There."

26

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly are thrust
  Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scattered, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

27

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
  About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

28

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand wrought to make it grow;
  And this was all the Harvest that I reaped—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

29

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing,
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
  And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

[16] without.
[17] a crier who summons the faithful to prayer.

30

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

31

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn[18] sate,
And many a Knot unravelled by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

32

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I could not see:
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.

33

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs[19] revealed
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

34

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

35

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I leaned, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmured—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

36

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answered, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kissed,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

37

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmured—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

38

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

39

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

40

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you like an empty Cup.

41

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

42

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are TO-DAY what YESTERDAY
You were—TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

43

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

44

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,

[18] According to the idea of Omar's time, Saturn governed the seventh of the concentric spheres surrounding the earth
[19] the signs of the Zodiac.

Wer't not a Shame—wer't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

45

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one-day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrásh[20]
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

46

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sáki[21] from that Bowl has poured
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

47

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh but the long long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

48

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reached
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

49

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—
And upon what, prithee, does Life depend?

50

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif[22] were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

51

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi;[23] and
They change and perish all—but He remains;

52

A moment guessed—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama rolled
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He does Himself contrive, enact, behold.

53

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You—how then
TO-MORROW, when You shall be You no more?

54

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavor and dispute:
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

55

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

56

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule And Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

57

Ah, but my Computation, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?[24]—Nay,
'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

58

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,

[20] servant. [21] wine-bearer. [22] the letter A.

[23] from fish to moon

[24] Omar was a famous mathematician and helped reform the calendar

Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the Grape!

59

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

60

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing[25] Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

61

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?
A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there?

62

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust!

63

O threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain,—*This* Life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown forever dies.

64

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of Darkness through
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

65

The Revelations of Devout and Learned
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burned,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their fellows, and to Sleep returned.

[25] Allah-worshipping.

66

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell."

67

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the Shadow of a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

68

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with this Sun-illumined Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

69

Impotent Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checker-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

70

The Ball[26] no question makes of Ayes and Noes
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
And He that tossed you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

71

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

72

And that inverted Bowl they call the sky,
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for It
As impotently rolls as you or I.

[26] of the polo-player.

73

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sowed the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

74

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
To-MORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

75

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín[27] and Mushtari[28] they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

76

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

77

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

78

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

79

What, from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent us dross-allayed—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

80

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin[29]
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

81

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened—Man's Forgiveness give—and take!

82

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán[30] away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay—

83

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listened perhaps, but never talked at all.

84

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

85

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy:
And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

86

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make:
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

[27] Pleiades.
[28] Jupiter.
[29] a trap.
[30] the month of fasting.

87

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi[31] pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
Who makes—Who sells—Who buys—Who *is* the Pot?"

88

"Why," said another, "Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
The luckless Pots he marred in making—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

89

"Well," murmured one, "Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by."

90

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon[32] looked in that all were seeking:
And then they jogged each other, "Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"[33]

91

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

92

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

93

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in Men's eyes much wrong:
Have drowned my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

94

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

95

And much as Wine has played the Infidel,
And robbed me of my Robe of Honor—Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

96

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

97

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, revealed,
To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

98

Would but some wingèd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

99

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

100

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

101

And when like her, oh Sáki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scattered on the Grass,
And in your blissful errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

(1859-79)

[31] member of a Mohammedan sect.
[32] the new moon which would end the month of fasting
[33] with a heavy load of wine

Emily Brontë

(1818-1848)

In the spring of 1820 an eccentric Irishman named Patrick Brunty came to be curate of Haworth, on the bleak moors of Yorkshire. A year later his wife died of cancer, leaving a family of six small children. In 1824 the two oldest girls, their health weakened by privations at a negligent boarding school for clergymen's daughters, died of consumption. The remaining four children—Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and their red-headed brother, Branwell—escaped from the lonely life of the parsonage into the warmer world of the imagination. In the middle of their magic "web of childhood" lay the dream land of Gondal, for which they created people and art and literature inscribed in Lilliputian characters. As they grew up, the girls' need to earn a living as schoolteachers and governesses did not extinguish the creative flame. By 1846 the brilliant brother had become a hopeless drunkard and drug-addict. But Charlotte, inspired by some verses of Emily's which she had discovered in a desk, found a publisher for the *Poems* of the three sisters, who took refuge in the ambiguous pseudonyms "Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell." The book sold exactly two copies. In the next year, however, the "Bells" published three novels: Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne's *Agnes Grey*. The puzzled reviews were still coming out when death returned to Haworth. Branwell died in the fall of 1848, Emily in December, Anne in the following May. Charlotte, who wrote three more novels, survived until 1855.

A century after Emily's Brontë's death, *Wuthering Heights* still ranks high among the world's best-selling classics, and readers still argue whether she or Charlotte was the greater novelist. But no serious reader would question Charlotte's honest admission that Emily was by far the best poet of the three sisters. "I have never seen her parallel in anything," wrote Charlotte. "Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone."

The makers of the vast Brontë legend—especially those who have read into the love of Heathcliff and Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* all sorts of questionable autobiographical references—have combed the poems for light to illumine the dark, elusive picture of the poetess. Only recently, with the publication of the first complete scholarly edition of the poetry, has research beset these glib conjectures with embarrassing question marks. Miss Fannie E. Ratchford has carefully argued that "the majority, perhaps all" of the poems of Emily Brontë pertain to the imaginary country of Gondal, and that lyrics in which it was for a long time assumed that Emily was voicing her own heart's cry were actually written for the mouths of Julius Brenzaida, Lord Eldred, Augusta, Angelica, and other shadowy personages from that remarkable realm. This does not mean, however, that a poetess cannot express her most intimate personal feelings through a fictitious character or that the reader needs a complete guide to the history and geography of Gondal in order to feel the melancholy beauty and strength of Emily Brontë's verse.

The Night Is Darkening

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow;
The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

(written 1837)

Fall, Leaves

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day:
Every leaf speaks bliss to me,
Fluttering from the autumn tree;

I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow:
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in the drearier day.

(written 1838)

A Little While

A little while, a little while,
The weary task is put away,
And I can sing and I can smile,
Alike, while I have holiday.

Where wilt thou go, my harassed heart—
What thought, what scene invites thee now?
What spot, or near or far apart,
Has rest for thee, my weary brow?

There is a spot, 'mid barren hills,
Where winter howls, and driving rain;
But, if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.

The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear—
So longed for—as the hearth of home?

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn trees gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all!

Still, as I mused, the naked room,
The alien firelight died away;
And from the midst of cheerless gloom,
I passed to bright, unclouded day.

A little and a lone green lane
That opened on a common wide;
A distant, dreamy, dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side.

A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air;
And, deepening still the dreamlike charm,
Wild moor-sheep feeding everywhere.

That was the scene, I knew it well;
I knew the turfy pathway's sweep,
That, winding o'er each billowy swell,
Marked out the tracks of wandering sheep.

Could I have lingered but an hour,
It well had paid a week of toil;
But Truth has banished Fancy's power:
Restraint and heavy task recoil.

Even as I stood with raptured eye,
Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear,
My hour of rest had fleeted by,
And back came labor, bondage, care.

(written 1838)

The Old Stoic

Riches I hold in light esteem,
And Love I laugh to scorn;
And lust of fame was but a dream,
That vanished with the morn:

And if I pray, the only prayer
That moves my lips for me
Is, "Leave the heart that now I bear
And give me liberty!"

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
'Tis all that I implore;
In life and death, a chainless soul,
With courage to endure.

(written 1841)

Plead for Me

Miss Fannie Ratchford, a leading Brontë scholar, maintains that in this poem the author "speaks in her own person, proclaiming clearly and emphatically her credo of life, the noblest apology for genius in the language."

O thy bright eyes must answer now,
When Reason, with a scornful brow,
Is mocking at my overthrow;
O thy sweet tongue must plead for me
And tell why I have chosen thee!

Stern Reason is to judgement come
Arrayed in all her forms of gloom:
Wilt thou my advocate be dumb?
No, radiant angel, speak and say
Why I did cast the world away;

Why I have persevered to shun
The common paths that others run;
And on a strange road journeyed on
Heedless alike of Wealth and Power—
Of Glory's wreath and Pleasure's flower.

These once indeed seemed Beings divine,
And they perchance heard vows of mine
And saw my offerings on their shrine—
But, careless gifts are seldom prized,
And mine were worthily despised;

So with a ready heart I swore
To seek their altar-stone no more,
And gave my spirit to adore
Thee, ever present, phantom thing—
My slave, my comrade, and my King!

A slave because I rule thee still;
Incline thee to my changeful will
And make thy influence good or ill—
A comrade, for by day and night
Thou art my intimate delight—

My Darling Pain that wounds and sears
And wrings a blessing out from tears
By deadening me to real cares;
And yet, a king—though prudence well
Have taught thy subject to rebel.

And am I wrong to worship where
Faith cannot doubt nor Hope despair
Since my own soul can grant my prayer?
Speak, God of Visions, plead for me
And tell why I have chosen thee!

(written 1844)

Remembrance

In Emily Brontë's minute manuscript this poem was entitled with the names of two characters from Gondal: *R[osina] Alcona to J[ulius] Brenzaida*. But this does not mean it is impersonal "If words have meaning " writes Charles Morgan, "this is a lament written by one experiencing a personal emotion. . . . It is by no means impossible that the personal thought within the Gondal form was directed to her dead sister."

Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee.
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee!

But when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed, without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

(written 1845)

The Visionary

Both this poem and *The Prisoner* appear in one of the manuscripts as parts of a long Gondal poem entitled *Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle*. Lines 12-20 of *The Visionary* were added by Charlotte Brontë

Silent is the house: all are laid asleep:
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the 'wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door;
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far:
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.

Frown, my haughty sire! chide, my angry dame!
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame:
But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen snow.

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare;
Who loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.

Burn then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear—
Hush! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air:
He for whom I wait thus ever comes to me;
Strange Power! I trust thy might; trust thou my constancy.

(written 1845)

The Prisoner

Charles Morgan, in a brilliant essay on Emily Brontë, notes the remarkable difference between the commonplace narrative opening and the sudden lyric outcry in the stanzas beginning, "Still, let my tyrants know." He calls these stanzas "the clearest, the most persuasive description of mystical experience in our language."

In the dungeon-crypts idly did I stray,
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;
"Draw the ponderous bars! open, Warder stern!"
He dared not say me nay—the hinges harshly turn.

"Our guests are darkly lodged," I whispered, gazing through
The vault, whose grated eye showed heaven more gray than blue;
(This was when glad Spring laughed in awaking pride);
"Aye, darkly lodged enough!" returned my sullen guide.

Then, God forgive my youth! forgive my careless tongue!
I scoffed, as the chill chains on the damp flagstones rung:
"Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to fear,
That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?"

The captive raised her face; it was as soft and mild
As sculptured marble saint, or slumbering unweaned child;
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair,
Pain could not trace a line, or grief a shadow there!

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow;
"I have been struck," she said, "and I am suffering now;

Yet these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong;
And, were they forged in steel, they could not hold me long."

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim: "Shall I be won to hear;
Dost think, fond, dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer?
Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?
Ah! sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones.

"My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind,
But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind;
And I am rough and rude, yet not more rough to see
Than is the hidden ghost that has its home in me."

About her lips there played a smile of almost scorn.
"My friend," she gently said, "you have not heard me mourn;
When you my kindred's lives, *my* lost life can restore,
Then may I weep and sue,—but never, friend, before!

"Still, let my tyrants know, I am not doomed to wear
Year after year in gloom, and desolate despair;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me,
And offers for short life, eternal liberty.

"He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise, and change, that kill me with desire.

"Desire for nothing known in my maturer years,
When Joy grew mad with awe, at counting future tears.
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm.

"But, first, a hush of peace—a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony,
That I could never dream, till Earth was lost to me.

"Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels:
Its wings are almost free—its home, its harbor found,
Measuring the gulf, it stoops—and dares the final bound.

"Oh! dreadful is the check—intense the agony—
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

"Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald death, the vision is divine!"

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering, turned to go—
We had no further power to work the captive woe:
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence, unapproved, and overruled by Heaven.

(written 1845)

No Coward Soul Is Mine

Charlotte called these "the last lines my sister Emily ever wrote," but recent research has shown her to be an untrustworthy chronologist.

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

(written 1846)

Arthur Hugh Clough

(1819-1861)

Many people may be inclined to think of Clough only as a man immortalized by his friendship with Matthew Arnold and as one of the very few writers who have inspired a great elegy by a first-rate poet But the devotion of Arnold and of other men of his generation was not without cause· Clough deserves to be studied for his own sake.

Though he was born in Liverpool, January 1, 1819, his childhood was spent in Charleston, South Carolina. From his ninth year onward, however, he went to school in England, most of the time at Rugby, where he came under the influence of Dr. Thomas Arnold and made friendships which were to remain with him through life. In 1837 he entered Balliol College, Oxford, on a scholarship, and there came into close association with a distinguished group of contemporaries such as Benjamin Jowett, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, and Matthew Arnold.

The Oxford Movement under the leadership of Newman was then at its height. Clough was repelled by the reactionary nature of the movement and, although he remained around Oxford a number of years as Fellow of Oriel College, he became more and more skeptical on religious matters until he felt impelled to resign his position in 1848.

Experiencing a great sense of relief, he now published poems and traveled to Paris and to Rome, where he witnessed the revolutions of 1848. The next five years were unsettled. His religious skepticism became deeper and was the cause of a great internal conflict. Notable during these years was a friendship with the Carlyles and with Emerson. Under the influence of the latter he visited Harvard in 1852, and there lectured and began work on a translation of Plutarch. He returned to England in 1853 and became an Examiner in the Education Office. In the same year he married. His last few years remaining were devoted to writing, to his duties, and particularly to his friends. In 1860 his health failed and he went to Italy to recuperate but died in Florence on November 13, 1861.

He began his poetic activity about 1840, but did not publish until 1848. His output is decidedly uneven, some of his poems being little more than hastily written memoranda of excursions or travels. On the other hand, at his best he has shown us perhaps as clearly as any poet the profound melancholy that comes to a spirit temperamentally conservative and fond of traditional ways of thinking when it is faced with what seems to be an intellectual certainty that all these ancient patterns of thought and conduct are mistakes. Clough met this challenge with courage, sincerity, and a certain joyous strength.

Perhaps the best appreciation of Clough as a man is to be found in Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis* (see p. 584).

Qua Cursum Ventus[1]

As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day
Are scarce long leagues apart descried;

When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side:

E'en so—but why the tale reveal
Of those, whom year by year unchanged,
Brief absence joined anew to feel,
Astounded, soul from soul estranged?

At dead of night their sails were filled,
And onward each rejoicing steered—
Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,
Or wist, what first with dawn appeared!

To veer, how vain! On, onward strain,
Brave barks! In light, in darkness too,
Through winds and tides one compass guides—
To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze! and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,
One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
At last, at last, unite them there.

(written 1843)

"With Whom Is No Variableness, Neither Shadow of Turning"

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so:
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

(written 1843)

[1] As the wind blows (so the vessel takes its course); see Virgil's *Aeneid*, III, 269.

Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars:
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

(written 1849)

Qui Laborat, Orat[1]

O only Source of all our light and life,
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
Alone aright reveal!

Mine inmost soul, before Thee inly brought,
Thy presence owns ineffable, divine;
Chastised each rebel self-encentered thought,
My will adoreth Thine.

With eye down-dropt, if then this earthly mind
Speechless remain, or speechless e'en depart;
Nor seek to see—for what of earthly kind
Can see Thee as Thou art?—

If well-assured 'tis but profanely bold
In thought's abstractest forms to seem to see,
It dare not dare the dread communion hold
In ways unworthy Thee,

O not unowned, thou shalt unnamed forgive,
In worldly walks the prayerless heart prepare;
And if in work its life it seem to live,
Shalt make that work be prayer.

[1] He who labors, prays.

Nor times shall lack, when while the work it plies,
  Unsummoned powers the blinding film shall part,
And scarce by happy tears made dim, the eyes
  In recognition start.

But, as thou willest, give or e'en forbear
  The beatific supersensual sight,
So, with Thy blessing blest, that humbler prayer
  Approach Thee morn and night.

(1862)

The Latest Decalogue

Clough's bitter adaptation of the Ten Commandments to the code of Victorian materialism should be contrasted with the original decalogue in *Exodus*, 20:1-17.

Thou shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshiped, except the currency.
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse.
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend.
Honor thy parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall.
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive.
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it.
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat.
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly.
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

(1862)

All Is Well

Whate'er you dream with doubt possessed,
Keep, keep it snug within your breast,
And lay you down and take your rest;
Forget in sleep the doubt and pain,
And when you wake, to work again.
The wind it blows, the vessel goes,
And where and whither, no one knows.

'Twill all be well: no need of care;
Though how it will, and when, and where,
We cannot see, and can't declare.
In spite of dreams, in spite of thought,
'Tis not in vain, and not for nought,
The wind it blows, the ship it goes,
Though where and whither, no one knows.

(1869)

In a London Square

Put forth thy leaf, thou lofty plane,
  East wind and frost are safely gone;
With zephyr mild and balmy rain
  The summer comes serenely on;
Earth, air, and sun and skies combine
  To promise all that's kind and fair:—
But thou, O human heart of mine,
  Be still, contain thyself, and bear.

December days were brief and chill,
  The winds of March were wild and drear,
And, nearing and receding still,
  Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,
  Had, not the less, their certain date:—
And thou, O human heart of mine,
  Be still, refrain thyself, and wait.

(1869)

Life Is Struggle

To wear out heart, and nerves, and brain,
And give oneself a world of pain;
Be eager, angry, fierce, and hot,
Imperious, supple—God knows what,
For what's all one to have or not;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
For 'tis not joy, it is not gain,
It is not in itself a bliss,
Only it is precisely this
  That keeps us all alive.

To say we truly feel the pain,
And quite are sinking with the strain;—
Entirely, simply, undeceived,
Believe, and say we ne'er believed
The object, e'en were it achieved,
A thing we e'er had cared to keep;
With heart and soul to hold it cheap.
And then to go and try it again;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
O, 'tis not joy, and 'tis not bliss,
Only it is precisely this
  That keeps us still alive.

(1869)

Matthew Arnold

(1822-1888)

Few of his contemporaries exerted an influence comparable to Matthew Arnold's upon the intellectual perspectives of the later nineteenth century. In common with Carlyle, Ruskin, and Newman, he revolted against the materialism of his age, but, unlike them, he did not seek inspiration from the spiritual values of the Middle Ages. If he allowed himself the luxury of indulging a regret for the religious certainties of the past, he nonetheless kept his eyes firmly on mankind's future. Morals and ethics had lost their theological basis for many thinkers because of science, and Arnold understood that something must be advanced to take religion's place. The foundation he proposed was the potential dignity of the human character, and the goal he set was the pursuit of human perfection. He was unwilling to recline in satisfaction, as did so many Liberals, on the boast of English progress in material prosperity. Mr. Roebuck, whom Arnold devastatingly attacked, could say to the Sheffield cutlers: "Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect safety?" But Arnold had only to quote against him from his daily newspaper: "A shocking child-murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody." The smug pretenses of industrial ethics were intolerable to Arnold, and he performed some noble services in exposing its shams. Cosmopolitan in temperament and unashamedly a fosterer of culture, Arnold was something like a prophet to those men and women who could not find religious faith merely by desiring to possess it, and who were repelled, as he was, by the spiritual stagnation of middle-class self-complacency.

He was born at Laleham on Christmas Eve, 1822, the son of the famous headmaster of Rugby, Thomas Arnold, a man of capacious views and moral energy. Although as a young man Matthew Arnold affected a debonair dandyism little to his father's taste, there was a deep affection existing between the two, as is revealed in Matthew's letters and his *Rugby Chapel*. The boy attended his father's school and studied under the elder Arnold. The family had a country place not distant from Grasmere, and in its beauteous surroundings Matthew spent his vacations. The Wordsworths were friends of the Arnolds, and the youth's poetical development was quickened by his veneration for Wordsworth. In 1841 he was granted a classical scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford. At the university Arnold avoided any concentrated study, preferring rather to read widely than to prepare himself for any special endeavor. During these years he formed the close attachment to that "beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century," Oxford, whose praises he later sang in his famous *Preface* to *Essays in Criticism*, and whose memories form the background of *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis*. He also became saturated with the spirit of the Greek and Roman literatures, which were profoundly to determine his philosophy. At Oxford, too, he became a close friend of Arthur Hugh Clough.

He took his degree in 1845, taught for a while at Rugby, and was elected to a Fellowship at Oriel College a few months after leaving Balliol. In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, an active politician, a post he held for three years. He went to France to visit George Sand and Chopin. Enough leisure was at his disposal for him to read constantly his beloved authors—Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Thomas à Kempis, and Goethe—and also to write poetry. His first volume, *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, appeared in 1849. Though almost every one of these poems has since been accepted as part of our great literary heritage, the book made but a slight impression on the public.

Through Lord Lansdowne's influence he was given the post of Inspector of Schools in 1851, and in the same year he married Frances Wightman, daughter of a judge on the Queen's Bench. Arnold's married life was very happy, though subject to the vexations of the endless traveling about that was required of an Inspector of Schools. Until 1886 Arnold retained this position, chafing at his obligations and the long absences from his family. There were compensations, however, in his opportunities for traveling on the Continent to examine other systems of education, and in France he came to know such distinguished writers as Sainte-Beuve and Renan. For some years, despite the enervating routine of his office, Arnold continued to write poetry. *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* appeared in 1852, and the volume called *Poems* in 1853.

In the latter collection Arnold made his début as a prose writer with a historic Preface. In it he advocated the calm of the ancient writers as an important discipline for modern writers. As the student of the Greeks "penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works," Arnold observed, "as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect, unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient poets aimed. . . . He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will . . . escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness. The present age makes great claims upon us: we owe it service, it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment. . . . They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age: they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves. . . . They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, . . . their business is . . . to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them. They are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this they can do nothing; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such. . . . He who possesses the discipline I speak of . . will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age; he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time, and to enable others, through his representation of it, to delight in it also."

This poetic credo, strongly impregnated by the practice of the classics and the theories of Aristotle (see I, p. 1121), demonstrates both Arnold's dissatisfaction with the prosaic qualities of his age and his intention of bringing men to moral and intellectual virtue. He disliked the Romantic Movement for its excesses of style and looseness of structure and for its vain disgust with life. Wordsworth alone he profoundly admired (see p. 145), but he found even him "wanting in completeness and variety." Nor could he share Wordsworth's worship of the divine in Nature, for he felt that "Man hath all that Nature hath—but more," and, he added, "in that more lie all his hopes of good." Arnold's own poetry is meditative, as is Wordsworth's, but the recurrent motive in his verse is his profound concern for civilization. Unable to find a solution to the problems of his time, his poetry, the product of his earlier years, is overcast with a feeling of melancholy and frustration. He stated in poetic terms the dilemma of many men like him who took no pleasure in the achievements of the age and found no help in the religion and dogmas being sponsored on all sides.

Arnold possessed neither Browning's volcanic imagination nor Tennyson's golden artistry. But he brought to poetry a classic sense of form uncommon in his period. He was especially gifted in imparting a sense of structure to unrhymed poetry, and was one of the earliest to write with success in free verse. The key to his poetical ideals, to be read in the already quoted Preface to the volume of 1853, is his love of that elegance which is born of symmetry. This remained the foundation of his beliefs, literary and social; and in his later address on *Literature and Science* (see p. 742) we hear it clearly enunciated: "The results of the want [of symmetry] show themselves most glaringly, perhaps, in our architecture, but they show themselves, also, in our art. . . . . Striking details we have, and well executed details we have; but that high symmetry which, with satisfying and delightful effect, combines them, we seldom or never have. The glorious beauty of the Acropolis at Athens did not come from single fine things stuck about on that hill, a statue here, a gateway there;—no, it arose from all things being perfectly combined for a supreme perfect effect." This stricture explains his dislike of the romantic poets' concentration on rich detail to the disregard of the total impression, and affords an excellent commentary on what Arnold attempted, on the artistic side, to accomplish in his poetry. His collections of poems made no great stir when they first appeared, but Arnold himself was his own best critic. "I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson," he says in a letter, "and less intellectual vigor and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs." Though the appeal of Arnold's poetry is quiet and unsensational, "he has," as Professor Saintsbury has remarked, "the real throb and cry, the indispensable 'moments,' the faculty of transforming and transcending." The poems that follow in these pages exhibit Arnold at his best, and to them only a few others, such as the long *Sohrab and Rustum*, need be added to understand his poetical achievement.

Though he had not gained popularity, Arnold's gifts were sufficiently noted to win for him the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford in 1857. His duties involved the delivery of a few public lectures on the study of poetry. His first talk was on the modernity of the great Greek classics. In 1858 he issued a classical tragedy, *Merope,* to justify his stand. In 1866 he wrote his beautiful elegy on Clough, *Thyrsis,* and in 1867 appeared his last volume of verse, *New Poems.* The major part of his poetic career, in fact, may be said to have terminated with his thirty-fourth year; and twenty years of literary productivity followed his final volume of poems. His detractors have said that the fount of poetic inspiration had dried up within him; but to confute them it is only necessary to quote his fine elegy, *Westminster Abbey,* written as late as 1881. The true explanation would seem to be that he expended his best energies upon the drilling tasks of an inspector of education. However little to his taste his official labors must have been, Arnold possessed too strong a sense of moral responsibility to shirk them, as is attested by his carefully drawn reports and his *Popular Education of France* (1861), *A French Eton* (1864), and *Schools and Universities on the Continent* (1868). The writing of prose he found more compatible with the nomadic life enforced upon him, and he turned more and more to prose composition for the expression of his ideas. Nor need we regret that he thus made the best of necessity, for he is one of the most distinguished of English prose stylists.

His career in prose opened with the publication of three lectures delivered during his professorship at Oxford, *On Translating Homer* (1861). The next year witnessed his *Translating Homer: Last Words,* in which the influence of Sainte-Beuve is strong. His first great prose work, *Essays in Criticism* (see p. 722), later to be called *Essays in Criticism, First Series,* appeared in 1865. It has been described as the book which taught Englishmen how to write criticism. As Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch says, the *Essays in Criticism* was the first English book to "treat Criticism as a deliberate disinterested art, with laws and methods of its own, a proper temper, and certain standards or touchstones of right taste by which the quality of any writing, as literature, could be tested." It was here that

Arnold began his onslaught upon the Philistinism (a phrase he borrowed from Heine) of the English middle class. The word "Philistine" was used frequently by him thereafter to signify the provincialism, narrow-mindedness, and vulgarity of the culture fostered by industrialism. It is difficult for us to realize, for Arnold's battle has been successful, that the average Englishman then looked upon any form of art at best as a waste of time and at worst as something not quite moral. A glance at the periodical literature of the day, with its highly moral tales and "edifying" verses, will give an idea of the abysmal level of public taste. Small wonder that the history of Victorian literature is a record of revolt against the age. Arnold's insistence on the importance of literature, and of art in general, was not the commonplace his efforts have since made it.

His most belligerent attack on English Philistinism is to be found in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), which first appeared as a series of articles for the *Cornhill Magazine*. The opening chapter, *Sweetness and Light* (see p. 734), preaches a new gospel of culture in a style informed with intelligence and wit. To identify the dull Sunday-school side of English life he employed the term "Hebraism" (to include both prophetic Judaism and Pauline Christianity); over against it he held up the "Hellenism" of beauty and reason. A humanity worthy of its calling must learn to co-ordinate its moral with its esthetic and intellectual nature. *Culture and Anarchy* is a spirited plea for the free play of critical intelligence. That pursuit of perfection, which he advocated, is, he here says, "the pursuit of sweetness and light. . . . It knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light."

In 1870 Arnold published *St. Paul and Protestantism*, an attempt to apply scientific criticism to the Scriptures. *Friendship's Garland* (1871) is a continuation of the principles announced in *Culture and Anarchy*, but written in a spirit of delightful raillery. His book of 1873, *Literature and Dogma*, evoked a storm of horror from the orthodox. In it he attacked theologians for interpreting the Bible literally, and for their stressing the letter rather than the spirit of the Scriptures. A thoroughgoing humanist, he reversed the old process of adapting the human character to the injunctions of the Bible; to him the Bible was valuable for what it could offer men and women in their search for a sane and balanced life.

Arnold traveled considerably on the Continent and to America, where he made two lecture tours. His last works include *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877), *Mixed Essays* (1879), *Irish Essays and Others* (1882), and *Discourses in America* (1885).

Lewis E. Gates makes this interesting estimate of Arnold: "To realize the subtle and high quality of Arnold's genius, one has but to compare him with men of science or with rationalists pure and simple,—with men like Professor Huxley, Darwin, or Bentham. . . . Arnold has a far wider range of sensibilities than any one of them. . . . Arnold brings to bear upon the present a finer spiritual appreciation than the mere man of the world or the mere man of science—a larger accumulation of imaginative experience. . . . Arnold makes of life an art rather than a science, and commits the conduct of it to an exquisite tact, rather than to reason or demonstration. The imaginative assimilation of all the best experience of the past—this he regards as the right training to develop true tact for the discernment of good and evil in all practical matters. . . . He accepts—with some sadness, it is true, and yet genuinely and generously—the modern age, with its scientific bias and its worldly preoccupations; humanist as he is, half-romantic lover of an elder time, he yet masters his regret over what is disappearing and welcomes the present loyally. Believing, however, in the continuity of human experience, and above all in the transcendent worth to mankind of its spiritual acquisitions, . . . he devotes himself to preserving the quintessence of this ideal life of former generations, and insinuating it into the hearts of men of a modern age. He converts himself into a patient, ~~courageous mediator between the old and the new~~ . . . [He] takes life as it offers itself and does his best with it. He sees and feels its crudeness and disorderliness; but he has faith in the instincts that civilized men have developed in common."

The Forsaken Merman

Come, dear children, let us away,
Down and away below.
Now my brothers call from the bay;
Now the great winds shoreward blow;
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away,
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go,
Call once yet,
In a voice that she will know:
"Margaret! Margaret!"
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear,
Children's voices, wild with pain.
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
"Mother dear, we cannot stay.
The wild white horses foam and fret."
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more.
One last look at the white-walled town,
And the little gray church on the windy shore;
Then come down.
She will not come though you call all day.
Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;
Where the salt weed sways in the stream;
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail, and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world forever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red-gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea,
She said, "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little gray church on the shore today.
'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah, me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with thee."
I said, "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves."
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say;
Come," I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town.
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold-blowing airs.
We climbed on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here.
Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone.
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
But, ah! she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were sealed to the holy book.
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more.
Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down;
Down to the depths of the sea.
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,

For the humming street, and the child with its toy.
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well.
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun."
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh
For the cold strange eyes of a little mermaiden,
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away, children,
Come, children, come down.
The hoarse wind blows colder;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing, "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she;
And alone dwell forever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low,
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starred with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanched sands a gloom—
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town:
At the church on the hillside—
And then come back down,
Singing, "There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she.
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."

(1849)

To a Friend

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?
He much, the old man,[1] who, clearest-soul'd of men,
Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen,
And Tmolus' hill, and Smyrna's bay, though blind.
Much he,[2] whose friendship I not long since won,
That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
Clear'd Rome of what most sham'd him. But be his[3]
My special thanks, whose even-balanc'd soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild:
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole:
The mellow glory of the Attic stage;
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

(1849)

Shakespeare

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foiled searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at.—Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

(1849)

[1] Homer
[2] Epictetus, Stoic philosopher, who flourished about 90 A D at Rome
[3] Sophocles (495-406 B C), the author of *Oedipus at Colonus* and of *Antigone*, great Greek tragedies.

Lines Written in Kensington Gardens

In this lone, open glade I lie,
Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its end, to stay the eye,
Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine trees stand!

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum.
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain-sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world, which roars hard by,
Be others happy if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new!
When I who watch them am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass!
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

(1852)

To Marguerite

IN RETURNING A VOLUME OF THE LETTERS OF ORTIS

Yes: in the sea of life enisl'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights
The nightingales divinely sing,
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?
A God, a God their severance rul'd;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

(1852)

A Summer Night

In the deserted, moon-blanch'd street,
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world;—but see,
A break between the housetops shows
The moon! and, lost behind her, fading dim
Into the dewy dark obscurity

Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose!

And to my mind the thought
Is on a sudden brought
Of a past night, and a far different scene.
Headlands stood out into the moonlit deep
As clearly as at noon;
The spring-tide's brimming flow
Heaved dazzlingly between;
Houses, with long white sweep,
Girdled the glistening bay;
Behind, through the soft air,
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread away,
That night was far more fair—
But the same restless pacings to and fro,
And the same vainly throbbing heart was there,
And the same bright, calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say:
Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,
Which neither deadens into rest,
Nor ever feels the fiery glow
That whirls the spirit from itself away,
But fluctuates to and fro,
Never by passion quite possess'd
And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?—
And I, I know not if to pray
Still to be what I am, or yield and be
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where, in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labor fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast;
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest
Death in their prison reaches them,
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,
Escape their prison and depart
On the wide ocean of life anew.
There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart
Listeth, will sail;
Nor doth he know how there prevail,
Despotic on that sea,
Trade-winds which cross it from eternity.

Awhile he holds some false way, undebarr'd
By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind and blackening waves.
And then the tempest strikes him; and between
The lightning-bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck
With anguish'd face and flying hair
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false, impossible shore.
And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?
Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain!
Clearness divine!
Ye heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign
Of languor, though so calm, and, though so great,
Are yet untroubled and unpassionate;
Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,
And, though so task'd, keep free from dust and soil!
I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain—
But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency!
How it were good to abide there, and breathe free;
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still!

(1852)

Self-Dependence

Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
'Ye who from my childhood up have calmed me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!'

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
'Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

'Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

'And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

'Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.'

O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:
'Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery!'

(1852)

The Buried Life

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile!
But there's a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love, thy inmost soul.

Alas, is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men concealed
Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;
I knew they lived and moved
Tricked in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—does a like spell benumb
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb?
Ah, well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchained;
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordained.

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possessed,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come, and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpressed.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true!

And then we will no more be racked
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafened ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

(1852)

Philomela

Hark! ah, the Nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark—what pain!
O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—

Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?[1]
Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!
Again—thou hearest!
Eternal Passion!
Eternal Pain!

(1853)

Requiescat

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes;
Ah, would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required;
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
Tonight it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

(1853)

[1] For the story of Philomela and Procne see Swinburne's *Itylus*, p. 621, note. Arnold has here reversed the position of the sisters.

The Scholar-Gipsy

There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there, and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.—Glanvil's *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.—Arnold's note.

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes![1]
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
Come, shepherd; and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun, all morning, binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn[2]—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screened is this nook, o'er the high half-reaped field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks, I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book.
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of shining parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;
Whereat he answered that the gipsy-crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
But it needs Heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and returned no more.
But rumors hung about the countryside,
That the lost scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst[3] in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors.
On the warm ingle-bench,[4] the smock-frocked boors
Had found him seated at their entering;

[1] sheepfolds made of interwoven twigs.
[2] grain (of any kind).
[3] Cumner Hurst, a hill southwest of Oxford. All places mentioned later in the poem are in the vicinity of Oxford.
[4] a fireside seat.

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.—
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks,
I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moored to the cool bank in the summer-heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground:
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer-nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablockhithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers;
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers: the frail-leafed white anemony,
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves;
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass,
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandoned lasher[5] pass,
Have often passed thee near,
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Marked thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air:
But when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen; or hanging on a gate,
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes, and late,
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eying, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood,
(Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged, and shreds of grey,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly,)
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill,
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face toward Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill,
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall;[6]
Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown,
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls.
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe:

[5] the pool below a weir.

[6] the dining hall of Christ Church College, Oxford.

And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid:
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.
Till, having used our nerves with bliss and teen,[7]
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why shouldst thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead,
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half-lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou ~~waitest for the spark from heaven!~~ and we,
~~Light half-believers of our casual creeds~~,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day:
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it! but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us, one
Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly-varied anodynes.

This for our wisest: and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear,
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair.
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames,
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did, with gesture stern,
From her false friend's[8] approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away; and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silvered branches of the glade,
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge; and resting on the moonlit pales,

[7] sadness.

[8] Æneas, who had deserted Dido, queen of Carthage.

Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
As some grave Tyrian[9] trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægæan isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes and Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine,
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves!
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians[10] come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

(1853)

Thyrsis

A Monody, *to commemorate the author's friend,* Arthur Hugh Clough, *who died at Florence, 1861.*

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys[1] nothing keeps the same;
The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks—
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days—
Thyrsis[2] and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?—
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briers!
And that sweet city[3] with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening.

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland dim.
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;
Now seldom come I, since I came with him.
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,
But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;

[9] from Tyre, in Phoenicia.
[1] All the places mentioned in the poem are near Oxford.
[2] Clough.
[10] Spanish traders come to Gibraltar.
[3] Oxford.

And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irked him to be here, he could not rest.
He loved each simple joy the country yields,
He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lowered on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and filled his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vexed garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,
And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrsis[4] never more we swains shall see;
See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's[5] fate;
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,
And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
Of Proserpine,[6] among whose crowned hair
Are flowers first open'd on Sicilian air,
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.[7]

O easy access to the hearer's grace
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna[8] yields,
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirred;
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain!

Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,
Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topped hill!
Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?
I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
I know the Fyfield tree,
I know what white, what purple fritillaries
The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sanford, yields,
And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries;

[4] Thyrsis and Corydon are conventional names of shepherds in ancient pastoral poetry. See Theocritus, *Idyll I*, I, p. 1069, and Virgil, *Eclogue IV*, I, p. 1073.
[5] Cf. Moschus, *A Lament for Bion*, p. 1161.
[6] wife of Pluto, and queen of the nether world.
[7] Orpheus because of his music received permission to bring his wife, Eurydice, back from the dead.
[8] where Proserpine was gathering flowers when she was carried off by Pluto.

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?—
But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossomed trees,
Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried
High towered the spikes of purple orchises,
Hath since our day put by
The coronals of that forgotten time;
Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
And only in the hidden brookside gleam
Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,
Above the locks, above the boating throng,
Unmoored our skiff when through the Wytham flats,
Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,
And darting swallows and light water-gnats,
We tracked the shy Thames shore?
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?—
They all are gone, and thou art gone as well!

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;—
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet!—Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.
Quick! let me fly, and cross
Into yon farther field!—'Tis done; and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,
Yet, happy omen, hail!
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale[9]
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
The morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!—
Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
These brambles pale with mist engarlanded.
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him;
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air,
Wandering with the great Mother's[10] train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)
Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!—
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,[11]
For thee the Lityerses-song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes—
And how a call celestial round him rang,

[9] Clough is buried in Florence by the River Arno.
[10] Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods
[11] Lityerses who challenged strangers to a reaping-contest, with death the punishment for failure. The Lityerses-song was sung as a dirge for those slain in these contests Daphnis, with the help of Hercules, won the contest and slew Lityerses

And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair.
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the mild canopy of English air
That lonely tree against the western sky.
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemones in flower till May,
Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honor, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold—
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollowed, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound;
Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour!
Men gave thee nothing; but this happy quest,
If men esteemed thee feeble, gave thee power,
If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
And this rude Cumner ground,
Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime!
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not ~~for long its happy, country~~ tone;
~~Lost it too soon, and learned a stormy note~~
~~Of men contention~~-tossed, of men who groan,
Which tasked thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—
It failed, and thou wast mute!
Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thyrsis! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
—Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear:
Why faintest thou? I wandered till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still
Dost thou ask proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

(1866)

Dover Beach

The sea is calm tonight,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window; sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles[1] long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled,
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles[2] of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,

[1] Greek dramatist (496-406 B.C.)
[2] beaches

So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

(1867)

Growing Old

What is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form,
The luster of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?
—Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—
Not our bloom only, but our strength—decay?
Is it to feel each limb
Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more; but not
Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dreamed 'twould be!
'Tis not to have our life
Mellowed and softened as with sunset-glow,
A golden day's decline.

'Tis not to see the world
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,
And heart profoundly stirred;
And weep, and feel the fullness of the past,
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man.

(1867)

The Austerity of Poetry

That son of Italy[1] who tried to blow,
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sat with his bride to see a public show.
Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star; and what to youth belong—
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way! crash fell a platform! lo,
'Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay!
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin
Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorned outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

(1867)

Rugby Chapel

NOVEMBER, 1857

Coldly, sadly descends
The autumn evening. The field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of withered leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows;—but cold,
Solemn, unlighted, austere,
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father![1] art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back, in the light
Of thy radiant vigor again;
In the gloom of November we passed
Days not dark at thy side;
Seasons impaired not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast! and I stand
In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

[1] Giacopone di Todi, an Italian poet of the thirteenth century.

[1] Dr. Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), headmaster of Rugby and one of the most successful of all English schoolmasters

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,
In the summer-morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,
Sudden. For fifteen years,
We who till then in thy shade
Rested as under the boughs
Of a mighty oak, have endured
Sunshine and rain as we might,
Bare, unshaded, alone,
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labor-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly repressest the bad!
Still, like a trumpet, doth rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succorest!—this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—
Perish;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swelled,
Foamed for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust,
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah yes! some of us strive
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance!—but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sunk
Gorges, o'er the mountains in snow.
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
Then, on the height, comes the storm.
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
Roaring torrents have breached
The track, the stream-bed descends
In the place where the wayfarer once
Planted his footstep—the spray
Boils o'er its borders! aloft
The unseen snow-beds dislodge
Their hanging ruin; alas,
Havoc is made in our train!
Friends, who set forth at our side,
Falter, are lost in the storm.
We, we only are left!
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compressed, we strain on,
On—and at nightfall at last
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs—
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
Only ourselves! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm.
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripped, without friends, as we are.
Friends, companions, and train,
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,

Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful and firm!
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.
And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honored and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see—
Seemed but a dream of the heart,
Seemed but a cry of desire.
Yes! ~~I believe that there lived~~
~~Others like thee in the past,~~
~~Not like~~ the men of the crowd
~~Who~~ all round me to-day
Bluster ~~or cringe~~, and make life
~~Hideous~~, and arid, and vile;
~~But~~ souls tempered with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

~~Servants of God!~~—or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of his little ones lost—
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending?—~~A God~~
~~Marshalled them, gave them~~ their goal.
~~Ah, but the way is so long!~~
Years they have been in the wild!

Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.
—Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Stagger for ever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardor divine!
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!
Order, courage, return.
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

(1867)

The Last Word

Creep into thy narrow bed,
Creep, and let no more be said!
Vain thy onset! all stands fast.
Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will!
Thou are tired; best be still.

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee!
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

(1867)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

(1828-1882)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was born in London on May 12, 1828. His father was a political refugee from Italy and his mother was of Italian parentage. By virtue of this heritage Rossetti was able to bring to English literature the warmth and rich sensuousness characteristic of the Latin temperament, and an opulence exotic to English letters. It was, indeed, the artistic contributions of Italy rather than the life of the Rossetti household which influenced him, for, although his parents' home was a gathering place for political exiles, he had little taste at any time of his life for politics or sociological problems. Above all things he was an artist, and, more particularly, a painter. He lavished his care chiefly on his canvases, and wrote poetry by way of avocation (often to complement his paintings). Time has, however, already accorded a higher place to his poetry.

When but a boy he studied at an art school, and at the age of eighteen he entered the school of the Royal Academy. By this time, however, he was already an avid reader of poetry, and had developed an intense admiration for Browning, whose works had not been long before the public. Charmed by the elder poet's pictures of Renaissance Italy, Rossetti began to study the Middle Ages, and to translate Dante's *Vita Nuova* (see I, p. 1040). In 1848 Rossetti formed, with two fellow students at the Royal Academy, John Everett Millais and Holman Hunt, the soon notorious Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The name was chosen out of their conviction that sincerity and truth had vanished in the painters who succeeded Raphael, the master of the Italian Renaissance. The Pre-Raphaelite creed read: "We must protest against the intellectual emptiness of our so-called painters. . . . It is for us to bring dignity and sincerity back to art; for us to strip art of conventionality and go to Nature. . . . We must be sincere in our invention, truthful in our representation. We must be Early Christian—Pre-Raphaelite!" These enthusiastic youths also drew up a "list of Immortals," and added that "there exists no other Immortality than what is centred in their names and in the names of their contemporaries." The list included Christ, the author of the Book of Job, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Browning, Bellini (the composer), Joan of Arc, and Mrs. Browning. In their own canvases, Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais used primary colors boldly as a protest against the subdued tones of Academy painters, and paid much attention to the realism of details from nature and life.

Their numbers expanded among their friends. Rossetti's brother, William Michael, became the critic of the group, and his sister, Christina, the poet, although she never actually became a "member." Among other notables who later became allied with them were William Morris, the painter Burne-Jones, Coventry Patmore, Swinburne, and the sculptor Woolner. In 1850 the Brotherhood published their magazine, *The Germ*, under the editorship of William Michael Rossetti. It was to observe in its contents "a rigid adherence to the simplicity of nature." Here Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel* and several of his poems first appeared. But the general public was not impressed and the magazine ran only to four issues.

In this same year Rossetti fell in love with Elizabeth Siddal, who became the favorite model of the Brotherhood. "I knew," he prophetically confessed to a friend, "from the moment I met her my destiny was defined." Hers is the face that appears again and again in his paintings and drawings, and that haunted his days after her death. Her delicate health caused the postponement of their marriage for ten years, years during which Rossetti became confirmed in the irregular mode of a Bohemian life. In the meantime he had made friends with John Ruskin, England's leading art critic, who willingly undertook the role of Maecenas to Rossetti. With characteristic generosity, Ruskin volunteered to pay his young friend for each water color he produced. Thus encouraged, Rossetti was free to devote himself to painting. Ruskin also took a personal interest in

Rossetti's romance, and constantly urged him to marry Miss Siddal. At length, in 1860, though Rossetti knew her to be dying, they were married.

Their life together was brief and tragic in its consequences. His pagan nature and Bohemian habits provoked many quarrels and accusations against his infidelities real and imagined. On February 10, 1862, he left her at home while he went to teach at the Workingmen's College, in which Ruskin was interested. When he returned just before midnight, he found her unconscious, a "phial on a table at the bedside, which had contained laudanum." She died without waking from her comatose state. Rossetti never knew for the rest of his life whether she had died from an accidental overdose of the drug, which she often had taken in search of sleep, or had deliberately committed suicide. Never was he to escape the haunting conviction that she had died by her own hand. Rossetti instructed that the manuscript of his unpublished poems be buried with his wife.

After her death, Rossetti went to live in a large house in Chelsea which he shared with William Michael, and for a very brief time with Swinburne, and George Meredith (see p. 801). The temperaments of these four were not compatible, and they had frequent frictions. Thus far Rossetti had published only a few poems in *The Germ* and in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), and a collection of translations, *The Early Italian Poets* (1861). Now, in 1868, he began to write again, though his mind, tortured by guilt and remorse, was turning to morbid superstition and suspicion. His friends, many of them now winning literary success, urged him to publish his original poems. In vain he tried to remember the buried texts. At last, beset by doubts, he agreed to have the manuscript exhumed, though he would not consent to be present. From the "sad wreck" of the pages he copied out the verses, and in 1870 his volume, *Poems,* appeared.

The book at once achieved great esteem and went into many printings. But Rossetti's hour of triumph was short. Robert Buchanan, in rancor against Rossetti's brother, William Michael, and his friend Swinburne, determined to take his revenge upon both by attacking Dante Gabriel; his article, *The Fleshly School of Poetry,* was one of the most vicious onslaughts ever leveled at an English poet. The barbs sank into Rossetti's soul, and he soon came to look upon Buchanan's review as retribution for his having broken faith with his dead wife. He rapidly sank into despair, took copiously of drugs to deaden his mind, lived more and more like a recluse within the confines of his house, and hastened his end. He suffered from delusions of persecution, even suspecting Browning and Lewis Carroll of ridiculing him in their verse, and lived in a kind of nightmare of disordered thoughts and self-torture. He found some release in poetic composition, however, and in 1881 issued a two-volume edition of his poems. He died in April 1882.

Though the Pre-Raphaelites in their boyhood had framed an elaborate program, it is not easy to describe their movement. It is perhaps simpler to point out what they did not stand for. They did not believe that poetry should concern itself with philosophy, prophecy, or social questions, and herein differed from Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold. Because of these exclusions their talk of "sincerity and truth" is open to misconstruction. The sincerity and truth they sought was of a strictly artistic kind, and Rossetti best explained their intention as a scrupulousness over minute detail. From Keats, whom they worshiped, they learned to bring a sensuous richness to their art. Their particular contribution, however, is their introduction of symbolism to English poetry, in which, until they wrote, it was fairly uncommon.

That simplicity for which Rossetti sought was achieved by constant rewriting and recreating. As Burne-Jones well said of him, "he wanted to keep a poem at boiling-point all the way through, and he did it to that degree that it went into ether with fervent glowing heat before he had done with it." *The Blessed Damozel,* first written when he was nineteen, was recast three times. In his sonnets in *The House of Life* (see p. 598), he often followed the strict Italian form, and put "all of his mind and craft into every word."

Like his fellow Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti was actually a latter-day romanticist. His revolt against Victorian materialism and bad taste was accomplished by going back, as Ruskin and Newman had gone back, to the Middle Ages for inspiration. He was equally

happy in narrative or sonnet, but some of his most notable successes were with the ballad form. His *Sister Helen* (see p. 594), for example, is a wonderful transfiguration of an old medium. Even the theme here is an old one—it may be found in Theocritus. But the ballad, as it came from Rossetti's pen, partook of that strange marriage of spiritual exaltation and sensuousness which is the peculiar stamp of his genius. Throughout his poetry, Rossetti's gift in painting is manifest. But the one distinctive quality which is indeed unique in his work is his marvelous ability to paint silence (see, for example, *Silent Noon, below*). He not only deliberately paints moments of mystical silence, but often gives us an amazing sense that all movement—even time itself—has ceased.

The Blessed Damozel

Rossetti is reported to have said concerning his purposes in this poem: "Poe had done [i.e. in *The Raven*] the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven."

The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
. . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face . . .
Nothing; the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.

"Have I not prayed in heaven?—on earth,
  Lord, Lord, has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
  And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole clings,
  And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
  To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
  And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
  Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
  With prayers sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
  Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
  That living, mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
  Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
  Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
  I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
  Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
  Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
  Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
  To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
  Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
  Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
  Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
  Margaret, and Rosalys.

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
  And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth, white like flame,
  Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
  Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb;
  Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
  Not once abashed or weak;
And the dear Mother will approve
  My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
  To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
  Bowed with their aureoles;
And angels meeting us shall sing,
  To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
  Thus much for him and me—
Only to live as once on earth
  With Love, only to be,
As then awhile, forever now
  Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
  Less sad of speech than mild—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
  The light thrilled toward her, filled
With angels in strong, level flight.
  Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
  Was vague in distant spheres;
And then she cast her arms along
  The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
  And wept. (I heard her tears.)

(written 1847)

Sister Helen

This poem is based on the widespread belief that one can cause an enemy to waste away by making a waxen figure of him and gradually melting it. Helen is here punishing her faithless lover. See Calverley's parody, p. 857.

"Why did you melt your waxen man,
    Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began."
"The time was long, yet the time ran,
    Little brother."
    (*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But if you have done your work aright,
    Sister Helen,

You'll let me play, for you said I might."
"Be very still in your play to-night,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven!)

"You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,
Sister Helen;
If now it be molten, all is well."
"Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
O what is this, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
Sister Helen;
How like dead folk he has dropped away!"
"Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven?)

"See, see, the sunken pile of wood,
Sister Helen,
Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!"
"Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Now close your eyes, for they're sick and sore,
Sister Helen,
And I'll play without the gallery door."
"Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What rest to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me."
"Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,
Sister Helen;
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake."
"Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you spake,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sound to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"I hear a horse-tread, and I see,
Sister Helen,
Three horsemen that ride terribly."
"Little brother, whence come the three,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven?)

"They come by the hill-verge from Boyne Bar,
Sister Helen,
And one draws nigh, but two are afar."
"Look, look, do you know them who they are,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white mane on the blast."
"The hour has come, has come at last,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He has made a sign and called 'Hallo!'
Sister Helen,
And he says that he would speak with you."
"Oh tell him I fear the frozen dew,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Why laughs she thus, between Hell and Heaven?)

"The wind is loud, but I hear him cry,
Sister Helen,
That Keith of Ewern's like to die."
"And he and thou, and thou and I,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
And they and we, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days ago, on his marriage-morn,
Sister Helen,
He sickened, and lies since then forlorn."
"For bridegroom's side is the bride a thorn,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Cold bridal cheer, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days and nights he has lain abed,
Sister Helen,
And he prays in torment to be dead."

"The thing may chance, if he have prayed,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
If he have prayed, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he has not ceased to cry to-day,
Sister Helen,
That you should take your curse away."
"*My* prayer was heard,—he need but pray,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Shall God not hear, between Hell and Heaven?)

"But he says, till you take back your ban,
Sister Helen,
His soul would pass, yet never can."
"Nay then, shall I slay a living man,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he calls forever on your name,
Sister Helen,
And says that he melts before a flame."
"My heart for his pleasure fared the same,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Fire at the heart, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Here's Keith of Westholm riding fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white plume on the blast."
"The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and Heaven?)

"He stops to speak, and he stills his horse,
Sister Helen;
But his words are drowned in the wind's course."
"Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear perforce,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What word now heard, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,
Sister Helen,
Is ever to see you ere he die."
"In all that his soul sees, there am I,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The soul's one sight, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He sends a ring and a broken coin,
Sister Helen,
And bids you mind the banks of Boyne."
"What else he broke will he ever join,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
No, never joined, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He yields you these and craves full fain,
Sister Helen,
You pardon him in his mortal pain."
"What else he took will he give again,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Not twice to give, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He calls your name in an agony,
Sister Helen,
That even dead Love must weep to see."
"Hate, born of Love, is blind as he,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh it's Keith of Keith now that rides fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white hair on the blast."
"The short, short hour will soon be past,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Will soon be past, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He looks at me and he tries to speak,
Sister Helen,
But oh his voice is sad and weak!"
"What here should the mighty Baron seek,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,
Sister Helen,
The body dies, but the soul shall live."
"Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
As she forgives, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,
Sister Helen,
To save his dear son's soul alive."
"Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,
Little brother!"

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He cries to you, kneeling in the road,
Sister Helen,
To go with him for the love of God!"
"The way is long to his son's abode,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The way is long, between Hell and Heaven!)

"A lady's here, by a dark steed brought,
Sister Helen,
So darkly clad, I saw her not."
"See her now or never see aught,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What more to see, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Her hood falls back, and the moon shines fair,
Sister Helen,
On the Lady of Ewern's golden hair."
"Blest hour of my power and her despair,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Hour blest and banned, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did glow,
Sister Helen,
'Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago."
"One morn for pride and three days for woe,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Three days, three nights, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Her clasped hands stretch from her bending head,
Sister Helen;
With the loud wind's wail her sobs are wed."
"What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What strain but death's, between Hell and Heaven?)

"She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,
Sister Helen,—
She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon."
"Oh! might I but hear her soul's blithe tune,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Her woe's dumb cry, between Hell and Heaven!)

"They've caught her to Westholm's saddle-bow,
Sister Helen,
And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow."
"Let it turn whiter than winter snow,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!)

"O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,
Sister Helen;
More loud than the vesper-chime it fell."
"No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Alas! but I fear the heavy sound,
Sister Helen;
Is it in the sky or in the ground?"
"Say, have they turned their horses round,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What would she more, between Hell and Heaven?)

"They have raised the old man from his knee,
Sister Helen,
And they ride in silence hastily."
"More fast the naked soul doth flee,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,
Sister Helen,
But the lady's dark steed goes alone."
"And lonely her bridegroom's soul hath flown,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The lonely ghost, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,
Sister Helen,
And weary sad they look by the hill."
"But he and I are sadder still,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!)

"See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,
Sister Helen,
And the flames are winning up apace!"

"Yet here they burn but for a space,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Ah! what white thing at the door has crossed,
Sister Helen,
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?"
"A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

(1853)

From *The House of Life*

The title of this, one of the greatest of English sonnet-sequences, Rossetti took from the name of the first of the twelve astrological "houses" of the heavens. Though many of them are an expression of his love for his wife, Elizabeth Siddal, they are not all, as has been usually taken for granted, inspired by her. The later sonnets (e.g. *Sonnet 65*) may, in some cases, be better understood as the reflection of his bitter war with himself over his desire to be faithful to his wife's memory and his love for Jane Burden, Morris's wife. A strange union of burning passion and intellectual handling of the sonnet form makes these sonnets like no others in our literature.

The Sonnet

A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.
A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul,—its converse, to what Power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's[1] cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm[2] it pay the toll to Death.

4. Love-Sight

When do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours (we two alone),
Close kissed and eloquent of still replies,
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?
O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

19. Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,—
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge,
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.
Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:—
So this winged hour is dropped to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,

[1] of the River Lethe.
[2] Charon ferried the dead and demanded a piece of money for the passage

This close-companioned, inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

55. *Stillborn Love*

The hour which might have been yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?
Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,
It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute before
The house of Love, hears through the echoing door
His hours elect in choral consonancy.
But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand
Together tread at last the immortal strand
With eyes where burning memory lights love home?
Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
And leaped to them and in their faces yearned—
"I am your child: O parents, ye have come!"

63. *Inclusiveness*

The changing guests, each in a different mood,
Sit at the roadside table and arise:
And every life among them in likewise
Is a soul's board set daily with new food.
What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood
How that face shall watch his when cold it lies?—
Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,
Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?
May not this ancient room thou sit'st in dwell
In separate living souls for joy or pain?
Nay, all its corners may be painted plain
Where Heaven shows pictures of some life spent well;
And may be stamped, a memory all in vain.
Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.

65. *Known in Vain*

As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope,
Knows suddenly, to music high and soft,
The Holy of holies; who because they scoff'd
Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to cope
With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven should ope;
Yet, at their meetings, laugh not as they laugh'd
In speech; nor speak, at length; but sitting oft
Together, within hopeless sight of hope
For hours are silent:—So it happeneth
When work and Will awake too late, to gaze
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath.
Ah! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
Follow the desultory feet of Death?

71, 72, 73. *The Choice*

1

Eat thou and drink; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Surely the earth, that's wise being very old,
Needs not our help. Then loose me, love, and hold
Thy sultry hair up from my face; that I
May pour for thee this golden wine, brim-high,
Till round the glass thy fingers glow like gold.
We'll drown all hours: thy song, while hours are tolled,
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing sky.
Now kiss, and think that there are really those,
My own high-bosomed beauty, who increase
Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might choose our way!
Through many years they toil; then on a day
They die not,—for their life was death,—but cease;
And round their narrow lips the mould falls close.

2

Watch thou and fear; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Or art thou sure thou shalt have time for death?
Is not the day which God's word promiseth
To come man knows not when? In yonder sky,
Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth: can I
Or thou assure him of his goal? God's breath
Even at this moment haply quickeneth
The air to a flame; till spirits, always nigh
Though screened and hid, shall walk the day-light here.
And dost thou prate of all that man shall do?
Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be
Glad in his gladness that comes after thee?

Will *his* strength slay *thy* worm in Hell? Go to:
Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

3

Think thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,
Thou say'st: "Man's measured path is all gone o'er;
Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,
Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I,
Even I, am he whom it was destined for."
How should this be? Art thou, then, so much more
Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby?
Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drowned.
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

85. *Vain Virtues*

What is the sorriest thing that enters Hell?
None of the sins,—but this and that fair deed
Which a soul's sin at length could supersede.
These yet are virgins, whom death's timely knell
Might once have sainted; whom the fiends compel
Together now, in snake-bound shuddering sheaves
Of anguish, while the pit's pollution leaves
Their refuse maidenhood abominable.
Night sucks them down, the tribute of the pit,
Whose names, half entered in the book of Life,
Were God's desire at noon. And as their hair
And eyes sink last, the Torturer deigns no whit
To gaze, but, yearning, waits his destined wife,
The Sin still blithe on earth that sent them there.

86. *Lost Days*

The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?
I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?"
"And I—and I—thyself" (lo! each one saith),
"And thou thyself to all eternity!"

97. *A Superscription*

Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been:
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Fare-well;
Unto thine[1] ear I hold the dead-sea shell
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.
Mark me, how still I am! But should there dart
One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of sighs,—
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

101. *The One Hope*

When vain desire at last and vain regret
Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
And teach the unforgetful to forget?
Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,—
Or may the soul at once in a green plain
Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?
Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
Between the scriptured petals softly blown
Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—
Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er
But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

(1870, 1881)

[1] the poet's.

The Cloud Confines

The day is dark and the night
To him that would search their heart;
No lips of cloud that will part
Nor morning song in the light:
Only, gazing alone,
To him wild shadows are shown,
Deep under deep unknown
And height above unknown height.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

The Past is over and fled;
Named new, we name it the old;
Thereof some tale hath been told
But no word comes from the dead;
Whether at all they be,
Or whether as bond or free,
Or whether they too were we,
Or by what spell they have sped.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of hate
That beats in thy breast, O Time?—
Red strife from the furthest prime,
And anguish of fierce debate;
War that shatters her slain,
And peace that grinds them as grain,
And eyes fixed ever in vain
On the pitiless eyes of Fate.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of love
That bleeds in thy breast, O Man?—
Thy kisses snatched 'neath the ban
Of fangs that mock them above;
Thy bells prolonged unto knells,
Thy hope that a breath dispels,
Thy bitter forlorn farewells
And the empty echoes thereof?
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

The sky leans dumb on the sea,
Aweary with all its wings;
And oh! the song the sea sings
Is dark everlastingly.
Our past is clean forgot,
Our present is and is not,
Our future's a sealed seedplot,
And what betwixt them are we?—
We who say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

(1872)

Christina Rossetti

(1830-1894)

Christina, sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (see p. 591), led a life whose drama was all internal. When young she presented a soft and womanly appearance which belied the sharp intensity of her soul, and which won the affection of a timid young man, James Collinson, who was for a time associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It was tacitly understood that they would marry, until Collinson decided to study for the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. She never forgot him or her love for him, even after he had changed his mind and wedded another woman. When she was twenty-seven the scholarly Charles Bagot Cayley paid court to her, and awoke love in her heart again. He was a slow, unimaginative man, and by the time he proposed to her she felt compelled to reject him. She could not be certain that she had banished Collinson from her heart, and, moreover, she could not bear the thought of being separated from her mother and brothers. So she continued to live uneventfully, a devoted daughter and sister, masking an ardent tempera-

ment behind a calm exterior. She worshiped Dante Gabriel to the extent that she was even, against her will, jealous of his wife. As she grew older, she more and more sublimated her unfulfilled life by turning to the Anglican Church, to which she became a devout and mystical adherent. She was privileged, however, beyond the opportunities of most Victorian women, to enjoy the conversation of men of talent and genius, her brothers' friends, among whom she was acknowledged to be a poet of great gifts.

She is the author of over nine hundred English and sixty Italian poems, most of them brief and none of them long. Her first efforts appeared in the *Athenæum* (1848) and *The Germ* (1850). Beginning in 1862, she issued a series of volumes of poems: *Goblin Market* (1862), *The Prince's Progress* (1866), *Sing-Song* (1872), and *A Pageant* (1881). After her death *New Poems* appeared in 1896. Her verse is of three kinds: fanciful, religious, and impassioned. *Goblin Market* is one of the most original of English poems in the realm of fantasy, and a masterpiece of technical dexterity. The greater bulk of her poetry is religious, and in it she achieved stature equal to that of her forerunner in High Anglican poetry, George Herbert (see Vol. I, p. 541). Like her brother she was a severe metrist. But her genius did not tend, as did his, toward sensuous opulence. Her fount of inspiration was the King James Bible (see Vol. I, p. 406), and the austerity of her language often resembles the somber cadences of the prophets. Some of her poems are the personal, though chastened, expression of her blighted experiences in love. Of these, among the best are the fourteen sonnets which form the sequence *Monna Innominata* (i.e. Lady Nameless). Her most recurrent theme is her contemplation of death and everlasting rest, a subject she dwelt upon with tranquil melancholy shorn of any terror. None of the Pre-Raphaelites achieved in her measure that simplicity which they declared to be cardinal in their productions.

Christina Rossetti's prestige has advanced with the years, and there are some critics who would rate her, above Mrs. Browning, as the greatest of English women poets. Certainly her level of accomplishment is uniformly higher than that of Mrs. Browning, though she wrote nothing so universally appealing as the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. The powerful asceticism of her character is stamped upon everything she composed, and is revealed in the perfection of her versification.

Song

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
  With showers and dewdrops wet:
And if thou wilt, remember,
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
  Sing on as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
  That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
  And haply may forget.

(written Dec. 12, 1848)

Dream Land

Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmèd sleep:
  Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
  Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
  And water springs.
Through sleep, as through a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
  That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast:
Her face is toward the west,
The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain:
She cannot feel the rain
Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
Till time shall cease;
Sleep that no pain shall wake,
Night that no morn shall break
Till joy shall overtake
Her perfect peace.

(written April 1849)

After Death

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him say:
"Poor child, poor child"; and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm though I am cold.

(written April 28, 1849)

Rest

O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

(written May 15, 1849)

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day,
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

(written July 25, 1849)

A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

(written Nov. 18, 1857)

Mirage

The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
  Was but a dream; and now I wake
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
  For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
  A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt
  For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
  My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake.

(written June 12, 1860)

Up-hill

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
  Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
  From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
  A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
  You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
  Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
  They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
  Of labor you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
  Yea, beds for all who come.

(1861)

The Lowest Place

Give me the lowest place: not that I dare
  Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died
That I might live and share
  Thy glory by Thy side.

Give me the lowest place: or if for me
  That lowest place too high, make one more low
Where I may sit and see
  My God and love Thee so.

(written July 25, 1863)

The First Day

I wish I could remember that first day,
  First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
  If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say;
So unrecorded did it slip away,
  So blind was I to see and to foresee,
  So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.
If only I could recollect it, such
  A day of days! I let it come and go
  As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;
It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand—Did one but know!

(1882)

In an Artist's Studio[1]

One face looks out from all his canvases,
  One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
  We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
  A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
  A saint, an angel—every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
  And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
  Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
  Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

(1895)

[1] The studio of her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

William Morris

(1834-1896)

William Morris was the most variously talented of all the members circle. He was a man of enormous energy, and his productivity is an

He was born the son of a wealthy broker, and studied at Exeter Gifted with all things—money, robust health, love of work, and a beauty—he seemed to have been destined for a rich life. At Oxford Burne-Jones, and with him became absorbed in the artistic productions of Both youths decided to study painting under Rossetti. Morris, six years soon changed from the role of disciple to that of intimate friend. Accepting the Pre-Raphaelites, the new enthusiast determined to widen their sphere over Victorian life, and established for this purpose, together with Rossetti, dealt in furniture, tapestries, metalwork, stained glass, and woodcarving, succeeded in penetrating into the English home, and before long his services decoration were much sought after. Impressed with the teachings of Ruskin, a revival of handicrafts, and his influence in this field is still felt in our day machine, turning out countless identical rugs and pieces of furniture, was workman of joy in his creation, he felt, and gradually extinguishing beauty surroundings. Anyone familiar with early and mid-Victorian furnishings is with the justice of Morris's protest. From designing chairs, tapestries, rugs, and Morris carried his revolt further. Filled with distaste at the ugly-looking book Victorian publishers, he established his own printing press, and published, from famous Kelmscott Press, exquisite volumes printed on fine paper, handsomely designed by Morris and other artists.

So much accomplishment might well have filled the life of several other men; in addition, Morris was the author of a long series of poems, romances, and translations none of them, perhaps, great, but all of them of a uniformly excellent level. Most he wrote emanated from his full-hearted acceptance of the worship for the Middle of his fellow Pre-Raphaelites. His first volume, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), best poetically, and contains his most realistic recreations of medieval times. His best work is *The Earthly Paradise*, a collection of poetic tales (1868-70). Other volumes poetry include *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), *Love Is Enough* (1873), and prose, and translations *the Volsung* (1876). He wrote a number of tales and romances in Homer, *Beowulf*, and the Icelandic sagas (see I, p. 1026). Pre-Raphaelite

Although in his poetry Morris seems, in common with the other Pre-Raphaelites, to have turned his back upon the problems of contemporary society, his interest in these issues. As he proves that actually, alone of his group, he was vitally concerned with such matters, and in older he became a confirmed Socialist, studied the writings of Karl Marx, often expounded joined the Social Democratic Federation. His compositions, after this date, *A Dream of* his faith in the necessity of a socialistic society: *The Day Is Coming*, *A Dream for Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1896) are testimony to his optimism order of life.

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...night, and his
...rench territory
...at Poictiers in
...villain Godmar.
...economy, Morris
...es (line 6) to the

...or this,
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...less woods,
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...er knee,
...ash'd wretchedly;
...from every tree
...neavy hair,
...broad and fair;
...ran down her face.

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In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.
So then
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one;
At Poictiers[1] where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon[2] frontier is so near,
Nought after us."
But: "O!" she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;[3]
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.[4]
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, someone cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.
Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off:
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."
She laid her hand upon her brow,

Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and: "No!"
She said, and turn'd her head away,

[1] a battle fought in 1356 between French and English.
[2] of Gascogny, a former province in southwest France.
[3] a prison in Paris.
[4] the "trial by water," used often as a test of guilt for prisoners accused of witchcraft. If the accused drowned, she was judged innocent.

As there was nothing else to say,
And everything was settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands;
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair willful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"
A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help: ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."
"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know?" "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies, my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you:
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'
Eh!—gag me Robert!—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it. So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"
So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert, both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor gray lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.
With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moaned as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.
Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
"So, Jehane, the first fitte[5] is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.
This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

(1858)

The Defence of Guenevere

In this poem in *terza rima*, Guenevere, King Arthur's queen, defends herself eloquently against Gawain's charge that she had committed adultery with Launcelot. Morris took the main outlines of the story from Malory's *Morte Darthur* (see I, p. 208).

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

[5] section of a narrative poem.

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right, such great lords—still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak:

" 'One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" 'Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

"A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

"Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"After a shivering half-hour you said,
'God help! heaven's color, the blue;' and he said, 'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known;'
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas-time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

" 'Son of King Ban of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

"And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold, my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love.
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven?
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping was there some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting;

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darkened fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remembered bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinned this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,[1]

[1] Gawain's mother was a half-sister of King Arthur. Gawain's brother killed his mother as punishment for her adultery.

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head severed in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde*,[2] for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

"'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer out—'Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

"'A knife-point last night:' so must I defend
The honor of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance.
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
'Slayer of unarmed men, here is a chance!

"'Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

"'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovelled at his feet,
And groaned at being slain so young.—'At least,'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-armed will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wondered how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went;
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to grey, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

[2] The real name of the castle was "Joyous Garde"; now it was renamed "Dolorous Garde" or "False Garde."

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colored gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

"For ever? am I not a gracious proof—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

"'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

"'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

"'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight;

"'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

"'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

"'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said 'come'? there was one less than three

"In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head,
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

"By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot stilled their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turned sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She leaned eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need

(1858)

From *The Earthly Paradise*

The framework employed so successfully by Boccaccio in the *De* and by Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales* is adapted by Morris in his celebrated m, *The Earthly Paradise*. At bimonthly gatherings a group of men from the N a group

of descendants of the ancient Greeks meet to exchange tales of their peoples. The connecting passages, greeting the various months, are particularly charming in this work. Some of the tales themselves are told with vigor and dramatic excitement; others are not. The *Apology* opens and the *Envoi* closes the series.

An Apology

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,[1]
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when, aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die—
Remember me a little then, I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names rememberèd,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,[2]
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,
And through anot[her] saw the summer glow,
And through a t[hird] the fruited vines a-row,
While still, unhe[ed] it in its wonted way,
Piped the drear[y] that December day.

[1] allusion to Bool[k] *adise Lost*. See I, pp. 616 ff.
[2] through which [dream]s come from the House of Morpheus, the God

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

(1868)

L'Envoi

Here are we for the last time face to face,
Thou and I, Book, before I bid thee speed
Upon thy perilous journey to that place
For which I have done on thee pilgrim's weed,
Striving to get thee all things for thy need—
I love thee, whatso time or men may say
Of the poor singer of an empty day.

Good reason why I love thee, e'en if thou
Be mocked or clean forgot as time wears on;
For ever as thy fashioning did grow,
Kind word and praise because of thee I won
From those without whom were my world all gone,
My hope fallen dead, my singing cast away,
And I set soothly in an empty day.

I love thee; yet this last time must it be
That thou must hold thy peace and I must speak,
Lest if thou babble I begin to see
Thy gear too thin, thy limbs and heart too weak,
To find the land thou goest forth to seek—
Though what harm if thou die upon the way,
Thou idle singer of an empty day?

But though this land desired thou never reach,
Yet folk who know it mayst thou meet, or death;
Therefore a word unto thee would I teach
To answer these, who, noting thy weak breath,
Thy wandering eyes, thy heart of little faith,
May make thy fond desire a sport and play
Mocking the singer of an empty day.

That land's name, say'st thou? and the road thereto?
Nay, Book, thou mockest, saying thou know'st it not;
Surely no book of verse I ever knew
But ever was the heart within him hot
To gain the Land of Matters Unforgot—
There, now we both laugh—as the whole world may,
At us poor singers of an empty day.

Nay, let it pass, and harken! Hast thou heard
That therein I believe I have a friend,
Of whom for love I may not be afeared?
It is to him indeed I bid thee wend;
Yea, he perchance may meet thee ere thou end,
Dying so far off from the hedge of bay,
Thou idle singer of an empty day!

Well, think of him, I bid thee, on the road,
And if it hap that midst of thy defeat,
Fainting beneath thy follies' heavy load,
My Master, Geoffrey Chaucer, thou do meet,
Then shalt thou win a space of rest full sweet;
Then be thou bold, and speak the words I say,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"O Master, O thou great of heart and tongue,
Thou well mayst ask me why I wander here,
In raiment rent of stories oft besung!
But of thy gentleness draw thou anear,
And then the heart of one who held thee dear
Mayst thou behold! So near as that I lay
Unto the singer of an empty day.

"For this he ever said, who sent me forth
To seek a place amid thy company:
That howsoever little was my worth,
Yet was he worth e'en just so much as I;
He said that rhyme hath little skill to lie;
Nor feigned to cast his worser part away;
In idle singing for an empty day.

"I have beheld him tremble oft enough
At things he could not choose but trust to me,
Although he knew the world was wise and rough;
And never did he fail to let me see
His love,—his folly and faithlessness, maybe;
And still in turn I gave him voice to pray
Such prayers as cling about an empty day.

"Thou, keen-eyed, reading me, mayst read him through,
For surely little is there left behind;
No power great deeds unnameable to do;
No knowledge for which words he may not find,
No love of things as vague as autumn wind—
Earth of the earth lies hidden by my clay,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"Children we twain are, saith he, late made wise
In love, but in all else most childish still,
And seeking still the pleasure of our eyes,
And what our ears with sweetest sounds may fill;
Not fearing Love, lest these things he should kill;
Howe'er his pain by pleasure doth he lay,
Making a strange tale of an empty day.

"Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant;
Life have we loved, through green leaf and through sere,
Though still the less we knew of its intent;
The Earth and Heaven through countless year on year,
Slow changing, were to us but curtains fair,
Hung around about a little room, where play
Weeping and laughter of man's empty day.

"O Master, if thine heart could love us yet,
Spite of things left undone, and wrongly done,
Some place in loving hearts then should we get,
For thou, sweet-souled, didst never stand alone,
But knew'st the joy and woe of many an one—
By lovers dead, who live through thee, we pray,
Help thou us singers of an empty day!"

Fearest thou, Book, what answer thou mayst gain
Lest he should scorn thee, and thereof thou die?
Nay, it shall not be.—Thou mayst toil in vain,
And never draw the House of Fame anigh;
Yet he and his shall know whereof we cry,
Shall call it not ill done to strive to lay
The ghosts that crowd about life's empty day.

Then let the others go! and if indeed
In some old garden thou and I have wrought,
And made fresh flowers spri[illegible] up from hoarded seed,
And fragrance of old days a[illegible]eds have brought
Back to folk weary; all w[illegible]or nought.
—No little part it was fo[illegible] play—
The idle singer of an em[illegible]

(1870)

The Day Is Coming

From *Chants for Socialists*

Come hither, lads, and harken, for a tale there is to tell.
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are going to be.

There more than one in a thousand in the days that are yet to come,
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the ancient home.

For then—laugh not, but listen to this strange tale of mine—
All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine.

Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,
Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary to stand.

Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear
For tomorrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf anear.

I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall be glad
Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch at the work he had,

For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed.

O strange new world, lerful justice! But for whom
shall we ga the gain?
For ourselves an ach of our fellows, and no
hand shal' n vain.

Then all Mine Thine, shall be Ours, and
no more man crave

For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.

And what wealth then shall be left us when none shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pine the sold?

Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead;
And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head;

And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvelous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music—all those that do and know.

For all these shall be ours and all men's; nor shall any lack a share
Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when the world grows fair.

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But what are the deeds of today,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that wear our lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting?
There are three words to speak—
We will it—and what is the freeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak?

O why and for what are we waiting? while our brothers droop and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where crowd on crowd they dwell,
Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed, hungry hell?

Through squalid life they labored, in sordid grief they died,
Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of England's pride.

They are gone; there is none can undo it, nor save our souls from the curse;
But many a million cometh, and shall they be better or worse?

It is we must answer and hasten, and open wide the door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and the slow-foot hope of the poor.

Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched, and their unlearned discontent,
We must give it voice and wisdom till the waiting-tide be spent.

Come, then, since all things call us, the living and the dead,
And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmering light is shed.

Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and put by ease and rest,
For the Cause alone is worthy till the good days bring the best.

Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his deed shall still prevail.

Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this, at least, we know:
That the Dawn and the Day is coming, and forth the Banners go.

(1884)

Meeting in Winter

Winter in the world it is,
Round about the unhoped kiss
Whose dream I long have sorrowed o'er;
Round about the longing sore,
That the touch of thee shall turn
Into joy too deep to burn.

Round thine eyes and round thy mouth
Passeth no murmur of the south,
When my lips a little while
Leave thy quivering tender smile,
As we twain, hand holding hand,
Once again together stand.

Sweet is that, as all is sweet;
For the white drift shalt thou meet,
Kind and cold-cheeked and mine own,
Wrapped about with deep-furred gown
In the broad-wheeled chariot.
Then the north shall spare us not;
The wide-reaching waste of snow
Wilder, lonelier yet shall grow
As the reddened sun falls down.

But the warders of the town,
When they flash the torches out
O'er the snow amid their doubt,
And their eyes at last behold
Thy red-litten hair of gold;
Shall they open, or in fear
Cry, "Alas! What cometh here?
Whence hath come this Heavenly One
To tell of all the world undone?"

They shall open, and we shall see
The long street litten scantily
By the long stream of light before
The guest-hall's half-open door;
And our horses' bells shall cease
As we reach the place of peace;
Thou shalt tremble, as at last
The worn threshold is o'erpast,
And the firelight blindeth thee:
Trembling shalt thou cling to me
As the sleepy merchants stare
At thy cold hands slim and fair,
Thy soft eyes and happy lips
Worth all lading of their ships.

O my love, how sweet and sweet
That first kissing of thy feet,
When the fire is sunk a' ;,
And the hall made cm now
Groweth solemn, dim. ast!
O my love, the night st
Longer than men tel
Laden with our lone

(1891)

Algernon Charles Swinburne

(1837-1909)

It is nearly impossible to appraise the accomplishment of Swinburne. His voluminous output amply demonstrates his amazing poetic gifts. He easily exceeded all English poets in wizardry of word-music. There were no limits to his command over the orchestration of our language, and his melodies and metres were not less wonderful than fresh and new. Technically considered, his work will yield hardly an unrealized line, and the bulk of his perfectly executed poetry would make a book of considerable size. Nor is it true, as has often been said, that there is an absence of intellectual significance in what he wrote, for his fertile mind was ever reaching out to all sorts of fields of interest. He was not, it must be admitted, a profound thinker, but he never made any pretensions to being one. His imagination was, on the other hand, lively, expansive, restless, and generous, even if he was never tempted to speak in the role of prophet. With all this, no one can read Swinburne and come away with the conviction that he has been in the company of a poet of the first rank. One cannot fail to observe that Swinburne is at his very best when he is saying least—in his love or descriptive poetry—when he is frankly making only dazzling music rather than enunciating important ideas. In the last analysis, his missing greatness may be due to his sheer waste of power, his indifference to outline (despite his love of the Greeks), and his tendency to become intoxicated by the sound of his own music.

He was born in London on April 5, 1837, of an ancient family. His father, an admiral in the navy, was the son of a baronet, and his mother was the daughter of an earl. Though he inherited none of those traits which might have inclined him to follow in his father's footsteps, he was so far his father's son that his love of the sea remained all his life a fervent passion. Educated from boyhood to master French and Italian, he was already an avid scholar when he entered Eton. From there he went to Balliol College, Oxford, where he was a brilliant student in Latin and Greek. But Swinburne's erratic, high-strung temperament made all routine hateful to him, and he was anything but a model collegian. Near the very end of his career at Oxford, he left without taking his degree.

Though he later described these four years as profitless, he was actually training himself for his profession by imitation of numerous literary masters: the Elizabethan dramatists, Sappho (see I, p. 1091), Boccaccio (see I, pp. 1050, 1054), and the anonymous creators of the ballads. In 1857 he met Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones, and became for a while a disciple of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He retained permanently their devotion to art as an end in itself, their revolt against the ugliness of Victorian daily life, and their ideal of ecstasy in poetry, and also shared their enthusiasm for medieval culture. His interests were too eclectic, however, to permit his remaining allied to their movement. For Swinburne drank of many founts of inspiration, and the critic tracing his influences will have to reckon with such widely varied literary sources as the Bible, the Elizabethan dramatists, Aeschylus, the Greek lyrists (see I, p. 1090), Villon (see p. 1170), Baudelaire (see p. 1171), Victor Hugo, Landor, and William Morris. As someone has remarked, Swinburne's work is full of "isms"; medievalism, nihilism, republicanism, and anticlericalism permeate various periods of his creation, and paganism, which was natural to him, is nearly omnipresent. That radicalism (in politics, religion, and morality) which he was to maintain for the rest of his days, first became confirmed in him at about the time of his friendship with the Pre-Raphaelites.

After [illegible] Oxford, he was given an allowance to live in London, where he was soon [illegible] darling "imp" of the Rossetti circle. In 1860 he published two poetic dramas, *[illegible]en Mother* and *Rosamond*, without attracting any notice. During the next few [illegible]te reviews, a defense of George Meredith, and an essay on Baudelaire. Himself [illegible] of the flesh—he never tired of acknowledging himself a celebrant of

the Venus cult—he felt a peculiar kinship with Baudelaire, who had been almost devout in his pursuit of physical experience. In 1864 Swinburne toured the Continent, and in Florence met the man whom he hailed as his master, Walter Savage Landor (see p. 325). On his return to London the next year, he took lodgings in a house in Chelsea with Rossetti and Meredith. Soon after this appeared his *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), a poetic tragedy on the Greek model, which won him great acclaim. At once he followed up this success with another play, *Chastelard* (1865), the first in a trilogy that eventually included *Bothwell* (1874) and *Mary Stuart* (1881). In 1866 another volume of verse was ready, *Poems and Ballads,* in the general excitement over which were mixed many voices of denunciation. The eroticism and hinted perversity of these poems augmented the chorus of puritanical indignation which *Chastelard* had already provoked. Swinburne, who took pleasure in shocking respectability, set to work at once on a novel "to scare Mrs. Grundy out of her remaining wits," but though completed years later, it was never published—luckily for him, if the description of its contents may be credited.

He now made the acquaintance of the Italian patriot Mazzini, then living in exile in England, and with that strange childlike reverence for heroes which was part of Swinburne's character, he worshiped at the feet of the great Italian. Already a venerator of the republican Victor Hugo, he became inflamed with the cause of republicanism, and his *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) were in a new strain, free from the eroticism of his earlier volumes. In this mood were written *Hertha*—which he rated highest among his nondramatic poems—and *To Walt Whitman in America. Songs of Two Nations* (1875) contains more hymns to political freedom. His astonishing productivity continued unabated. At white heat he wrote the austere classic tragedy *Erectheus* (1876). In 1878 he issued a second series of *Poems and Ballads,* containing such pieces as the noble elegy on Baudelaire (occasioned by a false report of the French poet's death), *Ave Atque Vale.* In the meantime he had published prose studies of Blake (1867) and Chapman (1875).

In 1879 Swinburne underwent the greatest crisis of his life. His affinity with Baudelaire was based upon more than poetic grounds, for he too had cultivated sensuous and sensual experience often to the breaking point. When he was about forty he went into a collapse that brought him close to death. When he began to convalesce, his mother arranged that he live with his friend, the pedantic Theodore Watts-Dunton, in a villa at Putney, a short distance from London. From that time on, Swinburne was virtually Watts-Dunton's prisoner, submitting with characteristic docility to having a regular routine arranged for him, to leaving Putney only in the company of his guardian, and to receiving visits only from those persons of whom the other man approved. He made no protest against the uneventful existence which was his for the last thirty years of his life, and contented himself with withdrawing more intensely to the world of books.

But Swinburne the poet could not flourish in the sane, regulated atmosphere of Putney, although on occasion he still could write a beautiful poem. He was under no illusion as to the diminution of his powers, and he admitted writing to escape boredom. But his pen poured out a steady stream of works: *Songs of the Springtides* (1880), *Studies in Song* (1880), *The Heptalogia*—a book of parodies (1880), *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), *A Century of Roundels* (1883), *A Midsummer Holiday* (1884), *Astrophel* (1894), *The Tale of Balen* (1896), *A Channel Passage* (1904), *Collected Poems* (1904); and the poetic dramas *Marino Faliero* (1885), *Locrine* (1887), *The Sisters* (1892), and *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards* (1899). Hardly a volume of these but contains passages full of the old splendor.

In addition he published further critical studies: on Shakespeare (1880), ictor Hugo (1886), Ben Jonson (1889), and *The Age of Shakespeare* (1908), among oth As a critic, Swinburne is admirable for his generous enthusiasms, and he did m carry on Lamb's good work in restoring interest in the Elizabethans. His criticism, r, suffers from his typical immoderateness of temper; he tended to rhapsodize o fections, which were inevitably passionate devotions, and to heap so much praise authors that one wonders at the absence of any scale of values in his judgments.

Choruses from *Atalanta in Calydon*

1

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months[1] in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale[2] amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamor of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendor and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams fe[ed] on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses tra[mpled] a traveling foot,
The faint fresh fl[ame] the young year flushes
From leaf to fl[ower] to fruit;
And fruit and l[eaf] gold and fire,

[1] Artemis, as goc[dess of the] moon.
[2] See note 1 to S[ong from] *Itylus*, p. 621.

And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,[3]
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;[4]
And soft as lips that laugh and hide,
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

2

Before the beginning of years
There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;
Grief, with a glass that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite;
Love that endures for a breath:
Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the laboring earth;

[3] Pan, the goat-footed god of flocks and pastures; Bacchus, the god of wine.
[4] Various female worshippers of Bacchus.

And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labor and thought,
A time to serve and to sin:
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly, O Love;
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid;
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath;
But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born
Of sea-foam[1] and the frothing of blood,
Blood-red and bitter of fruit,
And the seed of it laughter and tears,
And the leaves of it madness and scorn;
A bitter flower from the bud,
Sprung of the sea without root,
Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn
That is woven of the day on the night,
The hair of the hours was not white
Nor the raiment of time overworn,
When a wonder of world's delight,
A perilous goddess was born;
And the waves of the sea as she came
Clove, and the foam at her feet,
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
A fleshly blossom, a flame
Filling the heavens with heat
To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,
And men upon earth that hear
Sweet articulate words
Sweetly divided apart,
And in shallow and channel and mere
The rapid and footless herds,
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,
She is fair, she is white like a dove,
And the life of the world in her breath
Breathes, and is born at her birth;
For they knew thee for mother of love,
And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,
Mother, when winds were at ease,
As a flower of the springtime of corn,
A flower of the foam of the seas?
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,
Aphrodite, a mother of strife;
For before thee some rest was on earth,
A little respite from tears,
A little pleasure of life;

[1] Aphrodite was represented in Greek mythology as having been born of the sea-foam.

For life was not then as thou art,
But as one that waxeth in years
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife;
Earth had no thorn, and desire
No sting, neither death any dart;
What hadst thou to do amongst these,
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas
As an ear from a seed of corn,
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,
As a ray shed forth of the morn,
For division of soul and disease,
For a dart and a sting and a thorn?
What ailed thee then to be born?

Was there not evil enough,
Mother, and anguish on earth
Born with a man at his birth,
Wastes underfoot, and above
Storm out of heaven, and dearth
Shaken down from the shining thereof,
Wrecks from afar overseas
And peril of shallow and firth,
And tears that spring and increase
In the barren places of mirth,
That thou, having wings as a dove,
Being girt with desire for a girth,
That thou must come after these,
That thou must lay on him love?

Thou shouldst not so have been born.
But death should have risen with thee,
Mother, and visible fear,
Grief, and the wringing of hands,
And noise of many that mourn;
The smitten bosom, the knee
Bowed, and in each man's ear
A cry as of perishing lands,
A moan as of people in prison,
A tumult of infinite griefs;
And thunder of storm on the sands,
And wailing of wives on the shore;
And under thee newly arisen
Loud shoals, and shipwrecking reefs,
Fierce air and violent light;
Sail rent and sundering oar,
Darkness, and noises of night;
Clashing of strea[s] in the sea,
Wave against w[as] as a sword,
Clamor of c[ents], and foam;
Rains ma[ruin] on earth,
Winds that wax ravenous and roam
As wolves in a wolfish horde;
Fruits growing faint in the tree,
And blind things dead in their birth;
Famine, and blighting of corn,
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee
Who shall discern or declare
In the uttermost ends of the sea
The light of thine eyelids and hair,
The light of thy bosom as fire
Between the wheel of the sun
And the flying flames of the air?
Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,
But abide with despair and desire
And the crying of armies undone,
Lamentation of one with another
And breaking of city by city;
The dividing of friend against friend,
The severing of brother and brother;
Wilt thou utterly bring to an end?
Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
And cast out gods from their places.
These things are spoken of thee.
Strong kings and goodly with gold
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,
And made their kingdoms and races
As dust and surf of the sea.
All these, overburdened with woes
And with length of their days waxen weak,
Thou slewest; and sentest moreover
Upon Tyro[2] an evil thing,
Rent hair and a fetter and blows
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,
Though she lay by a god as a lover,
Though fair, and the seed of a king.
For of old, being full of thy fire,
She endured not longer to wear
On her bosom a saffron vest,
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver;
Being mixed and made one through desire,
With Enipeus, and all her hair
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast
Filled full of the foam of the river.

(1865)

[2] Tyro, wife of Cretheus of Thessaly, was beloved by the river-god Enipeus

Itylus[1]

Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thy heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfill'd of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring is done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
The small slain body, the flower-like face,
Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet,
Who hath remember'd me? who hath forgotten?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.

(1866)

[1] Tereus, king of Thrace, dishonored his wife's sister Philomela and cut out her tongue to prevent her from revealing his crime. In revenge his wife Procne killed her son Itylus, served him as food to his father, and fled with Philomela. In order to permit their escape from Tereus the gods turned them into birds—Philomela into a nightingale and Procne into a swallow

A Match

Though not a rondeau, this poem bears a certain resemblance to that form by reason of the repetition of the opening two lines of each stanza as the seventh and eighth lines.

If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or gray grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

(1866)

Hymn to Proserpine[1]

AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Vicisti, Galilæe[2]

I have lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harp-string of gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?
I am sick of singing: the bays burn deep and chafe: I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.
O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New Gods are crowned in the city; their flowers have broken your rods;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife; ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breast of the nymphs in the brake;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire,

[1] Proserpine, wife of Pluto and goddess of the nether world See Swinburne's *The Garden of Proserpine*, p 625
[2] Thou hast conquered, Galilean.

More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:
Why should he labor, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean,[3] and fed on the fulness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of rack and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods![4]
Though all men abase them before you in spirits, and all knees bend,
I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north-wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years:
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour;
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour:
And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the roots of the sea:
And the height of its head as the height of the utmost stars of the air;
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean[5] be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to the dead.
Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,

[3] causing forgetfulness
[4] This refers to the worship of saints' relics.
[5] Aphrodite, who was born of the sea-foam.

Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam,
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odor, and color of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendor, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our temporal breath;
For these give labor and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.[6]
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a sleep.

(1866)

A Ballad of Burdens

The French *ballade*, of which this is a variation, is characterized by the refrain which forms the last line of each stanza. The most common rhyme-scheme is *ababbcbc*, though the ten-line stanza is also to be found. The *envoy*, which contains half as many lines as the stanza, is both dedication and climax of the poem.

The burden of fair women. Vain delight,
And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them gray,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
And grief that says what pleasure used to say:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
A burden without fruit in childbearing;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
Threescore between the dawn and evening.
The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
In the last days shall take no thought for thee;
In the last days like earth thy face shall be,

[6] Swinburne refers to a line from Epictetus, a Greek philosopher of the first century A.D.: "Thou art a little soul bearing up a corpse."

Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed;
And say at night, "Would God the day were here!"
And say at dawn, "Would God the day were dead!"
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle, and sorrow upon thine head:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colors. Thou shalt see
Gold tarnished, and the gray above the green;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
And thou shalt say of mercy, "It hath been;"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear, and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell;
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire,
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
White rain and wind among the tender trees;
A summer of green sorrows gathering;
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
And winter wan with many maladies;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is, nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight;
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust,
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite;
And where the red was, lo the bloodless white;
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar;
And where day was, the likeness of the night:
This is the end of every man's desire.

L'ENVOY

Princes,[1] and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire;
For life is sweet, but after life is death.
This is the end of every man's desire.

(1866)

The Garden of Proserpine[1]

Here, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams,
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap.
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,

[1] The envoy (or message) of a ballade is regularly addressed to a prince or other lordly person.

[1] Proserpine was wife of Pluto and goddess of the nether world

Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes,
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold, immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her,
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,[2]
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

[2] Demeter, mother of Proserpine, was the goddess of fertility

We are not sure of sorrow;
And joy was never sure;
Today will die tomorrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives forever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light;
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal—
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

(1866)

Ave Atque Vale[1]

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Nous devions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs,
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leur marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.
—Les Fleurs du mal.[2]

I

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower molded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads[3] weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet

[1] Hail and farewell.
[2] See p. 1171.
[3] tree nymphs.

To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

II

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.[4]
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV

O sleepless heart and somber soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

[4] Sappho, the poet of Lesbos, who was said to have cast herself into the sea from the Leucadian promontory. For some of her poems, see I, p. 1091.

V

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labor and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and somber songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

VII

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits gray like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

VIII

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O, sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet

Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's[5] veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the harkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like,[6] across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

XII

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,[7]
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfill all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sun-setting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,

[5] queen of the nether world.

[6] See the opening scene in Æschylus's *Choephoroe*

[7] Agamemnon

And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,[8]
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,[9]
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine;[10]
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

XVI

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,[11]
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

XVIII

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean[12] womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

(written 1868)

Hertha[1]

I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colored fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird; before God was, I am.[2]

[8] referring to the river of forgetfulness in the otherworld.
[9] According to medieval legend, Venus held her court within the Venusberg, a mountain in central Germany
[10] referring to Eryx, in Sicily, where Aphrodite had a temple
[11] Tannhauser, after spending a year with Venus in the Venusberg, asked absolution of the pope, who told him that he could hope for God's mercy no more than he could hope for the dry staff in the pope's hand to grow green again. After Tannhauser's departure the staff began to bud
[12] Niobe, the queen of Thebes, boasted of her children. She was punished by seeing them all killed by the gods. She herself was turned into stone.
[1] The ancient Germanic goddess of the earth. She is the speaker of the poem.
[2] See *John*, 8:58 "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken, and I am the blow.[3]

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high"?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,[4]
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Has the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
What was, hast thou known?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne[5]
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

~~A creed is a rod,~~
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

~~I am in thee to save thee,~~
As my soul in thee saith;
Give thou, as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labor, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

[3] Cf. Emerson's *Brahma*, in which he says,

"Far and forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same
. . . . . .
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt . . ."

[4] These questions are directly suggested by *Job*, chapters 38 and 39.

[5] Neither priest nor king. A tripod was a three-legged altar used by the priestess of Apollo.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights[6] ye see vanish meant
Always to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted[7]
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off; they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-colored hours
When my mind was as May's
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;

[6] religious creeds.
[7] The tree Yggdrasill which, according to Norse mythology, supported the universe. Its roots were in hell, its trunk in earth, and its branches in heaven.

That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
~~In me only the root is~~
~~That blooms in your boughs;~~
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward gods not of me,
~~Was not I enough beautiful~~?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, ~~I am with you, am in you and of you;~~ look forth now ~~and see~~.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the terror of God.

For his twilight[8] is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown gray from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

[8] This refers to the Norse belief in a twilight of the gods, when the whole universe shall perish but be followed by a new one.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

(1871)

To Walt Whitman[1] *in America*

Send but a song oversea for us,
Heart of their hearts who are free.
Heart of their singer, to be for us
More than our singing can be;
Ours, in the tempest at error,
With no light but the twilight of terror;
Send us a song oversea!

Sweet-smelling of pine-leaves and grasses,
And blown as a tree through and through
With the winds of the keen mountain-passes,
And tender as sun-smitten dew;
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes
The wastes of your limitless lakes,
Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic
Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song,
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,
With thoughts as thunders in throng,
With consonant ardors of chords
That pierce men's souls as with swords
And hale them hearing along,

Make us too music, to be with us
As a word from a world's heart warm,
To sail the dark as a sea with us,
Full-sailed, outsinging the storm,
A song to put fire in our ears
Whose burning shall burn up tears,
Whose sign bid battle reform;

A note in the ranks of a clarion,
A word in the wind of cheer,
To consume as with lightning the carrion
That makes time foul for us here;
In the air that our dead things infest
A blast of the breath of the west,
Till east way as west way is clear.

[1] American poet (1819-1892).

Out of the sun beyond sunset,
From the evening whence morning shall be,
With the rollers in measureless onset,
With the van of the storming sea,
With the world-wide wind, with the breath
That breaks ships driven upon death,
With the passion of all things free,

With the sea-steeds footless and frantic,
White myriads for death to bestride
In the charge of the ruining Atlantic
Where deaths by regiments ride,
With clouds and clamors of waters,
With a long note shriller than slaughter's
On the furrowless fields world-wide,

With terror, with ardor and wonder,
With the soul of the season that wakes
When the weight of a whole year's thunder
In the tidestream of autumn breaks,
Let the flight of the wide-winged word
Come over, come in and be heard,
Take form and fire for our sakes.

For a continent bloodless with travail
Here toils and brawls as it can,
And the web of it who shall unravel
Of all that peer on the plan;
Would fain grow men, but they grow not,
And fain be free, but they know not
One name for freedom and man?

One name, not twain for division;
One thing, not twain, from the birth;
Spirit and substance and vision,
Worth more than worship is worth;
Unbeheld, unadored, undivined,
The cause, the center, the mind,
The secret and sense of the earth.

Here as a weakling in irons,
Here as a weanling in bands,
As a prey that the stake-net environs,
Our life that we looked for stands;
And the man-child naked and dear,
Democracy, turns on us here
Eyes trembling with tremulous hands.

It sees not what season shall bring to it
Sweet fruit of its bitter desire;
Few voices it hears yet sing to it,
Few pulses of hearts reaspire;
Foresees not time, nor forehears
The noises of imminent years,
Earthquake, and thunder, and fire:

When crowned and weaponed and curbless
It shall walk without helm or shield
The bare burnt furrows and herbless
Of war's last flame-stricken field,
Till godlike, equal with time,
It stand in the sun sublime,
In the godhead of man revealed.

Round your people and over them
Light like raiment is drawn,
Close as a garment to cover them
Wrought not of mail nor of lawn;
Here, with hope hardly to wear,
Naked nations and bare
Swim, sink, strike out for the dawn.

Chains are here, and a prison,
Kings, and subjects, and shame.
If the God upon you be arisen,
How should our songs be the same?
How, in confusion of change,
How shall we sing, in a strange
Land, songs praising his name?

God is buried and dead to us,
Even the spirit of earth,
Freedom; so have they said to us,
Some with mocking and mirth,
Some with heartbreak and tears;
And a God without eyes, without ears,
Who shall sing of him, dead in the birth?

The earth-god Freedom, the lonely
Face lightening, the footprint unshod,
Not as one man crucified only
Nor scourged with but one life's rod;
The soul that is substance of nations,
Reincarnate with fresh generations;
The great god Man, which is God.

But in weariest of years and obscurest
Doth it live not at heart of all things,
The one God and one spirit, a purest
Life, fed from unstanchable springs?
Within love, within hatred it is,
And its seed in the stripe as the kiss,
And in slaves is the germ, and in kings.

Freedom we call it, for holier
Name of the soul's there is none;

Surelier its labors, if slowlier,
Than the meters of star or of sun;
Slowlier than life into breath,
Surelier than time into death,
It moves till its labor be done.

Till the motion be done and the measure
Circling through season and clime,
Slumber and sorrow and pleasure,
Vision of virtue and crime;
Till consummate with conquering eyes,
A soul disembodied, it rise
From the body transfigured of time.

Till it rise and remain and take station
With the stars of the worlds that rejoice;
Till the voice of its heart's exultation
Be as theirs an invariable voice;
By no discord of evil estranged,
By no pause, by no breach in it changed,
By no clash in the chord of its choice.

It is one with the world's generations,
With the spirit, the star, and the sod;
With the kingless and king-stricken nations,
With the cross, and the chain, and the rod;
The most high, the most secret, most lonely,
The earth-soul Freedom, that only
Lives, and that only is God.

(1871)

A Ballad of François Villon

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS

Like *A Ballad of Burdens* (see p. 624), this poem is a *ballade*, an old French verse form favored by the fourteenth-century vagabond poet Villon.

Bird of the bitter bright gray golden morn,
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born,
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
When song new-born put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas, the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers,
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers,
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That, like some ravenous bird, was strong to tire
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

(written September 1877)

Nephelidia

In *The Heptalogia*, a collection of parodies published anonymously in 1880, Swinburne not only satirized Tennyson and the Brownings but mocked

his own redundant melody. *Nephelidia* (the title means *Cloudlets*) is an admirable attack on the absurdity of attenuated anapestic alliteration.

From the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn
through a notable nimbus of nebulous noonshine,
Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-flower
that flickers with fear of the flies as they float,
Are the looks of our lovers that lustrously lean
from a marvel of mystic miraculous moonshine,
These that we feel in the blood of our blushes
that thicken and threaten with throbs
through the throat?
Thicken and thrill as a theatre thronged at appeal
of an actor's appalled agitation,
Fainter with fear of the fires of the future than
pale with the promise of pride in the past;
Flushed with the famishing fullness of fever that
reddens with radiance of rathe[1] recreation,
Gaunt as the ghastliest of glimpses that gleam
through the gloom of the gloaming when
ghosts go aghast?
Nay, for the nick of the tick of the time is a tremulous touch on the temples of terror,
Strained as the sinews yet strenuous with strife
of the dead who is dumb as the dust-heaps
of death:
Surely no soul is it, sweet as the spasm of erotic
emotional exquisite error,
Bathed in the balms of beatified bliss, beatific
itself by beatitude's breath.
Surely no spirit or sense of a soul that was soft
to the spirit and soul of our senses
Sweetens the stress of suspiring suspicion that
sobs in the semblance and sound of a sigh;
Only this oracle opens Olympian, in mystical
moods and triangular tenses—
"Life is the lust of a lamp for the light that is
dark till the dawn of the day when we die."
Mild is the mirk and monotonous music of
memory, melodiously mute as it may be,
While the hope in the heart of a hero is bruised
by the breach of men's rapiers, resigned to
the rod;
Made meek as a mother whose bosom-beats bound
with the bliss-bringing bulk of a balm-
breathing baby,
As they grope through the graveyard of creeds,
under skies growing green at a groan for
the grimness of God.

[1] quick.

Blank is the book of his bounty beholden of old,
and its binding is blacker than bluer:
Out of blue into black is the scheme of the skies,
and their dews are the wine of the bloodshed
of things;
Till the darkling desire of delight shall be free as
a fawn that is freed from the fangs that pursue her,
Till the heart-beats of hell shall be hushed by a
hymn from the hunt that has harried the
kennel of kings.

(1880)

A Child's Future

What will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be?
Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea?
Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is stirred
Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise are heard:
Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us round,
Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound;
Love may forsake us; yet may not the spirit be bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardor of joy
Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a toy:
Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives
Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives:
Death cannot slay her: she laughs upon death and forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star:
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their sea;
Fear not at all; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

(1882)

PROSE

Thomas Carlyle

(1795-1881)

Thomas Carlyle was born on December 4, 1795, at Ecclefechan, in Annandale, a county of southern Scotland. He was the eldest of nine children of a stonemason who later took up farming. The Carlyles belonged to a strict Calvinistic sect and the atmosphere of Thomas's boyhood home was kindly but austere. In his *Reminiscences* he speaks of his father with deep affection, but it was from his mother that the boy received a full measure of affectionate understanding.

By his fourteenth year he had shown such aptitude for study that his parents decided to stretch their narrow means and prepare him for the ministry. Accordingly, in November 1809 he walked to Edinburgh and entered the university there. He did not, however, particularly distinguish himself as a scholar, though he soon acquired a position of intellectual leadership among his fellow students. Until 1818, when he abandoned his plan for a clerical career, he spent several years in teaching. Among his competitors was Edward Irving, a native of Carlyle's own county. In spite of their professional rivalry, they became fast friends, and Irving's influence upon Carlyle during these formative years broadened the younger man's interests. Access to Irving's library enabled Carlyle to do a great deal of reading. The foundation of his faith now began to shake, and the spiritual crisis he underwent is recorded in *Sartor Resartus*. He rejected the theology of his fathers, but he never gave up their spiritual fervor. While he was thus passing sleepless weeks of self-examination, he made an important discovery. In 1819 he commenced a study of the German language, and was soon eagerly reading the German poets and philosophers. The greater achievements of that literature were still unknown to most British writers (see I, p. 1149), and Carlyle was for some years very actively engaged in presenting them to his contemporaries. In the process, he fell more and more under the spell of German thought, especially that of the philosophers.

The next few years found Carlyle occupied in hard study, private tutoring, translating from the German, and some original writing. In 1824 he decided to try his luck in London. He made the acquaintance of a number of literary men. Perhaps the most memorable of his experiences at this time was the visit he paid to Coleridge, later vividly recounted in his *Life of Sterling*. Disappointed with London, Carlyle made up his mind to settle in his native district, where he could live more cheaply and carry on his literary labors without distraction. But he was not to win the tranquility he desired. Dyspepsia and insomnia both began to afflict him, and he was never to be free of their torment. More distracting than illness, however, was a new event in his life. In 1822 he was introduced by Edward Irving to Jane Baillie Welsh, who had been Irving's pupil. She was a brilliant girl, with beauty and social charm. Aware of her attractiveness, proud of her family, she had aspirations toward a literary career. Carlyle was only too willing to assume the role of adviser and guide in her preparations. Their correspondence, begun at this time, forms one of the most interesting series of love letters in any language. After four years of courtship, during which Carlyle was now hopeful, now despairing, he gained her consent and they were married on October 17, 1826. Theirs was a strange and exciting companionship. Uncomprehending friends easily overinterpreted their frictions. But there can be little doubt that they were tied to each other by the strongest

of bonds. For forty years they were the nucleus of a stimulating circle of distinguished friends, and upon his wife's death in 1866 Carlyle was seriously broken.

For a year after their marriage they lived in Edinburgh. Finding expenses too high in the metropolis, they moved in 1828 to a lonely farm owned by Mrs. Welsh and operated by Thomas's brother Alexander, at Craigenputtock. Here the young couple passed the most difficult years of their lives. Carlyle was commencing to write his more enduring work and was not hurrying into print, so that they had to deal not only with loneliness but with financial uncertainty as well. On the other hand, he was beginning to be known in the literary world in England and also on the Continent He was corresponding with Goethe, whose great novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, Carlyle had translated in 1824. Of all the friendships made during these years, however, that which he formed with the young American, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who came to visit him at Craigenputtock, was most important. Kindred spirits, they warmed toward each other and their lifelong devotion was a central fact in their intellectual development.

Carlyle's emotional and ideological struggles, his discovery of German transcendental philosophy, and his dissatisfaction with his era filled him with the desire to win his age away from the materialism into which it had fallen. The first of the nineteenth-century prophets, he wrote *Sartor Resartus* (see p. 639), which began to appear in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833, as a kind of spiritual autobiography. Louis Cazamian has thus characterized the work: "The central idea is as old as human thought. It is the deepest principle of all idealism, ancient or modern: things are not what they seem, but quite different. The mainsprings of his thought and the whole force of his temperament impelled Carlyle to this age-old affirmation. His Puritan inheritance left in him a profound, an insatiable need of a spiritualist philosophy; to his distinction between body and mind, the influences of religion naturally coupled a passionate preference of the mind to the body; and from this preference it was but a step to the denial of the reality of the body. The German idealists corroborated and accentuated this sovereign tendency in Carlyle. Like Emerson, he always conceived of them primarily as transcendentalists, as men whose reflections bore upon the supreme realities, transcending the field of sensible appearances. The transcendental movement, the ascent toward what is above, toward what is beyond, was to be the constant rhythm of his thinking, the scheme of his doctrine. . . . His temperamental craving for a religion which should satisfy his reason became more conscious and more audacious, from his contact with the idealism of Kant. It was at this contact that he determined, for the expression of his confident and ardent faith in the universe, upon the age-old subject of man's doubt, the falsehood of appearances; it was at this contact that his moral personality issued its confession of belief, that the central book of his life took shape."

Difficult as the style of *Sartor Resartus* was for its readers, the discerning soon realized that an important teacher was in their midst. In the summer of 1834 the Carlyles moved to London and took up residence in the house in Chelsea (now a Carlyle museum) which was to be their home for the rest of their lives. The next great work on which he engaged was *The French Revolution*. The famous story connected with it shows Carlyle's characteristic spiritual courage. When, after enormous labors, he had completed the first volume, he gave his only copy of it to his friend John Stuart Mill to read. Through a household accident the manuscript was burned. Though nearly at the end of his financial resources and in despair over his lost time and energy, Carlyle did not even upbraid his friend for his carelessness, but set to work rewriting it. In 1837 he had the three volumes completed. *The French Revolution* is a continuation of Carlyle's exposition of the world as a manifestation of the divine idea. In this work he wrote to inculcate the lessons which history has recorded for the instruction of misguided humanity. As a historian Carlyle cannot be rated very high, and in the last analysis the book stands not as a trustworthy collection of historical data so much as a literary triumph. For its great quality is the vitality with which Carlyle presents the

dramatic scenes of world-shaking events. The success of *The French Revolution* ended his financial worries. Within a few years his position as a mentor was firmly established.

Carlyle had witnessed the growth of utilitarianism, democracy, and a system of social ethics based upon individual commercial enterprise. He had developed a horror of the soullessness of the factory, the abject condition of wage-earners, the money-worship of the bourgeoisie, the whole social milieu produced by *laissez-faire* economics—"dismal science," as he called it. Convinced that the whole system was wrong, Carlyle was nevertheless unable to penetrate to the fundamental causes of social misery, and laid the blame at the door of democracy, which he felt to be the great force killing the spiritual values in men. Though calling himself "a radical and an absolute," he set himself in opposition to liberalism, under whose influence the revolutionary Chartist movement (see p. 423) was growing. His *Chartism* (1839) is a curious mixture of conflicting tendencies: his sympathies with the victims of manufacture have affinities with Socialism, but his certainty that salvation can come only through individual leaders seems (in the light of recent history) essentially reactionary in character.

This doctrine of progress through great leaders he elaborated in *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, delivered as a series of lectures in 1839, and published in 1841. This volume, containing some of his most popular essays, presents heroes not only from among rulers and warriors but from among poets and writers—those who have, in his opinion, shaped the destiny of their times. History, as his *French Revolution* had tried to demonstrate, was the record of the deeds of great men. It is the duty, Carlyle thought, of those of us who are not great to find a great man to lead us, to follow him, and to lend our little strength to his noble strength. This romantic precept is, of course, full of danger to humanity, and has certain resemblances to the theory of the Superman later propounded by Nietzsche. It was the same philosophy which motivated Carlyle to write the biographies of *Oliver Cromwell* (1845) and of *Frederick the Great* (1858-65). In a different strain he wrote the *Life of John Sterling* (1851), an affectionate tribute to a dear friend.

In *Past and Present* (1843) Carlyle approached the political issues of his time more directly. Attacking the spiritual blindness and mediocrity which he believed to be fostered by industrialism and democracy, he posed for modern society the ideals of medieval monasticism. His demand for a government powerful enough to suppress social disorders was naturally greeted with disfavor by the Liberals. However tempting the idea of benevolent despotism might have been as a short-cut to social amelioration, we cannot fail, knowing twentieth-century history, to regard Carlyle's ideas as untenable. Many of the criticisms he levels against democracy may be just enough, but we are likely to be confident that the disadvantages of democracy are evils far preferable to the putative advantages of rule by an individual or a group, no matter how enlightened. But Carlyle's generation received considerable moral impetus from his exasperated denunciations. His fundamental belief, curiously similar to Langland's (see I, p. 125), that only hard, honest work could save humanity, was a healthy antidote to the parasitism of the moneyed manufacturing class. It inspired Ruskin, Mrs. Browning, and the Pre-Raphaelites, among many others.

Carlyle's greatest weakness as a thinker is his lack of a system. He understood social evils only in flashes of emotion and indignation. The last word on him will probably be that he was at bottom an artist, master of a tortured, original style that fuses the grand with the homely, the tragic with buffoonery, and which is always vital, invigorating, and studded with unforgettable phrases.

Carlyle's final years, full of honors and official rewards, were partly spent in annotating the letters from his wife, published as *Letters and Memorials* (1883). Soon after his death, his literary executor, Froude, issued Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, unfortunately without the editing enjoined by the author. As a result there ensued a considerable amount of misunderstanding on the subject of Carlyle's private life. Subsequent collections of letters and biographical studies have revised literary opinion, so that Carlyle the man is again as much admired as Carlyle the great writer.

From *Sartor Resartus*[1]

In a letter to his brother on October 19, 1830, Carlyle said: "What I am writing is the strangest of all things; begun as an article for *Fraser;* then found to be too long (except it were divided in two); now sometimes looking as if it would swell into a Book. A very singular piece I assure you! It glances from Heaven to Earth and back again in a strange and satirical frenzy." The article had, by August 1831, in fact become a book, *Sartor Resartus.* The basic idea had been suggested to Carlyle by a passage in *The Tale of a Tub* in which Swift speaks of the universe as like a "large suit of clothes which invests everything," and asks, "What is man himself but a microcoat?"

Carlyle professes here to be writing a commentary on, and exposition of, the work of an eccentric German professor, one Diogenes Teufelsdröckh (i.e. Born-of-God Devil's-dung) of the University of Weissnichtwo (i.e. None-knows-where), on "Clothes, Their Origin and Influence." This device enabled the author to express his passionate sincerity and iconoclastic ideas with the comforting assistance of a disguise. To lend credibility to his design, he interspersed German phrases (as if from the "original" manuscript of Teufelsdröckh) and gave to the whole the air of a translation that could not escape the German idiom. But it is superficial to describe the style of *Sartor Resartus* as an imitation of German prose. "Carlylese" is a manner compounded of many elements, of which the Germanic is only one. The freedom of vocabulary and structure, for instance, contains many an echo of the King James Bible (see I, p. 406). The total effect of Carlyle's prose is to convey perfectly the complexity of his personality: impassioned, irascible, inspired, mocking, and tender—by turns, and, sometimes, all in the same sentence.

The dilemma of literal-minded readers upon the appearance of *Sartor Resartus* may be illustrated by the remarks of the critic of the *North American Review* for October 1835: "Our private opinion is . . . that the whole story of a correspondence with Germany, a university of Nobody-knows-where, a Professor of Things in General, a Counsellor Grasshopper, a Flower-Goddess Blumine, and so forth, has about as much foundation in truth as the late entertaining account of Sir John Herschel's discoveries in the moon. Fictions of this kind . . . ought not, perhaps, to be condemned with too much severity. But without intending to adopt a too rigid standard of morals, we own that we doubt a little the propriety of offering to the public a treatise on Things in General, under the name and in the form of an Essay on Dress."

Sartor Resartus has the double purpose of exposing the shams of society (elaborate, though frayed, robes which conceal the soul of life) and of revealing the divine idea in all creation.

The three chapters included here from Book II comprise one of the few passages of relatively sustained narrative in Teufelsdröckh's mélange. "The incident in the Rue St. Thomas de l'Enfer," said Carlyle ". . . occurred quite literally to myself in Leith Walk [Edinburgh] during three weeks of total sleeplessness, in which almost my one solace was that of a daily bathe on the sands between Leith and Portobello. . . . I remember it well and could go straight to the place." In short, the dimly etched story represents Carlyle's own struggle against the Satanic despair which had led him to contemplate suicide. It begins with the first battle in 1822 against the Everlasting No—once defined as "the sum of the facts adverse to the idea of moral order in the universe"—and ends four years later with a spiritual triumph achieved through self-annihilation and hard work.

[1] The Tailor Retailored.

Book II. Chapter VII

The Everlasting No

Under the strange nebulous envelopment, wherein our Professor has now shrouded himself, no doubt but his spiritual nature is nevertheless progressive, and growing: for how can the 'Son of Time,' in any case, stand still? We behold him, through those dim years, in a state of crisis, of transition: his mad Pilgrimage, and general solution into aimless Discontinuity, what is all this but a mad Fermentation; wherefrom, the fiercer it is, the clearer product will one day evolve itself?

Such transitions are ever full of pain: thus the Eagle when he moults is sickly; and, to attain his new beak, must harshly dash-off the old one upon rocks. What Stoicism soever our Wanderer, in his individual acts and motions, may affect, it is clear that there is a hot fever of anarchy and misery raging within; coruscations of which flash out: as, indeed, how could there be other? Have we not seen him disappointed, bemocked of Destiny, through long years? All that the young heart might desire and pray for has been denied; nay, as in the last worst instance,[1] offered and then snatched away. Ever an 'excellent Passivity'; but of useful, reasonable Activity, essential to the former as Food to Hunger, nothing granted: till at length, in this wild Pilgrimage, he must forcibly seize for himself an Activity, though useless, unreasonable. Alas, his cup of bitterness, which had been filling drop by drop, ever since that first 'ruddy morning' in the Hinterschlag Gymnasium,[2] was at the very lip; and then with that poison-drop, of the Towgood-and-Blumine[3] business, it runs over, and even hisses over in the deluge of foam.

He himself says once, with more justice than originality: 'Man is, properly speaking, based upon Hope, he has no other possession but Hope; this world of his is emphatically the Place of Hope.' What, then, was our Professor's possession? We see him, for the present, quite shut-out from Hope; looking not into the golden orient, but vaguely all round into a dim copper firmament, pregnant with earthquake and tornado.

Alas, shut-out from Hope, in a deeper sense than we yet dream of! For, as he wanders wearisomely through this world, he has now lost all tidings of another and higher. Full of religion, or at least of religiosity, as our Friend has since exhibited himself, he hides not that, in those days, he was wholly irreligious: 'Doubt had darkened into Unbelief,' says he; 'shade after shade goes grimly over your soul, till you have the fixed, starless, Tartarean[4] black.' To such readers as have reflected, what can be called reflecting, on man's life, and happily discovered, in contradiction to much Profit-and-loss Philosophy,' speculative and practical, that Soul is *not* synonymous with Stomach; who understand, therefore, in our Friend's words, 'that, for man's well-being, Faith is properly the one thing needful; how with it, Martyrs, otherwise weak, can cheerfully endure the shame and the cross; and without it, Worldlings puke-up their sick existence, by suicide, in the midst of luxury'; to such it will be clear that, for a pure moral nature, the loss of his religious Belief was the loss of everything. Unhappy young man! All wounds, the crush of long-continued Destitution, the stab of false Friendship and of false Love, all wounds in thy so genial heart, would have healed again, had not its life-warmth been withdrawn. Well might he exclaim, in his wild way: 'Is there no God, then; but at best an absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of his Universe, and *seeing* it go? Has the word Duty no meaning; is what we call Duty no divine Messenger and Guide, but a false earthly Fantasm, made-up of Desire and Fear, of emanations from the Gallows and from Dr. Graham's Celestial-Bed?[6] Happiness of an approving Conscience! Did not Paul of Tarsus, whom admiring men have since named Saint, feel that *he* was "the chief of sinners"; and Nero of Rome, jocund in spirit (*wohlgemuth*), spend much of his time in fiddling? Foolish Word-monger and Motive-grinder, who in thy Logic-mill hast an earthly mechanism for the Godlike itself, and wouldst fain grind me out Virtue from the husks of Pleasure,—I tell thee, Nay! To the unregenerate Prometheus Vinctus[7] of a man, it is ever the bitterest aggravation of his wretchedness that he is conscious of Virtue, that

[1] Teufelsdrockh had been disappointed in his love for Blumine Probably a reference to Carlyle's love for either Margaret Gordon, a boyhood sweetheart, or Jane Welsh, whom he married

[2] literally the "Smite-behind" School, a humorous allusion to Carlyle's own Annan Grammar School.

[3] Teufelsdrockh had seen his best friend, Towgood, drive past with Blumine on their wedding trip.

[4] from Tartarus, deepest region of Hell.

[5] Carlyle's name for Utilitarianism

[6] James Graham (1745-94), famous quack whose "celestial bed" was guaranteed to cure sterility.

[7] "Prometheus Conquered," title of the play by Æschylus in which the hero incurs the wrath of Zeus by stealing fire from heaven for man.

he feels himself the victim not of suffering only, but of injustice. What then? Is the heroic inspiration we name Virtue but some Passion; some bubble of the blood, bubbling in the direction others *profit* by? I know not only this I know, If what thou namest Happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray. With Stupidity and sound Digestion man may front much. But what, in these dull unimaginative days, are the terrors of Conscience to the diseases of the Liver! Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold: there brandishing our frying-pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his Elect!'

Thus has the bewildered Wanderer to stand, as so many have done, shouting question after question into the Sibyl-cave of Destiny,[8] and receive no Answer but an Echo. It is all a grim Desert, this once-fair world of his; wherein is heard only the howling of wild-beasts, or the shrieks of despairing, hate-filled men; and no Pillar of Cloud by day, and no Pillar of Fire by night,[9] any longer guides the Pilgrim. To such length has the spirit of Inquiry carried him. 'But what boots it (*was thut's*)?' cries he: 'it is but the common lot in this era. Not having come to spiritual majority prior to the *Siècle de Louis Quinze*,[10] and not being born purely a Loghead (*Dummkopf*), thou hadst no other outlook. The whole world is, like thee, sold to Unbelief; their old Temples of the Godhead, which for long have not been rainproof, crumble down; and men ask now. Where is the Godhead; our eyes never saw him?'

Pitiful enough were it, for all these wild utterances, to call our Diogenes wicked. Unprofitable servants as we all are, perhaps at no era of his life was he more decisively the Servant of Goodness, the Servant of God, than even now when doubting God's existence. 'One circumstance I note,' says he, 'after all the nameless woe that Inquiry, which for me, what it is not always, was genuine Love of Truth, had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved Truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance to her. "Truth!" I cried, "though the Heavens crush me for following her: no Falsehood! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy." In conduct it was the same. Had a divine Messenger from the clouds, or miraculous Handwriting on the wall,[11] convincingly proclaimed to me *This thou shalt do*, with what passionate readiness, as I often thought, would I have done it, had it been leaping into the infernal Fire. Thus, in spite of all Motive-grinders, and Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies, with the sick opthalmia and hallucination they had brought on, was the Infinite nature of Duty still dimly present to me: living without God in the world, of God's light I was not utterly bereft; if my as yet sealed eyes, with their unspeakable longing, could nowhere see Him, nevertheless in my heart He was present, and His heaven-written Law still stood legible and sacred there.'

Meanwhile, under all these tribulations, and temporal and spiritual destitutions, what must the Wanderer, in his silent soul, have endured! 'The painfullest feeling,' writes he, 'is that of your own Feebleness (*Unkraft*); ever, as the English Milton says, to be weak is the true misery.[12] And yet of your Strength there is and can be no clear feeling, save by what you have prospered in, by what you have done. Between vague wavering Capability and fixed indubitable Performance, what a difference! A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us; which only our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our Works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible Precept, *Know thyself*;[13] till it be translated into this partially possible one, *Know what thou canst work at.*

'But for me, so strangely unprosperous had I been, the net-result of my Workings amounted as yet simply to—Nothing. How then could I believe in my Strength, when there was as yet no mirror to see it in? Ever did this agitating, yet, as I now perceive, quite frivolous question, remain to me insoluble: Hast thou a certain Faculty, a certain Worth, such even as the most have not; or art thou the completest Dullard of these modern times? Alas! the fearful Unbelief is unbelief in yourself; and how could I believe? Had not my first, last Faith in myself, when even to me the Heavens seemed laid open, and I dared to love, been all-too cruelly belied?[14] The speculative Mys-

[8] alluding to Æneas' visit to Sibyl the prophetess, in Virgil's *Æneid* (VI, 36ff)

[9] the ways by which the Lord guided the children of Israel (*Exodus* 13:21-2).

[10] The age of Louis XV, King of France from 1715 to 1774, was noted for skepticism.

[11] Daniel interpreted the handwriting that appeared at King Belshazzar's feast and portended his downfall (*Daniel*, 5:5-28).

[12] *Paradise Lost*, I, 157. See I, p. 618.

[13] by the Athenian lawgiver Solon (6th century B.C.), inscribed in gold over the portico of the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

[14] See footnote 1.

tery of Life grew ever more mysterious to me: neither in the practical Mystery had I made the slightest progress, but been everywhere buffeted, foiled, and contemptuously cast-out. A feeble unit in the middle of a threatening Infinitude, I seemed to have nothing given me but eyes, whereby to discern my own wretchedness. Invisible yet impenetrable walls, as of Enchantment, divided me from all living: was there, in the wide world any true bosom I could press trustfully to mine? O Heaven, No, there was none! I kept a lock upon my lips: why should I speak much with that shifting variety of so-called Friends, in whose withered, vain and too-hungry souls Friendship was but an incredible tradition? In such cases, your resource is to talk little, and that little mostly from the Newspapers. Now when I look back, it was a strange isolation I then lived in. The men and women around me, even speaking with me, were but Figures; I had, practically, forgotten that they were alive, that they were not merely automatic. In midst of their crowded streets and assemblages, I walked solitary; and (except as it was my own heart, not another's, that I kept devouring) savage also, as the tiger in his jungle. Some comfort it would have been, could I, like a Faust,[15] have fancied myself tempted and tormented of the Devil; for a Hell, as I imagine, without Life, though only diabolic Life, were more frightful: but in our age of Down-pulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil. To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. O, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha,[16] and Mill of Death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious? Why, if there is no Devil; nay, unless the Devil is your God?'

A prey incessantly to such corrosions, might not, moreover, as the worst aggravation to them, the iron constitution even of a Teufelsdröckh threaten to fail? We conjecture that he has known sickness; and, in spite of his locomotive habits, perhaps sickness of the chronic sort.[17] Hear this, for example: 'How beautiful to die of broken-heart on Paper! Quite another thing in practice; every window of your Feeling, even of your Intellect, as it were, begrimed and mud-bespattered, so that no pure ray can enter; a whole Drugshop in your inwards; the fordone soul drowning slowly in quagmires of Disgust!'

Putting all which external and internal miseries together, may we not find in the following sentences, quite in our Professor's still vein, significance enough? 'From Suicide a certain aftershine (*Nachschein*) of Christianity withheld me: perhaps also a certain indolence of character; for, was not that a remedy I had at any time within reach? Often, however, was there a question present to me: Should some one now, at the turning of that corner, blow thee suddenly out of Space, into the other World, or other No-World, by pistol-shot—how were it? On which ground, too, I have often, in sea-storms and sieged cities and other death-scenes, exhibited an imperturbability, which passed, falsely enough, for courage.'

'So had it lasted,' concludes the Wanderer, 'so had it lasted, as in bitter protracted Death-agony, through long years. The heart within me, unvisited by any heavenly dewdrop, was smouldering in sulphurous, slow-consuming fire. Almost since earliest memory I had shed no tear; or once only when I, murmuring half-audibly, recited Faust's Deathsong,[18] that wild *Selig der den er im Siegesglanze findet* (Happy whom *he* finds in Battle's splendour), and thought that of this last Friend even I was not forsaken, that Destiny itself could not doom me not to die. Having no hope, neither had I any definite fear, were it of Man or of Devil: nay, I often felt as if it might be solacing, could the Arch-Devil himself, though in Tartarean terrors, but rise to me, that I might tell him a little of my mind. And yet, strangely enough, I lived in a continual, indefinite, pining fear; tremulous, pusillanimous, apprehensive of I knew not what: it seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heavens and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured.

'Full of such humour, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French Capital or Suburbs, was I, one sultry Dog-day, after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little *Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer*,[19] among civic rubbish

[15] the medieval scholar who sold his soul to the devil for supernatural powers; the hero of Goethe's *Faust* (1808, 32) and of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (see I, p. 415).

[16] the "place of the skull" where Christ was crucified (*Matthew*, 27:33).

[17] an allusion to Carlyle's chronic dyspepsia.

[18] Goethe's *Faust*, IV, 1572-76.

[19] This "street of hell" corresponds to Leith Walk, Edinburgh, where Carlyle underwent a similar experience. (see the headnote, p. 639.)

enough, in a close atmosphere, and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace;[20] whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered; when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself: "What *art* thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling? Despicable biped; what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet[21] too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come, then; I will meet it and defy it!" And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base Fear away from me forever. I was strong, of unknown strength; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time, the temper of my misery was changed: not Fear or whining Sorrow was it, but Indignation and grim fire-eyed Defiance.

'Thus had the EVERLASTING NO (*das ewige Nein*) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then was it that my whole ME stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said: "Behold, thou are fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)"; to which my whole Me now made answer: "*I* am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!"

'It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual Newbirth, or Baphometic[22] Fire-baptism; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man.'

Book II, Chapter VIII

The Centre of Indifference

Though, after this 'Baphometic Fire-baptism,' of his, our Wanderer signifies that his Unrest was but increased; as, indeed, 'Indignation and Defiance,' especially against things in general, are not the most peaceable inmates; yet can the Psychologist surmise that it was no longer a quite hopeless Unrest; that henceforth it had at least a fixed centre to revolve round. For the fire-baptised soul, long so scathed and thunder-riven, here feels its own Freedom, which feeling is its Baphometic Baptism: the citadel of its whole kingdom it has thus gained by assault, and will keep inexpugnable; outwards from which the remaining dominions, not indeed without hard battling, will doubtless by degrees be conquered and pacificated. Under another figure, we might say, if in that great moment, in the *Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer*, the old inward Satanic School was not yet thrown out of doors, it received peremptory judicial notice to quit;—whereby, for the rest, its howl-chantings, Ernulphus-cursings,[23] and rebellious gnashings of teeth, might, in the meanwhile, become only the more tumultuous, and difficult to keep secret.

Accordingly, if we scrutinise these Pilgrimings well, there is perhaps discernible henceforth a certain incipient method in their madness. Not wholly as a Spectre does Teufelsdröckh now storm through the world; at worst as a spectre-fighting Man, nay who will one day be a Spectre-queller. If pilgriming restlessly to so many 'Saints' Wells,' and ever without quenching of his thirst, he nevertheless finds little secular wells, whereby from time to time some alleviation is ministered. In a word, he is now, if not ceasing, yet intermitting to 'eat his own heart'; and clutches round him outwardly on the NOT-ME[24] for wholesomer food. Does not the following glimpse exhibit him in a much more natural state?

'Towns also and Cities, especially the ancient, I failed not to look upon with interest. How beautiful to see thereby, as through a long vista, into the remote Time; to have, as it were, an actual section of almost the earliest Past brought safe into the Present, and set before your eyes! There, in that old City, was a live ember of Culinary Fire put down, say only two thousand years ago; and there, burning more or less triumphantly, with such fuel as the region yielded, it has burnt, and still burns, and thou thyself seest the very smoke thereof. Ah! and the far more mysterious live ember of Vital Fire was then also put down there;

[20] King Nebuchadnezzar (*Daniel*, 3) cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace.

[21] a place near Jerusalem where human sacrifices were made in Biblical times. Later a synonym for Hell.

[22] from Baphomet (presumably a corruption of Mahomet) the idol supposedly worshiped by the Knights Templars in the Middle Ages. In the story of the Fallen Master, Baffometus is anointed with a crown of burning gold for disobeying the Lord.

[23] The excommunication curse of Ernulph, Bishop of Rochester, can be found in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Book III, Chapter 11

[24] the "Nicht-Ich" of German philosophers, a term for the outer world that is not "the conscious subject of experience"

and still miraculously burns and spreads; and the smoke and ashes thereof (in these Judgment-Halls and Church-yards), and its bellows-engines (in these Churches), thou still seest; and its flame, looking out from every kind countenance, and every hateful one, still warms thee or scorches thee.

'Of Man's Activity and Attainment the chief results are aeriform, mystic, and preserved in Tradition only: such are his Forms of Government, with the Authority they rest on; his Customs, or Fashions both of Cloth-habits and of Soul-habits; much more his collective stock of Handicrafts, the whole Faculty he has acquired of manipulating Nature: all these things, as indispensable and priceless as they are, cannot in any way be fixed under lock and key, but must flit, spiritlike, on impalpable vehicles, from Father to Son; if you demand sight of them, they are nowhere to be met with. Visible Ploughmen and Hammermen there have been, ever from Cain and Tubalcain[25] downwards: but where does your accumulated Agricultural, Metallurgic, and other Manufacturing SKILL lie warehoused? It transmits itself on the atmospheric air, on the sun's rays (by Hearing and by Vision); it is a thing aeriform, impalpable, of quite spiritual sort. In like manner, ask me not, Where are the Laws, where is the GOVERNMENT? In vain wilt thou go to Schönbrunn, to Downing Street, to the Palais Bourbon:[26] thou findest nothing there but brick or stone houses, and some bundles of Papers tied with tape. Where, then, is that same cunningly-devised almighty GOVERNMENT of theirs to be laid hands on? Everywhere, yet nowhere: seen only in its works, this too is a thing aeriform, invisible; or if you will, mystic and miraculous. So spiritual (*geistig*) is our whole daily Life: all that we do springs out of Mystery, Spirit, invisible Force; only like a little Cloud-image, or Armida's Palace,[27] airbuilt, does the Actual body itself forth from the great mystic Deep.

'Visible and tangible products of the Past, again, I reckon-up to the extent of three: Cities, with their Cabinets and Arsenals; then tilled Fields, to either or to both of which divisions Roads with their Bridges may belong; and thirdly —— Books. In which third truly, the last invented, lies a worth far surpassing that of the two others. Wondrous indeed is the virtue of a true Book. Not like a dead city of stones, yearly crumbling, yearly needing repair; more like a tilled field, but then a spiritual field: like a spiritual tree, let me rather say, it stands from year to year, and from age to age (we have Books that already number some hundred-and-fifty human ages); and yearly comes its new produce of leaves (Commentaries, Deductions, Philosophical, Political Systems; or were it only Sermons, Pamphlets, Journalistic Essays), every one of which is talismanic and thaumaturgic, for it can persuade men. O thou who art able to write a Book, which once in the two centuries or oftener there is a man gifted to do, envy not him whom they name City-builder, and inexpressibly pity him whom they name Conqueror or City-burner! Thou too art a Conqueror and Victor: but of the true sort, namely over the Devil: thou too hast built what will outlast all marble and metal, and be a wonder-bringing City of the Mind, a Temple and Seminary and Prophetic Mount, whereto all kindreds of the Earth will pilgrim.—Fool! why journeyest thou wearisomely, in thy antiquarian fervour, to gaze on the stone pyramids of Geeza, or the clay ones of Sacchara?[28] These stand there, as I can tell thee, idle and inert, looking over the Desert, foolishly enough, for the last three-thousand years: but canst thou not open thy Hebrew BIBLE, then, or even Luther's Version[29] thereof?'

No less satisfactory is his sudden appearance not in Battle, yet on some Battle-field; which, we soon gather, must be that of Wagram;[30] so that here, for once, is a certain approximation to distinctness of date. Omitting much, let us impart what follows:

'Horrible enough! A whole Marchfeld strewed with shell-splinters, cannon-shot, ruined tumbrils, and dead men and horses; stragglers still remaining not so much as buried. And those red mould heaps: ay, there lie the Shells of Men, out of which all the Life and Virtue has been blown; and now are they swept together, and crammed-down out of sight, like blown Egg-shells!—Did Nature, when she bade the Donau[31] bring down his mould-cargoes from the Carinthian and Carpathian Heights, and spread them out here into the softest, richest level,—intend thee, O Marchfeld, for a

[25] In *Genesis*, 4.2 and 22, Cain is the first "tiller of the soil" and Tubalcain the "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron."

[26] government centers in Vienna, London, and Paris respectively.

[27] the home of the enchantress in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, Book XVI.

[28] royal tombs at Gizeh and Sakkara near Cairo.

[29] Martin Luther's German translation of 1534.

[30] village near Vienna in the middle of the plain of the Marchfield, where Napoleon defeated the Austrians on July 5 and 6, 1809.

[31] the Danube.

corn-bearing Nursery, whereon her children might be nursed; or for a Cockpit, wherein they might the more commodiously be throttled and tattered? Were thy three broad Highways, meeting here from the ends of Europe, made for Ammunition-wagons, then? Were thy Wagrams and Stillfrieds[32] but so many ready-built Casemates,[33] wherein the house of Hapsburg might batter with artillery, and with artillery be battered? Konig Ottokar, amid yonder hillocks, dies under Rodolf's truncheon; here Kaiser Franz[34] falls a-swoon under Napoleon's: within which five centuries, to omit the others, how has thy breast, fair Plain, been defaced and defiled! The greensward is torn-up and trampled-down; man's fond care of it, his fruit-trees, hedge-rows, and pleasant dwellings, blown-away with gunpowder; and the kind seedfield lies a desolate, hideous Place of Sculls[35]—Nevertheless, Nature is at work; neither shall these Powder-Devilkins with their utmost devilry gainsay her. but all that gore and carnage will be shrouded-in, absorbed into manure; and next year the Marchfeld will be green, nay greener. Thrifty unwearied Nature, ever out of our great waste educing some little profit of thy own,—how dost thou, from the very carcass of the Killer, bring Life for the Living!

'What, speaking in quite unofficial language, is the net-purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the British village of Dumdrudge,[36] usually some five-hundred souls. From these, by certain "Natural Enemies" of the French, there are successively selected, during the French war, say thirty able-bodied men. Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them: she has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood, and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone[37] avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in red; and shipped away, at the public charges, some two-thousand miles, or say only to the south of Spain; and fed there till wanted. And now to that same spot, in the south of Spain, are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge, in like manner wending: till at length, after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition; and Thirty stands fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand. Straightway the word "Fire!" is given: and they blow the souls out of one another; and in place of sixty brisk useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury, and anew shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the Devil is, not the smallest! They lived far enough apart; were the entirest strangers; nay, in so wide a Universe, there was even, unconsciously, by Commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How then? Simpleton! their Governors had fallen-out; and, instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot.—Alas, so is it in Deutschland, and hitherto in all other lands; still as of old, "what devilry soever Kings do, the Greeks must pay the piper!"—In that fiction of the English Smollet,[38] it is true, the final Cessation of War is perhaps prophetically shadowed forth; where the two Natural Enemies, in person, take each a Tobacco-pipe, filled with Brimstone; light the same, and smoke in one another's faces, till the weaker gives in: but from such predicted Peace-Era, what blood-filled trenches, and contentious centuries, may still divide us!'

Thus can the Professor, at least in lucid intervals, look away from his own sorrows, over the many-coloured world, and pertinently enough note what is passing there. We may remark, indeed, that for the matter of spiritual culture, if for nothing else, perhaps few periods of his life were richer than this. Internally, there is the most momentous instructive Course of Practical Philosophy, with Experiments, going on; towards the right comprehension of which his Peripatetic habits, favourable to Meditation, might help him rather than hinder. Externally, again, as he wanders to and fro, there are, if for the longing heart little substance, yet for the seeing eye sights enough: in these so boundless Travels of his, granting that the Satanic School was even partially kept down, what an incredible knowledge of our Planet, and its Inhabitants and their Works, that is to say, of all knowable things, might not Teufelsdröckh acquire!

'I have read in most Public Libraries,' says he, 'including those of Constantinople and Samarcand: in most Colleges, except the Chinese Mandarin ones, I have studied, or seen that there was

[32] a battle fought on the Marchfield plain in 1278 between Rudolph I of Hapsburg and Ottokar II of Bohemia.
[33] bomb-proof chambers.
[34] Francis I (1768-1835), Emperor of Austria.
[35] See footnote 16.
[36] Carlyle's coinage for a typical British village, dumb drudgery being the life of the working class.
[37] A stone is fourteen pounds.
[38] Tobias Smollett (1721-71), English novelist.

no studying. Unknown Languages have I oftenest gathered from their natural repertory, the Air, by my organ of Hearing; Statistics, Geographics, Topographics came, through the Eye, almost of their own accord. The ways of Man, how he seeks food, and warmth, and protection for himself, in most regions, are ocularly known to me. Like the great Hadrian,[39] I meted-out much of the terraqueous Globe with a pair of Compasses that belonged to myself only.

'Of great Scenes why speak? Three summer days, I lingered reflecting, and even composing (*dichtete*), by the Pinechasms of Vaucluse;[40] and in that clear Lakelet moistened my bread. I have sat under the Palm-trees of Tadmor;[41] smoked a pipe among the ruins of Babylon. The great Wall of China I have seen; and can testify that it is of gray brick, coped and covered with granite, and shows only second-rate masonry.—Great Events, also, have not I witnessed? Kings sweated-down (*ausgemergelt*) into Berlin-and-Milan Custom-house-Officers; the World well won, and the World well lost; oftener than once a hundred-thousand individuals shot (by each other) in one day. All kindreds and peoples and nations dashed together, and shifted and shovelled into heaps, that they might ferment there, and in time unite. The birth-pangs of Democracy, wherewith convulsed Europe was groaning in cries that reached Heaven, could not escape me.

'For great Men I have ever had the warmest predilection; and can perhaps boast that few such in this era have wholly escaped me. Great Men are the inspired (speaking and acting) Texts of that divine BOOK OF REVELATIONS, whereof a Chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named HISTORY; to which inspired Texts your numerous talented men, and your innumerable untalented men, are the better or worse exegetic Commentaries, and wagonload of too-stupid, heretical or orthodox, weekly Sermons. For my study, the inspired Texts themselves! Thus did not I, in very early days, having disguised me as tavern-waiter, stand behind the field-chairs, under that shady Tree at Treisnitz by the Jena Highway; waiting upon the great Schiller and greater Goethe; and hearing what I have not forgotten. For——'

——But at this point the Editor recalls his principle of caution, some time ago laid down, and must suppress much. Let not the sacredness of Laurelled, still more, of Crowned Heads, be tampered with. Should we, at a future day, find circumstances altered, and the time come for Publication, then may these glimpses into the privacy of the Illustrious be conceded; which for the present were little better than treacherous, perhaps traitorous Eavesdroppings. Of Lord Byron, therefore, of Pope Pius,[42] Emperor Tarakwang,[43] and the 'White Water-roses' (Chinese Carbonari[44]) with their mysteries, no notice here! Of Napoleon himself we shall only, glancing from afar, remark that Teufelsdröckh's relation to him seems to have been of very varied character. At first we find our poor Professor on the point of being shot as a spy; then taken into private conversation, even pinched on the ear, yet presented with no money; at last indignantly dismissed, almost thrown out of doors, as an 'Ideologist.' 'He himself,' says the Professor, 'was among the completest Ideologists, at least Ideopraxists:[45] in the Idea (*in der Idee*) he lived, moved and fought. The man was a Divine Missionary, though unconscious of it; and preached, through the cannon's throat, that great doctrine, *La carrière ouverte aux talens* (The Tools to him that can handle them), which is our ultimate Political Evangel, wherein alone can liberty lie. Madly enough he preached, it is true, as Enthusiasts and first Missionaries are wont, with imperfect utterance, amid much frothy rant; yet as articulately perhaps as the case admitted. Or call him, if you will, an American Backwoodsman, who had to fell unpenetrated forests, and battle with innumerable wolves, and did not entirely forbear strong liquor, rioting, and even theft; whom, notwithstanding, the peaceful Sower will follow, and, as he cuts the boundless harvest, bless.'

More legitimate and decisively authentic is Teufelsdröckh's appearance and emergence (we know not well whence) in the solitude of the North Cape, on that June Midnight. He has 'a light-blue Spanish cloak' hanging round him, as his 'most commodious, principal, indeed sole upper garment'; and stands there, on the World-promontory, looking over the infinite Brine, like a little blue Belfry (as we figure), now motionless indeed, yet ready, if stirred, to ring quaintest changes.

'Silence as of death,' writes he; 'for Midnight, even in the Arctic latitudes, has its character:

[39] Roman emperor (117-138).
[40] near Avignon in Southern France.
[41] Palmyra, ancient city in Syria.
[42] probably Pope Pius VII (1800-23).
[43] nineteenth century Chinese emperor who had trouble with the "Water Lily faction."
[44] a secret Italian political faction at the beginning of the nineteenth century.
[45] one who puts ideas into practice.

nothing but the granite cliffs ruddy-tinged, the peaceable gurgle of that slow-heaving Polar Ocean, over which in the utmost North the great Sun hangs low and lazy, as if he too were slumbering. Yet is his cloud-couch wrought of crimson and cloth-of-gold; yet does his light stream over the mirror of waters, like a tremulous fire-pillar, shooting downwards to the abyss, and hide itself under my feet. In such moments, Solitude also is invaluable; for who would speak, or be looked on, when behind him lies all Europe and Africa, fast asleep, except the watchmen; and before him the silent Immensity, and Palace of the Eternal, whereof our Sun is but a porch-lamp?

'Nevertheless, in this solemn moment comes a man, or monster, scrambling from among the rock-hollows; and, shaggy, huge as the Hyperborean[46] Bear, hails me in Russian speech: most probably, therefore, a Russian Smuggler. With courteous brevity, I signify my indifference to contraband trade, my humane intentions, yet strong wish to be private. In vain: the monster, counting doubtless on his superior stature, and minded to make sport for himself, or perhaps profit, were it with murder, continues to advance; ever assailing me with his importunate train-oil breath; and now has advanced, till we stand both on the verge of the rock, the deep Sea rippling greedily down below. What argument will avail? On the thick Hyperborean cherubic reasoning, seraphic eloquence were lost. Prepared for such extremity, I, deftly enough, whisk aside one step; draw out, from my interior reservoirs, a sufficient Birmingham Horse-pistol, and say, "Be so obliging as retire, Friend (*Er ziehe sich zuruck, Freund*), and with promptitude!" This logic even the Hyperborean understands; fast enough, with apologetic, petitionary growl, he sidles off; and, except for suicidal as well as homicidal purposes, need not return.

'Such I hold to be the genuine use of Gunpowder: that it makes all men alike tall. Nay, if thou be cooler, cleverer than I, if thou have more *Mind*, though all but no Body whatever, then canst thou kill me first, and art the taller. Hereby, at last, is the Goliath powerless, and the David resistless; savage Animalism is nothing, inventive Spiritualism is all.

'With respect to Duels, indeed, I have my own ideas. Few things, in this so surprising world, strike me with more surprise. Two little visual Spectra of men, hovering with insecure enough cohesion in the midst of the UNFATHOMABLE, and to dissolve therein, at any rate, very soon,—make pause at the distance of twelve paces asunder; whirl round; and, simultaneously by the cunningest mechanism, explode one another into Dissolution; and off-hand become Air, and Non-extant! Deuce on it (*verdammt*), the little spitfires!—Nay, I think with old Hugo von Trimberg:[47] "God must needs laugh outright, could such a thing be, to see his wondrous Manikins here below."'

But amid these specialties, let us not forget the great generality, which is our chief quest here: How prospered the inner man of Teufelsdröckh under so much outward shifting? Does Legion[48] still lurk in him, though repressed; or has he exorcised that Devil's Brood? We can answer that the symptoms continue promising. Experience is the grand spiritual Doctor; and with him Teufelsdröckh has now been long a patient, swallowing many a bitter bolus. Unless our poor Friend belong to the numerous class of Incurables, which seems not likely, some cure will doubtless be effected. We should rather say that Legion, or the Satanic School,[49] was now pretty well extirpated and cast out, but next to nothing introduced in its room; whereby the heart remains, for the while, in a quiet but no comfortable state.

'At length, after so much roasting,' thus writes our Autobiographer, 'I was what you might name calcined. Pray only that it be not rather, as is the more frequent issue, reduced to a *caput-mortuum*![50] But in any case, by mere dint of practice, I had grown familiar with many things. Wretchedness was still wretched; but I could now partly see through it, and despise it. Which highest mortal, in this inane Existence, had I not found a Shadow-hunter, or Shadow-hunted; and, when I looked through his brave garnitures, miserable enough? Thy wishes have all been sniffed aside, thought I: but what, had they even been all granted! Did not the Boy Alexander weep because he had not two Planets to conquer; or a whole Solar System; or after that, a whole Universe? *Ach Gott*, when I gazed into these Stars, have they not looked down on me as if with pity, from their serene spaces; like Eyes glistening with heavenly tears over the little lot of man! Thousands of human generations, all

[46] in Greek mythology, pertaining to a region of perpetual sunshine beyond the north wind

[47] thirteenth century German schoolmaster and moralist.

[48] See the speech of the "unclean spirit" in *Mark*, 5·9 "My name is Legion; for we are many."

[49] probably a reference to the term Southey applied to Byron and his "school" in *A Vision of Judgment* (1821).

[50] a death's head.

as noisy as our own, have been swallowed-up of Time, and there remains no wreck of them any more; and Arcturus and Orion and Sirius and the Pleiades are still shining in their courses, clear and young, as when the Shepherd first noted them in the plain of Shinar.[1] Pshaw! What is this paltry little Dog-cage of an Earth; what art thou that sittest whining there? Thou art still Nothing, Nobody: true; but who, then, is Something, Somebody? For thee the Family of Man has no use; it rejects thee; thou art wholly as a dissevered limb: so be it; perhaps it is better so!'

Too-heavy-laden Teufelsdröckh! Yet surely his hands are loosening; one day he will hurl the burden far from him, and bound forth free and with a second youth.

'This,' says our Professor, 'was the CENTRE OF INDIFFERENCE I had now reached; through which whoso travels from the Negative Pole to the Positive must necessarily pass.'

Book II, Chapter IX
The Everlasting Yea

"Temptations in the Wilderness!"[2] exclaims Teufelsdröckh: "Have we not all to be tried with such? Not so easily can the old Adam, lodged in us by birth, be dispossessed. Our Life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life itself no other than Freedom, than Voluntary Force: thus have we a warfare; in the beginning, especially, a hard-fought battle. For the God-given mandate, *Work thou in Well-doing,* lies mysteriously written, in Promethean Prophetic Characters, in our hearts; and leaves us no rest, night or day, till it be deciphered and obeyed; till it burn forth, in our conduct, a visible, acted Gospel of Freedom. And as the clay-given mandate, *Eat thou and be filled,* at the same time persuasively proclaims itself through every nerve,—must not there be a confusion, a contest, before the better Influence can become the upper?

"To me nothing seems more natural than that the Son of Man, when such God-given mandate first prophetically stirs within him, and the Clay must now be vanquished or vanquish,—should be carried of the spirit into grim Solitudes, and there fronting the Tempter do grimmest battle with him; defiantly setting him at naught, till he yield and fly. Name it as we choose: with or without visible Devil, whether in the natural Desert of rocks and sands, or in the populous moral Desert of selfishness and baseness,—to such Temptation are we all called. Unhappy if we are not! Unhappy if we are but Half-men, in whom that divine handwriting has never blazed forth, all-subduing, in true sun-splendor; but quivers dubiously amid meaner lights; or smoulders, in dull pain, in darkness, under earthly vapors!—Our Wilderness is the wide World in an Atheistic Century; our Forty Days[3] are long years of suffering and fasting: nevertheless, to these also comes an end. Yes, to me also was given, if not Victory, yet the consciousness of Battle, and the resolve to persevere therein while life or faculty is left. To me also, entangled in the enchanted forests, demon-peopled, doleful of sight and of sound, it was given, after weariest wanderings, to work out my way into the higher sunlight slopes—of that Mountain which has no summit, or whose summit is in Heaven only!"

He says elsewhere, under a less ambitious figure; as figures are, once for all, natural to him: "Has not thy Life been that of most sufficient men (*tüchtigen Männer*) thou hast known in this generation? An outflush of foolish young Enthusiasm, like the first fallow-crop, wherein are as many weeds as valuable herbs: this all parched away, under the Droughts of practical and spiritual Unbelief, as Disappointment, in thought and act, often-repeated gave rise to Doubt, and Doubt gradually settled into Denial! If I have had a second-crop, and now see the perennial greensward, and sit under umbrageous cedars, which defy all Drought (and Doubt); herein too, be the Heavens praised, I am not without examples, and even exemplars."

So that, for Teufelsdröckh also, there has been a "glorious revolution": these mad shadow-hunting and shadow-hunted Pilgrimings of his were but some purifying "Temptation in the Wilderness," before his apostolic work (such as it was) could begin; which Temptation is now happily over, and the Devil once more worsted! Was "that high moment in the *Rue de l'Enfer,*"[4] then, properly the turning-point of the battle; when the Fiend said, *Worship me, or be torn in shreds;* and was answered valiantly with an *Apage Satana?*[5]—Singular, Teufelsdröckh, would thou hadst told

[1] Abraham in Babylonia (*Genesis,* 15.5).

[2] alluding to the temptation of Christ by Satan in the wilderness (*Matthew,* 4).

[3] suggested by the forty days of fasting endured by Christ in the wilderness.

[4] See p. 642.

[5] Get thee behind me, Satan.

thy singular story in plain words! But it is fruitless to look there, in those Paper-bags, for such. Nothing but innuendoes, figurative crotchets: a typical Shadow, fitfully wavering, propheticosatiric; no clear logical Picture. "How paint to the sensual eye," asks he once, "what passes in the Holy-of-Holies of Man's Soul; in what words, known to these profane times, speak even afar-off of the unspeakable?" We ask in turn: Why perplex these times, profane as they are, with needless obscurity, by omission and by commission? Not mystical only is our Professor, but whimsical; and involves himself, now more than ever, in eye-bewildering *chiaroscuro*.[6] Successive glimpses, here faithfully imparted, our more gifted readers must endeavor to combine for their own behoof.

He says: "The hot Harmattan[7] wind had raged itself out; its howl went silent within me; and the long-deafened soul could now hear. I paused in my wild wanderings; and sat me down to wait, and consider; for it was as if the hour of change drew nigh. I seemed to surrender, to renounce utterly, and say: Fly, then, false shadows of Hope; I will chase you no more, I will believe you no more. And ye too, haggard spectres of Fear, I care not for you; ye too are all shadows and a lie. Let me rest here: for I am way-weary and life-weary; I will rest here, were it but to die: to die or to live is alike to me; alike insignificant."—And again: "Here, then, as I lay in that CENTRE OF INDIFFERENCE; cast, doubtless by benignant upper Influence, into a healing sleep, the heavy dreams rolled gradually away, and I awoke to a new Heaven and a new Earth. The first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self (*Selbsttödtung*), had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed, and its hands ungyved."

Might we not also conjecture that the following passage refers to his Locality, during this same "healing sleep"; that his Pilgrim-staff lies cast aside here, on "the high table-land"; and indeed that the repose is already taking wholesome effect on him? If it were not that the tone, in some parts, has more of riancy, even of levity, than we could have expected! However, in Teufelsdröckh, there is always the strangest Dualism: light dancing, with guitar-music, will be going on in the fore-court, while by fits from within comes the faint whimpering of woe and wail. We transcribe the piece entire.

"Beautiful it was to sit there, as in my skyey Tent, musing and meditating; on the high table-land, in front of the Mountains; over me, as roof, the azure Dome, and around me, for walls, four azure-flowing curtains,—namely, of the Four azure Winds, on whose bottom-fringes also I have seen gilding. And then to fancy the fair Castles that stood sheltered in these Mountain hollows; with their green flower-lawns, and white dames and damosels, lovely enough: or better still, the straw-roofed Cottages, wherein stood many a Mother baking bread, with her children round her:—all hidden and protectingly folded-up in the valley-folds; yet there and alive, as sure as if I beheld them. Or to see, as well as fancy, the nine Towns and Villages, that lay round my mountain-seat, which, in still weather, were wont to speak to me (by their steeple-bells) with metal tongue; and, in almost all weather, proclaimed their vitality by repeated Smoke-clouds; whereon, as on a culinary horologe, I might read the hour of the day. For it was the smoke of cookery, as kind housewives at morning, midday, eventide, were boiling their husbands' kettles; and ever a blue pillar rose up into the air, successively or simultaneously, from each of the nine, saying, as plainly as smoke could say: Such and such a meal is getting ready here. Not uninteresting! For you have the whole Borough, with all its love-makings and scandal-mongeries, contentions and contentments, as in miniature, and could cover it all with your hat.—If, in my wide Wayfarings, I had learned to look into the business of the World in its details, here perhaps was the place for combining it into general propositions, and deducing inferences therefrom.

"Often also could I see the black Tempest marching in anger through the Distance: round some Schreckhorn,[8] as yet grim-blue, would the eddying vapor gather, and there tumultuously eddy, and flow down like a mad witch's hair; till, after a space, it vanished, and, in the clear sunbeam, your Schreckhorn stood smiling grim white, for the vapor had held snow. How thou fermentest and elaboratest, in thy great fermenting-vat and laboratory of an Atmosphere, of a World, O Nature!—Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee GOD? Art not thou the 'Living Garment of God'? O Heavens, is it, in very deed, HE, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me?

"Fore-shadows, call them rather fore-splendors, of that Truth, and Beginning of Truths, fell mys-

[6] a picture made up of shadow and light.

[7] a dry, dust-laden wind blowing from the interior on the Atlantic coast of Africa.

[8] a mountain in the Alps.

teriously over my soul. Sweeter than Dayspring to the Ship-wrecked in Nova Zembla;[9] ah, like the mother's voice to her little child that strays bewildered, weeping, in unknown tumults; like soft streamings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart, came that Evangel. The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's!

"With other eyes, too, could I now look upon my fellow man: with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the royal mantle or the beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave. O my Brother, my Brother, why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thy eyes!—Truly, the din of many-voiced Life, which, in this solitude, with the mind's organ, I could hear, was no longer a maddening discord, but a melting one; like inarticulate cries, and sobbings of a dumb creature, which in the ear of Heaven are prayers. The poor Earth, with her poor joys, was now my needy Mother, not my cruel Stepdame; Man, with his so mad Wants and so mean Endeavors, had become the dearer to me; and even for his sufferings and his sins, I now first named him Brother. Thus was I standing in the porch of that *'Sanctuary of Sorrow'*; by strange, steep ways had I too been guided thither; and ere long its sacred gates would open, and the *'Divine Depth of Sorrow'* lie disclosed to me."

The Professor says, he here first got eye on the Knot that had been strangling him, and straightway could unfasten it, and was free. "A vain interminable controversy," writes he, "touching what is at present called Origin of Evil, or some such thing, arises in every soul, since the beginning of the world; and in every soul, that would pass from idle Suffering into actual Endeavoring, must first be put an end to. The most, in our time, have to go content with a simple, incomplete enough Suppression of this controversy; to a few some Solution of it is indispensable. In every new era, too, such Solution comes-out in different terms; and ever the Solution of the last era has become obsolete, and is found unserviceable. For it is man's nature to change his Dialect from century to century; he cannot help it though he would. The authentic *Church-Catechism* of our present century has not yet fallen into my hands: meanwhile, for my own private behoof, I attempt to elucidate the matter so. Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite. Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoeblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two: for the Shoeblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite Universe altogether to himself,* therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Oceans of Hochheimer,[10] a Throat like that of Ophiuchus;[11] speak not of them; to the infinite Shoeblack they are as nothing. No sooner is your ocean filled, than he grumbles that it might have been of better vintage. Try him with half of a Universe, of an Omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men.—Always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even, as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves.*

"But the whim we have of Happiness is somewhat thus. By certain valuations, and averages, of our own striking, we come upon some sort of average terrestrial lot; this we fancy belongs to us by nature, and of indefeasible right. It is simple payment of our wages, of our deserts; requires neither thanks nor complaint; only such *overplus* as there may be do we account Happiness; any *deficit* again is Misery. Now consider that we have the valuation of our own deserts ourselves, and what a fund of Self-conceit there is in each of us,—do you wonder that the balance should so often dip the wrong way, and many a Blockhead cry: See there, what a payment; was ever worthy gentleman so used!—I tell thee, Blockhead, it all comes of thy Vanity; of what thou *fanciest* those same deserts of thine to be. Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged (as is most likely), thou wilt feel it happiness to be only shot: fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair-halter, it will be a luxury to die in hemp.

"So true is it, what I then said, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator.* Nay, unless my Algebra deceive

[9] an island in the Arctic Ocean north of Russia.

[10] a white Rhine wine.

[11] an ancient northern constellation representing a man holding a serpent.

me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero will give Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the Wisest of our time[12] write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'

"I asked myself: What is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word: is it not because thou art not HAPPY? Because the THOU (sweet gentleman) is not sufficiently honored, nourished, soft-bedded, and lovingly cared-for? Foolish soul! What Act of Legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all. What if thou wert born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be Unhappy! Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to *eat*; and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*."

"*Es leuchtet mir ein,* I see a glimpse of it!" cries he elsewhere: "there is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! Was it not to preach-forth this same HIGHER that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in Man, and how in the Godlike only has he Strength and Freedom? Which God-inspired Doctrine art thou also honored to be taught; O Heavens! and broken with manifold merciful Afflictions, even till thou become contrite, and learn it! O, thank thy Destiny for these; thankfully bear what yet remain: thou hadst need of them; the Self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms is Life rooting out the deep-seated chronic Disease, and triumphs over Death. On the roaring billows of Time, thou art not engulfed, but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity. Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."

And again: "Small is it that thou canst trample the Earth with its injuries under thy feet, as old Greek Zeno[13] trained thee: thou canst love the Earth while it injures thee, and even because it injures thee; for this a Greater than Zeno was needed, and he too was sent. Knowest thou that *'Worship of Sorrow'*? The Temple thereof, founded some eighteen centuries ago, now lies in ruins, overgrown with jungle, the habitation of doleful creatures: nevertheless, venture forward; in a low crypt, arched out of falling fragments, thou findest the Altar still there, and its sacred Lamp perennially burning."

Without pretending to comment on which strange utterances, the Editor will only remark, that there lies beside them much of a still more questionable character; unsuited to the general apprehension; nay wherein he himself does not see his way. Nebulous disquisitions on Religion, yet not without bursts of splendor; on the "perennial continuance of Inspiration"; on Prophecy; that there are "true Priests, as well as Baal-Priests, in our own day": with more of the like sort. We select some fractions, by way of finish to this farrago.

"Cease, my much respected Herr von Voltaire,"[14] thus apostrophizes the Professor: "shut thy sweet voice; for the task appointed thee seems finished. Sufficiently hast thou demonstrated this proposition, considerable or otherwise: That the Mythus of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth. Alas, were thy six-and-thirty quartos, and the six-and-thirty thousand other quartos and folios, and flying sheets or reams, printed before and since on the same subject, all needed to convince us of so little! But what next? Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythus, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our Souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live? What! thou hast no faculty in that kind? Only a torch for burning, no hammer for building? Take our thanks, then, and —— thyself away.

"Meanwhile what are antiquated Mythuses to me? Or is the God present, felt in my own heart, a thing which Herr von Voltaire will dispute out of me; or dispute into me? To the *'Worship of Sorrow'* ascribe what origin and genesis thou pleasest, *has* not that Worship originated, and been generated; is it not *here*? Feel it in thy heart, and then say whether it is of God! This is Belief; all else is Opinion,—for which latter whoso will, let him worry and be worried."

"Neither," observes he elsewhere, "shall ye tear-out one another's eyes, struggling over 'Plenary

[12] Goethe

[13] Greek philosopher, founder of Stoicism (third century B.C.).

[14] Skeptical French philosopher (1694-1778).

Inspiration,' and such-like: try rather to get a little even Partial Inspiration, each of you for himself. One BIBLE I know, of whose Plenary Inspiration doubt is not so much as possible; nay with my own eyes I saw the God's-Hand writing it: thereof all other Bibles are but Leaves,—say, in Picture-writing to assist the weaker faculty."

Or, to give the wearied reader relief, and bring it to an end, let him take the following perhaps more intelligible passage:

"To me, in this our life," says the Professor, "which is an internecine warfare with the Time-spirit, other warfare seems questionable. Hast thou in any way a Contention with thy brother, I advise thee, think well what the meaning thereof is. If thou gauge it to the bottom, it is simply this: 'Fellow, see! thou art taking more than thy share of Happiness in the world, something from *my* share: which, by the Heavens, thou shalt not; nay I will fight thee rather.'—Alas, and the whole lot to be divided is such a beggarly matter, truly a 'feast of shells,' for the substance has been spilled out: not enough to quench one Appetite; and the collective human species clutching at them!—Can we not, in all such cases, rather say: 'Take it, thou too-ravenous individual; take that pitiful additional fraction of a share, which I reckoned mine, but which thou so wantest; take it with a blessing: would to Heaven I had enough for thee!'—If Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*[15] be, 'to a certain extent, Applied Christianity,' surely to a still greater extent, so is this. We have here not a Whole Duty of Man,[16] yet a Half Duty, namely the Passive half: could we but do it, as we can demonstrate it!

"But indeed Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay properly Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices: only by a felt indubitable certainty of Experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system. Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that 'Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action.' On which ground, too, let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: '*Do the Duty which lies nearest thee,*' which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer.

"May we not say, however, that the hour of Spiritual Enfranchisement is even this: When your Ideal World, wherein the whole man has been dimly struggling and inexpressibly languishing to work, becomes revealed, and thrown open; and you discover, with amazement enough, like the Lothario in *Wilhelm Meister*,[17] that your 'America is here or nowhere'? The Situation that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal: work it out therefrom; and working, believe, live, be free. Fool! the Ideal is in thyself, the impediment too is in thyself: thy Condition is but the stuff thou art to shape that same Ideal out of: what matters whether such stuff be of this sort or that, so the Form thou give it be heroic, be poetic? O thou that pinest in the imprisonment of the Actual, and criest bitterly to the gods for a kingdom wherein to rule and create, know this of a truth: the thing thou seekest is already with thee, 'here or nowhere,' couldst thou only see!

"But it is with man's Soul as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tossed Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: Let there be Light! Ever to the greatest that has felt such moment, is it not miraculous and God-announcing; even as, under simpler figures to the simplest and least. The mad primeval Discord is hushed; the rudely-jumbled conflicting elements bind themselves into separate Firmaments: deep silent rock-foundations are built beneath; and the skyey vault with its everlasting Luminaries above: instead of a dark wasteful Chaos, we have a blooming, fertile, heaven-encompassed World.

"I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even World-kin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work."

(1834)

[15] Teachings about Science. Johanne Gottlieb Fichte, celebrated German philosopher (1762-1814).

[16] probably referring to a well-known book of moral and religious instruction with this title published in 1659.

[17] by Goethe

Book III, Chapter VIII

Natural Supernaturalism

It is in his stupendous Section, headed *Natural Supernaturalism*, that the Professor first becomes a Seer; and, after long effort, such as we have witnessed, finally subdues under his feet this refractory Clothes-Philosophy, and takes victorious possession thereof. Phantasms enough he has had to struggle with; "Cloth-webs and Cob-webs," of Imperial Mantles, Superannuated Symbols, and what not: yet still did he courageously pierce through. Nay, worst of all, two quite mysterious, world-embracing Phantasms, TIME and SPACE, have ever hovered round him, perplexing and bewildering: but with these also he now resolutely grapples, these also he victoriously rends asunder. In a word, he has looked fixedly on Existence, till, one after the other, its earthly hulls and garnitures have all melted away; and now, to his rapt vision, the interior celestial Holy of Holies[1] lies disclosed.

Here, therefore, properly it is that the Philosophy of Clothes attains to Transcendentalism; this last leap, can we but clear it, takes us safe into the promised land, where *Palingenesia*,[2] in all senses, may be considered as beginning. "Courage, then!" may our Diogenes exclaim, with better right than Diogenes[3] the First once did. This stupendous Section we, after long painful meditation, have found not to be unintelligible; but, on the contrary, to grow clear, nay radiant, and all-illuminating. Let the reader, turning on it what utmost force of speculative intellect is in him, do his part; as we, by judicious selection and adjustment, shall study to do ours:

"Deep has been, and is, the significance of Miracles," thus quietly begins the Professor; "far deeper perhaps than we imagine. Meanwhile, the question of questions were: What specially is a Miracle? To that Dutch King of Siam, an icicle had been a miracle; whoso had carried with him an air-pump, and vial of vitriolic ether, might have worked a miracle. To my Horse, again, who unhappily is still more unscientific, do not I work a miracle, and magical *'Open sesame!'* every time I please to pay twopence, and open for him an impassable *Schlagbaum*, or shut Turnpike?

"'But is not a real Miracle simply a violation of the Laws of Nature?' ask several. Whom I answer by this new question: What are the Laws of Nature? To me perhaps the rising of one from the dead were no violation of these Laws, but a confirmation; were some far deeper Law, now first penetrated into, and by Spiritual Force, even as the rest have all been, brought to bear on us with its Material Force.

"Here too may some inquire, not without astonishment: On what ground shall one, that can make Iron swim, come and declare that therefore he can teach Religion? To us, truly, of the Nineteenth Century, such declaration were inept enough; which nevertheless to our fathers, of the First Century, was full of meaning.

"'But is it not the deepest Law of Nature that she be constant?' cries an illuminated class: 'Is not the Machine of the Universe fixed to move by unalterable rules?' Probable enough, good friends: nay I, too, must believe that the God, whom ancient inspired men assert to be 'without variableness or shadow of turning,' does indeed never change; that Nature, that the Universe, which no one whom it so pleases can be prevented from calling a Machine, does move by the most unalterable rules. And now of you, too, I make the old inquiry: What those same unalterable rules, forming the complete Statute-Book of Nature, may possibly be?

"They stand written in our Works of Science, say you; in the accumulated records of Man's Experience?—Was Man with his Experience present at the Creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals yet dived down to the foundations of the Universe, and gauged everything there? Did the Maker take them into His counsel; that they read His groundplan of the incomprehensible All; and can say, This stands marked therein, and no more than this? Alas, not in anywise! These scientific individuals have been nowhere but where we also are; have seen some handbreadths deeper than we see into the Deep that is infinite, without bottom as without shore.

"Laplace's Book on the Stars, wherein he exhibits that certain Planets, with their Satellites, gyrate round our worthy Sun, at a rate and in a course, which, by greatest good fortune, he and the like of him have succeeded in detecting,—is to me as precious as to another. But is this what thou namest 'Mechanism of the Heavens,' and 'System of the World'; this, wherein Sirius and the

[1] *Exodus*, 26:33 and 34. [2] new birth.

[3] According to the story, Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher, encouraged his hearers toward the end of a tedious lecture with, "Courage, friends! I see land." Later when he saw a boy throwing stones at a gallows he said, "Courage! You will attain your object."

Pleiades, and all Herschel's Fifteen-thousand Suns per minute,[4] being left out, some paltry handful of Moons, and inert Balls, had been—looked at, nicknamed, and marked in the Zodiacal Way-bill; so that we can now prate of their Whereabout; their How, their Why, their What, being hid from us, as in the signless Inane?

"System of Nature! To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite *infinite* depth, of quite infinite expansion; and all Experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square-miles. The course of Nature's phases, on this our little fraction of a Planet, is partially known to us: but who knows what deeper courses these depend on; what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny and pebble, and quality and accident, of its little native Creek may have become familiar: but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic Currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon's Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little Creek is regulated, and may, from time to time (*un*miraculously enough), be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons and periodic Currents the mysterious Course of Providence through Æons of Æons.

"We speak of the Volume of Nature: and truly a Volume it is,—whose Author and Writer is God. To read it! Dost thou, does man, so much as well know the Alphabet thereof? With its Words, Sentences, and grand descriptive Pages, poetical and philosophical, spread out through Solar Systems, and Thousands of Years, we shall not try thee. It is a Volume written in celestial hieroglyphs, in the true Sacred-writing; of which even Prophets are happy that they can read here a line and there a line. As for your Institutes, the Academies of Science, they strive bravely; and, from amid the thick-crowded, inextricably intertwisted hieroglyphic writing, pick out, by dextrous combination, some Letters in the vulgar Character, and therefrom put together this and the other economic Recipe, of high avail in Practice. That Nature is more than some boundless Volume of such Recipes, or huge, well-nigh inexhaustible Domestic-Cookery Book, of which the whole secret will in this manner one day evolve itself, the fewest dream.

"Custom," continues the Professor, "doth make dotards of us all. Consider well, thou wilt find that Custom is the greatest of Weavers; and weaves airraiment for all the Spirits of the Universe; whereby indeed these dwell with us visibly, as ministering servants, in our houses and workshops; but their spiritual nature becomes, to the most, forever hidden. Philosophy complains that Custom has hoodwinked us, from the first; that we do everything by Custom, even Believe by it; that our very Axioms, let us boast of Free-thinking as we may, are oftenest simply such Beliefs as we have never heard questioned. Nay, what is Philosophy throughout but a continual battle against Custom; an ever-renewed effort to *transcend* the sphere of blind Custom, and so become Transcendental?

"Innumerable are the illusions and legerdemain-tricks of Custom: but of all these, perhaps the cleverest is her knack of persuading us that the Miraculous, by simple repetition, ceases to be Miraculous. True, it is by this means we live; for man must work as well as wonder: and herein is Custom so far a kind nurse, guiding him to his true benefit. But she is a fond foolish nurse, or rather we are false foolish nurselings, when, in our resting and reflecting hours, we prolong the same deception. Am I to view the Stupendous with stupid indifference, because I have seen it twice, or two-hundred, or two-million times? There is no reason in Nature or in Art why I should: unless, indeed, I am a mere Work-Machine, for whom the divine gift of Thought were no other than the terrestrial gift of Steam is to the Steam-engine; a power whereby cotton might be spun, and money and money's worth realized.

"Notable enough too, here as elsewhere, wilt thou find the potency of Names; which indeed are but one kind of such custom-woven, wonder-hiding Garments. Witchcraft, and all manner of Spectre-work, and Demonology, we have now named Madness and Diseases of the Nerves. Seldom reflecting that still the new question comes upon us: What is Madness, what are Nerves? Ever, as before, does Madness remain a mysterious-terrific, altogether *infernal* boiling-up of the Nether Chaotic Deep, through this fair-painted Vision of Creation, which swims thereon, which we name the Real. Was Luther's Picture of the Devil less a Reality, whether it were formed within the bodily eye, or without it? In every the wisest Soul

[4] an allusion to the astronomer Herschel's division of the heavens into squares one astronomical minute in size. Carlyle is giving an impression of the magnitude of the heavens by what he calls the way-bill, or inventory, of the stars.

lies a whole world of internal Madness, an authentic Demon-Empire; out of which, indeed, his world of Wisdom has been creatively built together, and now rests there, as on its dark foundations does a habitable flowery Earth-rind.

"But deepest of all illusory Appearances, for hiding Wonder, as for many other ends, are your two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, SPACE and TIME. These, as spun and woven for us from before Birth itself, to clothe our celestial ME for dwelling here, and yet to blind it,—lie all-embracing, as the universal canvas, or warp and woof, whereby all minor Illusions, in this Phantasm Existence, weave and paint themselves. In vain, while here on Earth, shall you endeavor to strip them off; you can, at best, but rend them asunder for moments, and look through.

"Fortunatus had a wishing Hat, which when he put on, and wished himself Anywhere, behold he was There. By this means had Fortunatus triumphed over Space, he had annihilated Space; for him there was no Where, but all was Here. Were a Hatter to establish himself, in the Wahngasse of Weissnichtwo, and make felts of this sort for all mankind, what a world we should have of it! Still stranger, should, on the opposite side of the street, another Hatter establish himself; and, as his fellow-craftsman made Space-annihilating Hats, make Time-annihilating! Of both would I purchase, were it with my last groschen;[5] but chiefly of this latter. To clap-on your felt, and, simply by wishing that you were Any*where*, straightway to be *There*! Next to clap-on your otherfelt, and, simply by wishing that you were Any*when*, straightway to be *Then*! This were indeed te grander: shooting at will from the Fire-Creatic of the World to its Fire-Consummation; here historically present in the First Century, conversing ce to face with Paul and Seneca; there prophetically in the Thirty-first, conversing also face to fa with other Pauls and Senecas, who as yet stand dden in the depth of that late Time!

"Or thiest thou it were impossible, unimaginable? the Past annihilated, then, or only past; is the future nonextant, or only future? Those myst faculties of thine, Memory and Hope, alreac answer: already through those mystic avenue thou the Earth-blinded summonest both Past d Future, and communest with them, though as darkly, and with mute beckonings. The curta of Yesterday drop down, the curtains of Tomorrow roll up; but Yesterday and Tomorrow both *are*. Pierce through the Time-element, glance into the Eternal. Believe what thou findest written in the sanctuaries of Man's Soul, even as all Thinkers, in all ages, have devoutly read it there: that Time and Space are not God, but creations of God; that with God as it is a universal HERE, so is it an everlasting Now.

"And seest thou therein any glimpse of IMMORTALITY?—O Heaven! Is the white Tomb of our Loved One, who died from our arms, and had to be left behind us there, which rises in the distance, like a pale, mournfully receding Milestone, to tell how many toilsome uncheered miles we have journeyed on alone,—but a pale spectral Illusion! Is the lost Friend still mysteriously Here, even as we are Here mysteriously, with God!—Know of a truth that only the Time-shadows have perished, or are perishable; that the real Being of whatever was, and whatever is, and whatever will be, *is* even now and forever. This, should it unhappily seem new, thou mayest ponder at thy leisure; for the next twenty years, or the next twenty centuries: believe it thou must; understand it thou canst not.

"That the Thought-forms, Space and Time, wherein, once for all, we are sent into this Earth to live, should condition and determine our whole Practical reasonings, conceptions, and imagings or imaginings, seems altogether fit, just, and unavoidable. But that they should, furthermore, usurp such sway over pure spiritual Meditation, and blind us to the wonder everywhere lying close on us, seems nowise so. Admit Space and Time to their due rank as Forms of Thought; nay even, if thou wilt, to their quite undue rank of Realities: and consider, then, with thyself how their thin disguises hide from us the brightest God-effulgences! Thus, were it not miraculous, could I stretch forth my hand and clutch the Sun? Yet thou seest me daily stretch forth my hand and therewith clutch many a thing, and swing it hither and thither. Art thou a grown baby, then, to fancy that the Miracle lies in miles of distance, or in pounds avoirdupois of weight; and not to see that the true inexplicable God-revealing Miracle lies in this, that I can stretch forth my hand at all; that I have free Force to clutch aught therewith? Innumerable other of this sort are the deceptions, and wonder-hiding stupefactions, which Space practices on us.

"Still worse is it with regard to Time. Your grand antimagician, and universal wonder-hider, is this same lying Time. Had we but the Time-annihilating Hat, to put on for once only, we

[5] a German coin worth about two cents.

should see ourselves in a World of Miracles, wherein all fabled or authentic Thaumaturgy, and feats of Magic, were outdone. But unhappily we have not such a Hat; and man, poor fool that he is, can seldom and scantily help himself without one.

"Were it not wonderful, for instance, had Orpheus, or Amphion,[6] built the walls of Thebes by the mere sound of his Lyre? Yet tell me, Who built these walls of Weissnichtwo; summoning out all the sandstone rocks, to dance along from the *Steinbruch*[7] (now a huge Troglodyte[8] Chasm, with frightful green-mantled pools); and shape themselves into Doric and Ionic pillars, squared ashlar houses and noble streets? Was it not the still higher Orpheus, or Orpheuses, who, in past centuries, by the divine Music of Wisdom, succeeded in civilizing Man? Our highest Orpheus walked in Judea, eighteen-hundred years ago: his sphere-melody, flowing in wild native tones, took captive the ravished souls of men; and, being of a truth sphere-melody, still flows and sounds, though now with thousandfold accompaniments, and rich symphonies, through all our hearts; and modulates, and divinely leads them. Is that a wonder, which happens in two hours; and does it cease to be wonderful if happening in two million? Not only was Thebes built by the music of an Orpheus; but without the music of some inspired Orpheus was no city ever built, no work that man glories in ever done.

"Sweep away the Illusion of Time; glance, if thou have eyes, from the near moving-cause to its far-distant Mover: The stroke that came transmitted through a whole galaxy of elastic balls, was it less a stroke than if the last ball only had been struck, and sent flying? O, could I (with the Time-annihilating Hat) transport thee direct from the Beginnings to the Endings, how were thy eyesight unsealed, and thy heart set flaming in the Light-sea of celestial wonder! Then sawest thou that this fair Universe, were it in the meanest province thereof, is in very deed the star-domed City of God; that through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every Living Soul, the glory of a present God still beams. But Nature, which is the Time-vesture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish.

"Again, could anything be more miraculous than an actual authentic Ghost? The English Johnson longed, all his life, to see one; but could not, though he went to Cock Lane, and thence to the church-vaults, and tapped on coffins. Foolish Doctor! Did he never, with the mind's eye as well as with the body's, look round him into that full tide of human Life he so loved; did he never so much as look into Himself? The good Doctor was a Ghost, as actual and authentic as heart could wish; well-nigh a million of Ghosts were travelling the streets by his side. Once more I say, sweep away the illusion of Time; compress the three-score years into three minutes: what else was he, what else are we? Are we not Spirits, that are shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility? This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific *fact*; we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions; round us, as round the veriest spectre, is Eternity; and to Eternity minutes are as years and æons. Come there not tones of Love and Faith, as from celestial harp-strings, like the Song of beatified Souls? And again, do not we squeak and jibber (in our discordant, screech-owlish debatings and recriminatings); and glide bodeful, and feeble, and fearful; or uproar (*poltern*), and revel in our mad Dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still Home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day? Where now is Alexander of Macedon: does the steel Host, that yelled in fierce battle-shouts at Issus and Arbela,[9] remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly, even as perturbed Goblins mut? Napoleon too, and his Moscow Retreats and Austerlitz Campaigns! Was it all other than the veriest Spectre-hunt; which has now, with its howling tumult that made Night hideous, flitted away?—Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand-rillion walking the Earth openly at noontide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once

"O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within Him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stony Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our ME; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh. That warrior on his strong war-horse, fire flashes through his eyes; force dwells in his arm and heart: but warrior and war-horse are a vision; a revealed Force, nothing more. Stately they tread the Earth, as if it were a firm substance: fool! the Earth is but a film; it cracks in twain, and warrior

[6] mythical musicians accredited with this feat.
[7] quarry. [8] cave-dweller.
[9] battles in which Alexander defeated Darius.

and war-horse sink beyond plummet's sounding. Plummet's? Fantasy herself will not follow them. A little while ago, they were not; a little while, and they are not, their very ashes are not.

"So has it been from the beginning, so will it be to the end. Generation after generation takes to itself the Form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian[10] Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends: one grinding in the mill of Industry; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife, in war with his fellow:—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to sense becomes a vanished Shadow. Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage: can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped-in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

'We *are such stuff*
As dreams are made of, and our little Life
Is rounded with a sleep!' "[11] (1834)

From *The French Revolution*

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

Carlyle's sulphuric, didactic history contains a gallery of famous portraits ranging from such revolutionary giants as Robespierre, Mirabeau, and Danton to the "half-angelic, half-demonic" girl who sprang from obscurity into history by stabbing Marat in his bath. Few passages in the *French Revolution* better illustrate the qualities which make it unique among histories: Carlyle's intense interest in the bit players on the stage; his brilliant gift for painting contrasts; his talent for combining suspense and speed in narrative; his tendency to treat the individuals in one picture as symbols on a vaster, infinitely more confused canvas. Although he had little use for makers of fiction, this miniature masterpiece has been lifted from its context and included in at least one collection of modern short stories.

Jean Paul Marat (1743-93) was one of the leaders of the radical Jacobin party during the Revolution. Arrested in April 1793 by the more moderate Girondists, he had been acquitted and had later joined with Danton and Robespierre in overthrowing the opposition and leading the Reign of Terror. Charlotte Corday (1768-93), though sympathetic with the aims of the Revolution, deplored the terrorism of the extremists. The assassination took place on July 13, 1793.

. . . Amid which dim ferment of Caen and the World, History specially notices one thing: in the lobby of the Mansion *de l'Intendance*, where busy Deputies are coming and going, a young Lady with an aged valet, taking grave graceful leave of Deputy Barbaroux.[1] She is of stately Norman figure; in the twenty-fifth year; of beautiful still countenance: her name is Charlotte Corday, heretofore styled D'Armans, while Nobility still was. Barbaroux has given her a Note to Deputy Duperret,[2]—him who once drew his sword in the effervescence. Apparently she will to Paris on some errand? "She was a Republican before the Revolution, and never wanted energy." A completeness, a decision is in this fair female Figure: "by energy she means the spirit that will prompt one to

[10] pertaining to the Cimmerians, a fabulous people living in complete darkness.

[1] leading Girondist from Marseilles.

[11] Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, IV, i, 156-8.

[2] another prominent Girondist, later executed at the fall of the party.

sacrifice himself for his country." What if she, this fair young Charlotte, had emerged from her secluded stillness, suddenly like a Star; cruel-lovely, with half-angelic, half-dæmonic splendour; to gleam for a moment, and in a moment be extinguished: to be held in memory, so bright complete was she, through long centuries!—Quitting Cimmerian[1] Coalitions without, and the dim-simmering Twenty-five millions within, History will look fixedly at this one fair Apparition of a Charlotte Corday; will note whither Charlotte moves, how the little Life burns forth so radiant, then vanishes swallowed of the Night.

With Barbaroux's Note of Introduction, and slight stock of luggage, we see Charlotte on Tuesday the ninth of July seated in the Caen Diligence, with a place for Paris. None takes farewell of her, wishes her Good-journey: her Father will find a line left, signifying that she is gone to England, that he must pardon her, and forget her. The drowsy diligence lumbers along; amid drowsy talk of Politics, and praise of the Mountain;[4] in which she mingles not: all night, all day, and again all night. On Thursday, not long before noon, we are at the bridge of Neuilly; here is Paris with her thousand black domes, the goal and purpose of thy journey! Arrived at the Inn de la Providence in the Rue des Vieux Augustins, Charlotte demands a room; hastens to bed; sleeps all afternoon and night, till the morrow morning.

On the morrow morning, she delivers her Note to Duperret. It relates to certain Family Papers which are in the Minister of the Interior's hand; which a Nun at Caen, an old Convent-friend of Charlotte's, has need of; which Duperret shall assist her in getting: this then was Charlotte's errand to Paris? She has finished this, in the course of Friday; yet says nothing of returning. She has seen and silently investigated several things. The Convention, in bodily reality, she has seen; what the Mountain is like. The living physiognomy of Marat she could not see; he is sick at present, and confined to home.

About eight on the Saturday morning, she purchases a large sheath-knife in the Palais Royal; then straightway, in the Place des Victoires, takes a hackney-coach: "To the Rue de l'École de Médecine, No. 44." It is the residence of the Citoyen Marat!—the Citoyen Marat is ill, and cannot be seen; which seems to disappoint her much. Her business is with Marat, then? Hapless beautiful Charlotte; hapless squalid Marat! From Caen in the utmost West, from Neuchâtel in the utmost East, they two are drawing nigh each other; they two have, very strangely, business together.—Charlotte, returning to her Inn, despatches a short Note to Marat; signifying that she is from Caen, the seat of rebellion; that she desires earnestly to see him, and "will put it in his power to do France a great service." No answer. Charlotte writes another Note, still more pressing; sets out with it by coach, about seven in the evening, herself. Tired day-labourers, have again finished their Week; huge Paris is circling and simmering, manifold, according to its vague wont: this one fair Figure has decision in it; drives straight,—towards a purpose.

It is yellow July evening, we say, the thirteenth of the month; eve of the Bastille day,—when "M. Marat," four years ago, in the crowd of the Pont Neuf, shrewdly required of that Besenval Hussar-party, which had such friendly dispositions, "to dismount, and give up their arms, then"; and became notable among Patriot men. Four years: what a road he has travelled;—and sits now about half-past seven of the clock, stewing in slipper-bath; sore afflicted; ill of Revolution Fever,—of what other malady this History had rather not name. Excessively sick and worn, poor man: with precisely eleven-pence-half-penny of ready-money in paper; with slipper-bath; strong three-footed stool for writing on, the while; and a squalid—Washerwoman[5], one may call her: that is his civic establishment in Medical-School Street; thither and not else-whither has his road led him. Not to the reign of Brotherhood and Perfect Felicity; yet surely on the way towards that?—Hark, a rap again! A musical woman's voice, refusing to be rejected: it is the Citoyenne who would do France a service. Marat, recognising from within, cries, Admit her. Charlotte Corday is admitted.

Citoyen Marat, I am from Caen the seat of rebellion, and wished to speak with you.—Be seated, *mon enfant*. Now what are the Traitors doing at Caen? What Deputies are at Caen?—Charlotte names some Deputies. "Their heads shall fall within a fortnight," croaks the eager People's-friend, clutching his tablets to write: *Barbaroux, Pétion,* writes he with bare shrunk arm, turning aside in the bath: *Pétion*, and *Louvet*, and—Charlotte has drawn her knife from the sheath; plunges it, with

[1] The Cimmerians, according to classic mythology, lived in perpetual darkness.

[4] the extreme democratic party, led by Marat, so-called because they occupied the highest benches in the Hall of National Convention.

[5] Simone Evrard, Marat's mistress

one sure stroke, into the writer's heart. "*À moi, chère amie*, Help, dear!" no more could the Death-choked say or shriek. The helpful Washerwoman running in, there is no Friend of the People[6] or Friend of the Washerwoman left; but his life with a groan gushes out, indignant, to the shades below.

And so Marat People's-friend is ended; the lone Stylites[7] has got hurled down suddenly from his Pillar—*whitherward?* He that made him knows. Patriot Paris may sound triple and tenfold, in dole and wail; re-echoed by Patriot France; and the Convention, "Chabot[8] pale with terror, declaring that they are to be all assassinated," may decree him Pantheon Honours, Public Funeral, Mirabeau's dust making way for him; and Jacobin Societies, in lamentable oratory, summing up his character, parallel him to One, whom they think it honour to call "the good Sansculotte,"[9]—whom we name not here; also a Chapel may be made, for the urn that holds his Heart, in the Place du Carrousel; and new-born children be named Marat; and Lago-di-Como Hawkers bake mountains of stucco into unbeautiful Busts; and David[10] paint his Picture, or Death-Scene; and such other Apotheosis take place as the human genius, in these circumstances, can devise: but Marat returns no more to the light of this Sun. One sole circumstance we have read with clear sympathy, in the old *Moniteur* Newspaper: how Marat's Brother comes from Neuchâtel to ask of the Convention, "that the deceased Jean-Paul Marat's musket be given him." For Marat too had a brother, and natural affections; and was wrapt once in swaddling clothes, and slept safe in a cradle like the rest of us. Ye children of men!—A sister of his, they say, lives still to this day in Paris.

As for Charlotte Corday, her work is accomplished; the recompense of it is near and sure. The *chère amie*, and neighbours of the house, flying at her, she "overturns some movables," entrenches herself till the gendarmes arrive; then quietly surrenders; goes quietly to the Abbaye Prison: she alone quiet, all Paris sounding in wonder, in rage or admiration, round her. Duperret is put in arrest, on account of her; his Papers sealed, —which may lead to consequences. Fauchet, in like manner; though Fauchet had not so much as heard of her. Charlotte, confronted with these two Deputies, praises the grave firmness of Duperret, censures the dejection of Fauchet.

On Wednesday morning, the thronged Palais de Justice and Revolutionary Tribunal can see her face; beautiful and calm: she dates it "fourth day of the Preparation of Peace." A strange murmur ran through the Hall, at sight of her; you could not say of what character. Tinville has his indictments and tape-papers: the cutler of the Palais Royal will testify that he sold her the sheath-knife; "All these details are needless," interrupted Charlotte; "it is I that killed Marat." By whose instigation?—"By no one's." What tempted you, then? His crimes. "I killed one man," added she, raising her voice extremely (*extrêmement*), as they went on with their question, "I killed one man to save a hundred thousand; a villain to save innocents; a savage wild beast to give repose to my country. I was a Republican before the Revolution; I never wanted energy." There is therefore nothing to be said. The public gazes astonished: the hasty limners sketch her features, Charlotte not disapproving: the men of law proceed with their formalities. The doom of Death as a murderess. To her Advocate she gives thanks; in gentle phrase, in high-flown classical spirit. To the priest they send her she gives thanks; but needs not any shriving, any ghostly or other aid from him.

On this same evening therefore, about half-past seven o'clock, from the gate of the Conciergerie, to a City all on tiptoe, the fatal Cart issues; seated on it a fair young creature, sheeted in red smock of murderess; so beautiful, serene, so full of life; journeying towards death,—alone amid the World. Many take off their hats, saluting reverently; for what heart but must be touched? Others growl and howl. Adam Lux,[11] of Mentz, declares that she is greater than Brutus; that it were beautiful to die with her: the head of this young man seems turned. At the Place de la Révolution, the countenance of Charlotte wears the same still smile. The executioners proceed to bind her feet; she resists, thinking it meant as an insult; on a word of explanation, she submits with cheerful apology. As the last act, all being now ready, they take the neckerchief from her neck; a blush of maidenly shame overspreads that fair face and neck; the cheeks were still tinged with it when the executioner lifted the severed head, to show it

[6] In 1789 Marat had earned the epithet by publishing a rabid paper called *L'Ami du Peuple*.

[7] Simeon Stylites (d. 459), Syrian ascetic, lived thirty years atop a pillar.

[8] François Chabot (b. 1759), a fanatical Jacobin.

[9] a republican of the poorer classes (literally "without knee-breeches").

[10] Jacques Louis David (1748-1825), a friend of Marat's who painted the famous picture of the assassination.

[11] A German who was later executed for publishing a defense of Charlotte.

to the people. "It is most true," says Forster, "that he struck the cheek insultingly; for I saw it with my eyes: the Police imprisoned him for it."

In this manner have the Beautifullest and the Squalidest come in collision, and extinguished one another. Jean-Paul Marat and Marie-Anne Charlotte Corday both, suddenly, are no more. "Day of the Preparation of Peace?" Alas, how were peace possible or preparable, while, for example, the hearts of lovely Maidens, in their convent-stillness, are dreaming not of Love-paradises, and the light of Life; but of Codrus'-sacrifices,[12] and Death well-earned? That Twenty-five million hearts have got to such temper, this *is* the Anarchy; the soul of it lies in this: whereof not peace can be the embodiment! The death of Marat, whetting old animosities tenfold, will be worse than any life. O ye hapless Two, mutually extinctive, the Beautiful and the Squalid, sleep ye well,—in the Mother's bosom that bore you both!

This is the history of Charlotte Corday; most definite, most complete; angelic-dæmonic: like a Star! Adam Lux goes home, half-delirious; to pour forth his Apotheosis of her, in paper and print; to propose that she have a statue with this inscription, *Greater than Brutus*. Friends represent his danger; Lux is reckless; thinks it were beautiful to die with her. (1837)

From *Past and Present*

The *past* in the title is thirteenth-century England. From a medieval chronicle by a monk of Bury St. Edmunds, Carlyle extracted an idyllic story of life in a monastery under the benevolent rule of a Carlylean hero, Abbot Samson. The *present*, in odious contrast, is the England of the "hungry forties," corroded by "Shams and Cant," by "Double-barreled Dilettantism" and "Midas-eared Mammonism"—to mention only a few of Carlyle's capitalized monsters. In the chapters here Carlyle is voicing his characteristic reverence for the gospel of Work and distrust of Democracy.

Book III, Chapter XI, *Labor*

For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so Mammonish,[1] mean, *is* in communication with Nature; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth.

The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself':[2] long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules! That will be thy better plan.

It has been written, 'an endless significance lies in Work'; a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labor, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valor against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labor in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame!

Destiny, on the whole, has no other way of cultivating us. A formless Chaos, once set it *revolving*, grows round and ever rounder; ranges itself, by mere force of gravity, into strata, spherical courses; is no longer a Chaos, but a round compacted World. What would become of the Earth, did she cease to revolve? In the poor old Earth, so long as she revolves, all inequalities, irregularities disperse themselves; all irregularities are incessantly becoming regular. Hast thou looked on the Potter's wheel,—one of the venerablest objects; old

[12] Codrus, last King of Athens (c. 1068 B.C.) sacrificed his own life to fulfill an oracle and save his fellow-Athenians.

[1] money-getting; see *Paradise Lost*, II, 270, Vol. I, p. 628.

[2] a maxim inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

as the Prophet Ezekiel and far older? Rude lumps of clay, how they spin themselves up, by mere quick whirling, into beautiful circular dishes. And fancy the most assiduous Potter, but without his wheel; reduced to make dishes or rather amorphous botches, by mere kneading and baking! Even such a Potter were Destiny, with a human soul that would rest and lie at ease, that would not work and spin! Of an idle unrevolving man the kindest Destiny, like the most assiduous Potter without wheel, can bake and knead nothing other than a botch; let her spend on him what expensive coloring, what gilding and enameling she will, he is but a botch. Not a dish; no, a bulging, kneaded, crooked, shambling, squint-cornered, amorphous botch,—a mere enameled vessel of dishonor! Let the idle think of this.

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it! How, as a free-flowing channel, dug and torn by noble force through the sour mud-swamp of one's existence, like an ever-deepening river there, it runs and flows;—draining-off the sour festering water, gradually from the root of the remotest grass-blade; making, instead of pestilential swamp, a green fruitful meadow with its clear-flowing stream. How blessed for the meadow itself, let the stream and *its* value be great or small! Labor is Life: from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his god-given Force, the sacred celestial Life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness,—to all knowledge, 'self-knowledge' and much else, so soon as Work fitly begins. Knowledge? The knowledge that will hold good in working, cleave thou to that; for Nature herself accredits that, says Yea to that. Properly thou hast no other knowledge but what thou hast got by working: the rest is yet all a hypothesis of knowledge; a thing to be argued of in schools, a thing floating in the clouds, in endless logic-vortices, till we try it and fix it. 'Doubt, of whatever kind, can be ended by Action alone.'

Book III, Chapter XIII, *Democracy*

If the Serene Highnesses and Majesties do not take note of that, then, as I perceive, *that* will take note of itself! The time for levity, insincerity, and idle babble and play-acting, in all kinds, is gone by; it is a serious, grave time. Old long-vexed questions, not yet solved in logical words or parliamentary laws, are fast solving themselves in facts, somewhat unblessed to behold! This largest of questions, this question of Work and Wages, which ought, had we heeded Heaven's voice, to have begun two generations ago or more, cannot be delayed longer without hearing Earth's voice. "Labor" will verily need to be somewhat "organized," as they say,—God knows with what difficulty. Man will actually need to have his debts and earnings a little better paid by man; which, let Parliaments speak of them or be silent of them, are eternally his due from man, and cannot, without penalty and at length not without death-penalty, be withheld. How much ought to cease among us straightway; how much ought to begin straightway, while the hours yet are!

Truly they are strange results to which this of leaving all to "Cash;" of quietly shutting-up the God's Temple, and gradually opening wide-open the Mammon's Temple, with "Laissez-faire,[3] and Every man for himself,"—have led us in these days! We have Upper, speaking Classes, who indeed do "speak" as never man spake before; the withered flimsiness, the godless baseness and barrenness of whose Speech might of itself indicate what kind of Doing and practical Governing went on under it! For Speech is the gaseous element out of which most kinds of Practice and Performance, especially all kinds of moral Performance, condense themselves, and take shape; as the one is, so will the other be. Descending, accordingly, into the Dumb Class in its Stockport Cellars and Poor-Law Bastilles,[4] have we not to announce that they also are hitherto unexampled in the History of Adam's Posterity?

Life was never a May-game for men: in all times the lot of the dumb millions born to toil was defaced with manifold sufferings, injustices, heavy burdens, avoidable and unavoidable; not play at all, but hard work that made the sinews sore and the heart sore. As bond-slaves, *villani, bordarii, sochemanni,* nay indeed as dukes, earls and kings, men were oftentimes made weary of their life; and had to say, in the sweat of their brow and of their soul, Behold, it is not sport, it is grim earnest, and our back can bear no more! Who knows not what massacrings and harryings there have been; grinding, long-continuing, unbearable injustices,—till the heart had to rise in madness, and some *"Eu Sachsen, nimith euer sachses,* You Saxons, out with

[3] let alone; the doctrine held that business should be let alone, without governmental restrictions.

[4] Carlyle's slighting reference is to the workhouses of his day where the poor were sent.

your gully-knives, then!" You Saxons, some "arrestment," partial "arrestment of the Knaves and Dastards" has become indispensable!—The page of Dryasdust is heavy with such details.

And yet I will venture to believe that in no time, since the beginnings of Society, was the lot of those same dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is even in the days now passing over us. It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die,—the last exit of us all is in a Fire-Chariot of Pain. But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing; to be heart-worn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt-in with a cold universal Laissez-faire: it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead, Infinite Injustice, as in the accursed iron belly of a Phalaris' Bull![5] This is and remains forever intolerable to all men whom God has made. Do we wonder at French Revolutions, Chartisms,[6] Revolts of Three Days?[7] The times, if we will consider them, are really unexampled.

Never before did I hear of an Irish Widow reduced to "prove her sisterhood by dying of typhus-fever and infecting seventeen persons,"—saying in such undeniable way, "You *see* I was your sister!" Sisterhood, brotherhood, was often forgotten; but not till the rise of these ultimate Mammon and Shotbelt Gospels did I ever see it so expressly denied. If no pious Lord or *Lawward* would remember it, always some pious Lady (*"Hlaf-dig,"* Benefactress, *"Loafgiveress,"* they say she is,—blessings on her beautiful heart!) was there, with mild mother-voice and hand, to remember it; some pious thoughtful *Elder*, what we now call "Prester," *Presbyter* or "Priest," was there to put all men in mind of it, in the name of the God who had made all.

Not even in Black Dahomey[8] was it ever, I think, forgotten to the typhus-fever length. Mungo Park,[9] resourceless, had sunk down to die under the Negro Village-Tree, a horrible White object in the eyes of all. But in the poor Black Woman, and her daughter who stood aghast at him, whose earthly wealth and funded capital consisted of one small calabash of rice, there lived a heart richer than *Laissez-faire*: they, with a royal munificence, boiled their rice for him; they sang all night to him, spinning assiduous on their cotton distaffs, as he lay to sleep: "Let us pity the poor white man; no mother has he to fetch him milk, no sister to grind him corn!" Thou poor black Noble One,—thou *Lady* too: did not a God make thee too; was there not in thee too something of a God!—

Gurth,[10] born thrall of Cedric the Saxon, has been greatly pitied by Dryasdust and others. Gurth, with the brass collar round his neck, tending Cedric's pigs in the glades of the wood, is not what I call an exemplar of human felicity: but Gurth, with the sky above him, with the free air and tinted boscage and umbrage round him, and in him at least the certainty of supper and social lodging when he came home; Gurth to me seems happy, in comparison with many a Lancashire and Buckinghamshire man of these days, not born thrall of anybody! Gurth's brass collar did not gall him: Cedric *deserved* to be his master. The pigs were Cedric's, but Gurth too would get his parings of them. Gurth had the inexpressible satisfaction of feeling himself related indissolubly, though in a rude brass-collar way, to his fellow-mortals in this Earth. He had superiors, inferiors, equals.—Gurth is now "emancipated" long since; has what we call "Liberty." Liberty, I am told, is a divine thing. Liberty when it becomes the "Liberty to die by starvation" is not so divine!

Liberty? The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out the right path, and to walk thereon. To learn, or to be taught, what work he actually was able for; and then by permission, persuasion, and even compulsion, to set about doing of the same! That is his true blessedness, honor, "liberty" and maximum of wellbeing; if liberty be not that, I for one have small care about liberty. You do not allow a palpable madman to leap over precipices; you violate his liberty, you that are wise; and keep him, were it in strait-waistcoats, away from the precipices! Every stupid, every cowardly and foolish man is but a less palpable madman: his true liberty were that a wiser man, that any and every wiser man, could, by brass collars, or in whatever milder or sharper way, lay hold of him when he was going wrong, and order and compel him to go a little righter. O, if thou really art my *Senior*, Seigneur, my *Elder*, Presbyter or Priest,—if thou art in very deed my *Wiser*, may a beneficent instinct lead and impel thee to "conquer" me, to command me! If thou do know better

[5] Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum (sixth century B.C.), threw his prisoners into a red-hot brazen bull.

[6] The Chartists were a group of English political reformers, active from 1838 for the next ten years.

[7] the French Revolution of 1830, which lasted during three days of July.

[8] a district of west Africa.

[9] African explorer (1771-1806).

[10] See Scott's *Ivanhoe*, chapter I.

than I what is good and right, I conjure thee in the name of God, force me to do it; were it by never such brass collars, whips and handcuffs, leave me not to walk over precipices! That I have been called, by all the Newspapers, a "free man" will avail me little, if my pilgrimage have ended in death and wreck. O that the Newspapers had called me slave, coward, fool, or what it pleased their sweet voices to name me, and I had attained not death, but life!—Liberty requires new definitions.

A conscious abhorrence and intolerance of Folly, of Baseness, Stupidity, Poltroonery and all that brood of things, dwells deep in some men: still deeper in others an *un*conscious abhorrence and intolerance, clothed moreover by the beneficent Supreme Powers in what stout appetites, energies, egoisms so-called, are suitable to it;—these latter are your Conquerors, Romans, Normans, Russians, Indo-English; Founders of what we call Aristocracies. Which indeed have they not the most "divine right" to found;—being themselves very truly Ἄριστοι BRAVEST, BEST; and conquering generally a confused rabble of WORST, or at lowest, clearly enough, of WORSE? I think their divine right, tried, with affirmatory verdict, in the greatest Law-Court known to me, was good! A class of men who are dreadfully exclaimed against by Dryasdust; of whom nevertheless beneficent Nature has oftentimes had need; and may, alas, again have need.

When, across the hundredfold poor scepticisms, trivialisms and constitutional cobwebberies of Dryasdust, you catch any glimpse of a William the Conqueror, a Tancred of Hauteville[11] or suchlike, —do you not discern veritably some rude outline of a true God-made King; whom not the Champion of England cased in tin, but all Nature and the Universe were calling to the throne? It is absolutely necessary that he get thither. Nature does not mean her poor Saxon children to perish, of obesity, stupor or other malady, as yet: a stern Ruler and Line of Rulers therefore is called in,—a stern but most beneficent *perpetual House-Surgeon* is by Nature herself called in, and even the appropriate *fees* are provided for him! Dryasdust talks lamentably about Hereward and the Fen Counties; fate of Earl Waltheof; Yorkshire and the North reduced to ashes: all which is undoubtedly lamentable.[12] But every Dryasdust apprises me of one fact: "A child, in this William's reign, might have carried a purse of gold from end to end of England." My erudite friend, it is a fact which outweighs a thousand! Sweep away thy constitutional, sentimental and other cobwebberies; look eye to eye, if thou still have any eye, in the face of this big burly William Bastard: thou wilt see a fellow of most flashing discernment, of most strong lion-heart;—in whom, as it were, within a frame of oak and iron, the gods have planted the soul of "a man of genius"! Dost thou call that nothing? I call it an immense thing!—Rage enough was in Willelmus Conquæstor,[13] rage enough for his occasions;—and yet the essential element of him, as of all such men, is not scorching *fire*, but shining illuminative *light*. Fire and light are strangely interchangeable; nay, at bottom, I have found them different forms of the same most godlike "elementary substance" in our world: a thing worth stating in these days. The essential element of this Conquæstor is, first of all, the most sun-eyed perception of what *is* really what on this God's Earth;—which, thou wilt find, does mean at bottom "Justice," and "Virtues" not a few: *Conformity* to what the Maker has seen good to make; that, I suppose, will mean Justice and a Virtue or two?—

Dost thou think Willelmus Conquæstor would have tolerated ten years' jargon, one hour's jargon, on the propriety of killing Cotton-manufacturers by partridge Corn-Laws?[14] I fancy, this was not the man to knock out of his night's-rest with nothing but a noisy bedlamism in your mouth! "Assist us still better to bush the partridges; strangle Plugson who spins the shirts?"—*"Par la Splendeur de Dieu!"*[15]— —Dost thou think Willelmus Conquæstor, in this new time, with Steam-engine Captains of Industry on one hand of him, and Joe-Manton[16] Captains of Idleness on the other, would have doubted which *was* really the BEST; which did deserve strangling, and which not?

I have a certain indestructible regard for Willelmus Conquæstor. A resident House-Surgeon, provided by Nature for her beloved English People, and even furnished with the requisite fees, as I said; for he by no means felt himself doing Nature's work, this Willelmus, but his own work exclusively! And his own work withal it was; informed *"par la Splendeur de Dieu."*—I say, it is necessary to get the work out of such a man, however harsh that be! When a world, not yet doomed for death, is rushing down to ever-deeper Baseness

[11] a hero celebrated in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*; see I, p. 1080.

[12] a reference to various revolts suppressed by William the Conqueror.

[13] William the Conqueror.

[14] laws regulating the grain trade in England.

[15] By the splendor of God, a favorite oath of William's.

[16] a contemporary gun-smith, here suggestive of the sporting aristocracy.

and Confusion, it is a dire necessity of Nature's to bring in her ARISTOCRACIES, her BEST, even by forcible methods. When their descendants or representatives cease entirely to *be* the Best, Nature's poor world will very soon rush down again to Baseness; and it becomes a dire necessity of Nature's to cast them out. Hence French Revolutions, Five-point Charters, Democracies, and a mournful list of *Etceteras*, in these our afflicted times.

To what extent Democracy has now reached, how it advances irresistible with ominous, ever-increasing speed, he that will open his eyes on any province of human affairs may discern. Democracy is everywhere the inexorable demand of these ages, swiftly fulfilling itself. From the thunder of Napoleon battles, to the jabbering of Open-vestry in St. Mary Axe, all things announce Democracy. A distinguished man, whom some of my readers will hear again with pleasure, thus writes to me what in these days he notes from the Wahngasse of Weissnichtwo,[17] where our London fashions seem to be in full vogue. Let us hear the Herr Teufelsdröckh again, were it but the smallest word!

"Democracy, which means despair of finding any Heroes to govern you, and contented putting-up with the want of them,—alas, thou too, *mein Lieber*, seest well how close it is of kin to *Atheism*, and other sad *Isms*: he who discovers no God whatever, how shall he discover Heroes, the visible Temples of God?—Strange enough meanwhile it is, to observe with what thoughtlessness, here in our rigidly Conservative Country, men rush into Democracy with full cry. Beyond doubt, his Excellenz the Titular-Herr Ritter Kauderwälsch von Pferdefuss-Quacksalber, he our distinguished Conservative Premier himself, and all but the thicker-headed of his Party, discern Democracy to be inevitable as death, and are even desperate of delaying it much!

"You cannot walk the streets without beholding Democracy announce itself: the very Tailor has become, if not properly Sansculottic,[18] which to him would be ruinous, yet a Tailor unconsciously symbolizing, and prophesying with his scissors, the reign of Equality. What now is our fashionable coat? A thing of super-finest texture, of deeply meditated cut; with Malineslace[19] cuffs; quilted with gold; so that a man can carry, without difficulty, an estate of land on his back! *Keineswegs*, By no manner of means! The Sumptuary Laws[20] have fallen into such a state of desuetude as was never before seen. Our fashionable coat is an amphibium between barn-sack and drayman's doublet. The cloth of it is studiously coarse; the color a speckled soot-black or rust-brown gray; the nearest approach to a Peasant's. And for shape, thou shouldst see it! The last consummation of the year now passing over us is definable as Three Bags; a big bag for the body, two small bags for the arms, and by way of collar a hem! The first Antique Cheruscan[21] who, of felt-cloth or bear's-hide, with bone or metal needle, set about making himself a coat, before Tailors had yet awakened out of Nothing,—did not he make it even so? A loose wide poke for body, with two holes to let out the arms; this was his original coat: to which holes it was soon visible that two small loose pokes, or sleeves, easily appended, would be an improvement.

"Thus has the Tailor-art, so to speak, overset itself, like most other things; changed its centre-of-gravity; whirled suddenly over from zenith to nadir. Your Stulz,[22] with huge somerset, vaults from his high shopboard down to the depths of primal savagery,—carrying much along with him! For I will invite thee to reflect that the Tailor, as top-most ultimate froth of Human Society, is indeed swift-passing, evanescent, slippery to decipher; yet significant of much, nay of all. Topmost evanescent froth, he is churned-up from the very lees, and from all intermediate regions of the liquor. The general outcome he, visible to the eye, of what men aimed to do, and were obliged and enabled to do, in this one public department of symbolizing themselves to each other by covering of their skins. A smack of all Human Life lies in the Tailor: its wild struggles towards beauty, dignity, freedom, victory; and how, hemmed-in by Sedan and Huddersfield,[23] by Nescience, Dulness, Prurience, and other sad necessities and laws of Nature, it has attained just to this: Gray savagery of Three Sacks with a hem!

"When the very Tailor verges towards Sansculottism, is it not ominous? The last Divinity of poor mankind dethroning himself; sinking *his*

[17] the imaginary German town ("None-Knows-Where") where Teufelsdrockh, the supposed hero of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, lived.

[18] literally, without breeches; used in the French Revolution to refer to the impoverished revolutionists.

[19] fine lace from Malines, a city in Belgium.

[20] laws regulating expenditure on food and clothing.

[21] a German tribe of the time of Caesar.

[22] a famous London tailor.

[23] cloth manufacturing cities of France and England respectively.

taper too, flame downmost, like the Genius of Sleep or of Death; admonitory that Tailor time shall be no more!—For, little as one could advise Sumptuary Laws at the present epoch, yet nothing is clearer than that where ranks do actually exist, strict division of costumes will also be enforced; that if we ever have a new Hierarchy and Aristocracy, acknowledged veritably as such, for which I daily pray Heaven, the Tailor will reawaken; and be, by volunteering and appointment, consciously and unconsciously, a safeguard of that same."—Certain farther observations, from the same invaluable pen, on our never-ending changes of mode, our "perpetual nomadic and even ape-like appetite for change and mere change" in all the equipments of our existence, and the "fatal revolutionary character" thereby manifested, we suppress for the present. It may be admitted that Democracy, in all meanings of the word, is in full career; irresistible by any Ritter Kauderwälsch or other Son of Adam as times go. "Liberty" is a thing men are determined to have.

But truly, as I had to remark in the meanwhile, "the liberty of not being oppressed by your fellow man" is an indispensable, yet one of the most insignificant fractional parts of Human Liberty. No man oppresses thee, can bid thee fetch or carry, come or go, without reason shown. True; from all men thou art emancipated: but from Thyself and from the Devil—? No man, wiser, unwiser, can make thee come or go: but thy own futilities, bewilderments, thy false appetites for Money, Windsor Georges[24] and suchlike? No man oppresses thee, O free and independent Franchiser: but does not this stupid Porterpot[25] oppress thee? No Son of Adam can bid thee come or go; but this absurd Pot of Heavy-wet, this can and does! Thou art the thrall not of Cedric the Saxon, but of thy own brutal appetites and this scoured dish of liquor. And thou pratest of thy "liberty"? Thou entire blockhead!

Heavy-wet and gin: alas, these are not the only kinds of thraldom. Thou who walkest in a vain show, looking out with ornamental dilettante[26] sniff and serene supremacy at all Life and all Death; and amblest jauntily; perking up thy poor talk into crotchets, thy poor conduct into fatuous somnambulisms;—and *art* as an "enchanted Ape" under God's sky, where thou mightest have been a man, had proper Schoolmasters and Conquerors, and Constables with cat-o'-nine tails, been vouchsafed thee; dost thou call that "liberty"? Or your unreposing Mammon-worshipper again, driven, as if by Galvanisms,[27] by Devils, and Fixed-ideas, who rises early and sits late, chasing the impossible; straining every faculty to "fill himself with the east wind,"—how merciful were it, could you, by mild persuasion, or by the severest tyranny so-called, check him in his mad path, and turn him into a wiser one! All painful tyranny, in that case again, were but mild "surgery"; the pain of it cheap, as health and life, instead of galvanism and fixed-idea, are cheap at any price.

Sure enough, of all paths a man could strike into, there *is*, at any given moment, a *best path* for every man; a thing which, here and now, it were of all things *wisest* for him to do;—which could he be but led or driven to do, he were then doing "like a man," as we phrase it; all men and gods agreeing with him, the whole Universe virtually exclaiming Well-done to him! His success, in such case, were complete; his felicity a maximum. This path, to find this path and walk in it, is the one thing needful for him. Whatsoever forwards him in that, let it come to him even in the shape of blows and spurnings, is liberty: whatsoever hinders him, were it ward-motes, open-vestries poll-booths, tremendous cheers, rivers of heavy-wet, is slavery.

The notion that a man's liberty consists in giving his vote at election-hustings, and saying, "Behold, now I too have my twenty-thousandth part of a Talker in our National Palaver; will not all the gods be good to me?"—is one of the pleasantest! Nature nevertheless is kind at present; and puts it into the heads of many, almost of all. The liberty especially which has to purchase itself by social isolation, and each man standing separate from the other, having "no business with him" but a cash-account: this is such a liberty as the Earth seldom saw;—as the Earth will not long put up with, recommend it how you may. This liberty turns out, before it have long continued in action, with all men flinging up their caps round it, to be, for the Working Millions a liberty to die by want of food; for the Idle Thousands and Units, alas, a still more fatal liberty to live in want of work; to have no earnest duty to do in this God's-World any more. What becomes a man in such predicament? Earth's Laws are silent; and

[24] badges of the Order of the Garter, whose patron is St. George.

[25] pots full of porter, a malt alcoholic drink.

[26] characteristic of a superficial lover of the arts.

[27] electric shocks.

Heaven's speak in a voice which is not heard. No work, and the ineradicable need of work, give rise to new very wondrous life-philosophies, new very wondrous life-practices! Dilettantism, Poco-curantism,[28] Beau-Brummelism, with perhaps an occasional, half-mad, protesting burst of Byronism, establish themselves: at the end of a certain period,—if you go back to "the Dead Sea," there is, say our Moslem friends, a very strange "Sabbath-day" transacting itself there!—Brethren, we know but imperfectly yet, after ages of Constitutional Government, what Liberty and Slavery are.

Democracy, the chase of Liberty in that direction, shall go its full course; unrestrainable by him of Pferdefuss-Quacksalber, or any of *his* household. The Toiling Millions of Mankind, in most vital need and passionate instinctive desire of Guidance, shall cast away False-Guidance; and hope, for an hour, that No-Guidance will suffice them: but it can be for an hour only. The smallest item of human Slavery is the oppression of man by his Mock-Superiors; the palpablest, but I say at bottom the smallest. Let him shake-off such oppression, trample it indignantly under his feet; I blame him not, I pity and commend him. But oppression by your Mock-Superiors well shaken off, the grand problem yet remains to solve: That of finding government by your Real-Superiors! Alas, how shall we ever learn the solution of that, benighted, bewildered, sniffing, sneering, godforgetting unfortunates as we are? It is a work for centuries; to be taught us by tribulations, confusions, insurrections, obstructions; who knows if not by conflagration and despair! It is a lesson inclusive of all other lessons; the hardest of all lessons to learn.

One thing I do know: Those Apes, chattering on the branches by the Dead Sea, never got it learned; but chatter there to this day. To them no Moses need come a second time; a thousand Moseses would be but so many painted Phantasms, interesting Fellow-Apes of new strange aspect,—whom they would "invite to dinner," be glad to meet with in lion-soirées.[29] To them the voice of Prophecy, of heavenly monition, is quite ended. They chatter there, all Heaven shut to them, to the end of the world. The unfortunates! Oh, what is dying of hunger, with honest tools in your hand, with a manful purpose in your heart, and much real labor lying round you done, in comparison? You honestly quit your tools; quit a most muddy confused coil of sore work, short rations, of sorrows, dispiritments and contradictions, having now honestly done with it all;—and await, not entirely in a distracted manner, what the Supreme Powers, and the Silences and the Eternities may have to say to you.

A second thing I know: This lesson will have to be learned,—under penalties! England will either learn it, or England also will cease to exist among Nations. England will either learn to reverence its Heroes, and discriminate them from its Sham-Heroes and Valets and gaslighted Histrios;[30] and to prize them as the audible God's-voice, amid all inane jargons and temporary market-cries, and say to them with heart-loyalty, "Be ye King and Priest, and Gospel and Guidance for us:" or else England will continue to worship new and ever-new forms of Quackhood,—and so, with what resiliences and reboundings matters little, go down to the Father of Quacks! Can I dread such things of England? Wretched, thick-eyed, gross-hearted mortals, why will ye worship lies, and "Stuffed Clothes-suits created by the ninth-parts of men!" It is not your purses that suffer; your farm-rents, your commerces, your mill-revenues, loud as ye lament over these; no, it is not these alone, but a far deeper than these: it is your souls that lie dead, crushed down under despicable Nightmares, Atheisms, Brain-fumes; and are not souls at all, but mere succedanea[31] for *salt* to keep your bodies and their appetites from putrefying! Your cotton-spinning and thrice-miraculous mechanism, what is this too, by itself, but a larger kind of Animalism? Spiders can spin, Beavers can build and show contrivance; the Ant lays-up accumulation of capital, and has, for aught I know, a Bank of Antland. If there is no soul in man higher than all that, did it reach to sailing on the cloud-rack and spinning sea-sand; then I say, man is but an animal, a more cunning kind of brute: he has no soul, but only a succedaneum for salt. Whereupon, seeing himself to be truly of the beasts that perish, he ought to admit it, I think;—and also straightway universally to kill himself; and so, in a manlike manner at least *end*, and wave these brute-worlds *his* dignified farewell!—

(1843)

[28] so-named from a character in Voltaire's *Candide* who was incapable of enjoying himself in spite of his wealth and command of all the arts.

[29] evening entertainments in honor of some celebrity.

[30] actors.

[31] substitute remedies.

Boswell

This portrait is from Carlyle's lengthy review of John Wilson Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. It illustrates the nineteenth-century tendency to use a review as a springboard for an extended essay. It contains early traces of Carlyle's philosophy of hero-worship and reveals his characteristic ethical approach to biography and literary criticism. Carlyle's estimate of Boswell should be compared with Macaulay's (see p. 673).

We next have a word to say of James Boswell.[1] Boswell has already been much commented upon; but rather in the way of censure and vituperation than of true recognition. He was a man that brought himself much before the world; confessed that he eagerly coveted fame, or if that were not possible, notoriety; of which latter as he gained far more than was his due, the public were incited, not only by their natural love of scandal, but by a special ground of envy, to say whatever ill of him could be said. Out of the fifteen millions that then lived, and had bed and board in the British islands, this man has provided us a greater pleasure than any other individual, at whose cost we now enjoy ourselves; perhaps has done us a greater *service* than can be especially attributed to more than two or three yet, ungrateful that we are, no written or spoken eulogy of James Boswell anywhere exists; his recompense in solid pudding (so far as copyright went) was not excessive; and as for the empty praise, it has altogether been denied him. Men are unwiser than children; they do not know the hand that feeds them.

Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye; visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities, again, belonged not to the time he lived in; were far from common then; indeed, in such a degree, were almost unexampled; not recognizable therefore by every one; nay, apt even (so strange had they grown) to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to and had sprung out of. That he was a wine-bibber and gross liver; gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler; had much of the sycophant, alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced too with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb; that he gloried much when the tailor, by a court-suit, had made a new man of him; that he appeared at the Shakespeare Jubilee with a ribbon, imprinted "Corsica Boswell,"[2] round his hat; and in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without doing and saying more than one pretentious ineptitude: all this unhappily is evident as the sun at noon. The very look of Boswell seems to have signified so much. In that cocked nose, cocked partly in triumph over his weaker fellow-creatures, partly to snuff up the smell of coming pleasure, and scent it from afar; in those bag-cheeks, hanging like half-filled wine-skins, still able to contain more; in that coarsely protruded shelf-mouth, that fat dew-lapped chin: in all this, who sees not sensuality, pretension, boisterous imbecility enough; much that could not have been ornamental in the temper of a great man's overfed great man (what the Scotch name *flunky*), though it had been more natural there? The under part of Boswell's face is of a low, almost brutish character.

Unfortunately, on the other hand, what great and genuine good lay in him was nowise so self-evident. That Boswell was a hunter after spiritual notabilities, that he loved such, and longed, and even crept and crawled to be near them; that he first (in old Touchwood Auchinleck's[3] phraseology) "took on with Paoli";[4] and then being off with "the Corsican landlouper,"[5] took on with a schoolmaster,[6] "ane that keeped a schule, and ca'd it an academy;" that he did all this, and could not help doing it, we account a very singular merit. The man, once for all, had an "open sense," an open loving heart, which so few have: where excellence existed, he was compelled to acknowledge it; was drawn towards it, and (let the old sulphur-brand of a laird say what he liked) *could not but* walk with it—if not as superior, if not as equal, then

[1] See I, p. 927.

[2] Boswell had taken part in a campaign with Paoli in Corsica.

[3] Boswell's father, Alexander Boswell, Laird of Auchinleck.

[4] Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807), a Corsican patriot and friend of Boswell's.

[5] adventurer.

[6] Johnson, who had once taught school.

as inferior and lackey, better so than not at all. If we reflect now that this love of excellence had not only such as evil *nature* to triumph over; but also what an *education* and social position withstood it and weighed it down, its innate strength, victorious over all these things, may astonish us. Consider what an inward impulse there must have been, how many mountains of impediment hurled aside, before the Scottish laird could, as humble servant, embrace the knees (the bosom was not permitted him) of the English dominie! Your Scottish laird, says an English naturalist of these days, may be defined as the hungriest and vainest of all bipeds yet known. Boswell too was a Tory;[7] of quite peculiarly feudal, genealogical, pragmatical temper; had been nurtured in an atmosphere of heraldry, at the feet of a very Gamaliel[8] in that kind; within bare walls, adorned only with pedigrees, amid serving-men in threadbare livery; all things teaching him, from birth upwards, that a laird was a laird. Perhaps there was a special vanity in his very blood: old Auchinleck had, if not the gay, tail-spreading, peacock vanity of his son, no little of the slow stalking, contentious, hissing vanity of the gander; a still more fatal species. Scottish advocates will tell you how the ancient man, having chanced to be the first sheriff appointed (after the abolition of "hereditary jurisdiction") by royal authority, was wont, in dull-snuffling pompous tone, to preface many a deliverance from the bench with these words: "I, the first king's sheriff in Scotland."

And now behold the worthy Bozzy, so prepossessed and held back by nature and by art, fly nevertheless like iron to its magnet with what enclosures and encumbrances you please—with wood, with rubbish, with brass: it matters not, the two feel each other, they struggle restlessly towards each other, they *will* be together. The iron may be a Scottish squirelet, full of gulosity[9] and "gigmanity;"[10] the magnet an English plebeian, and moving rag-and-dust mountain, coarse, proud, irascible, imperious: nevertheless, behold how they embrace, and inseparably cleave to one another! It is one of the strangest phenomena of the past century, that at a time when the old reverent feeling of discipleship (such as brought men from far countries with rich gifts, and prostrate soul, to the feet of the prophets) had passed utterly away from men's practical experience, and was no longer surmised to exist (as it does), perennial, indestructible, in man's inmost heart—James Boswell should have been the individual, of all others, predestined to recall it, in such singular guise, to the wondering and, for a long while, laughing and unrecognizing world. It has been commonly said, "The man's vulgar vanity was all that attached him to Johnson; he delighted to be seen near him, to be thought connected with him." Now let it be at once granted that no consideration springing out of vulgar vanity could well be absent from the mind of James Boswell, in this his intercourse with Johnson, or in any considerable transaction of his life. At the same time, ask yourself: Whether such vanity, and nothing else, actuated him therein; whether this was the true essence and moving principle of the phenomenon, or not rather its outward vesture, and the accidental environment (and defacement) in which it came to light? The man was, by nature and habit, vain; a sycophant-coxcomb, be it granted: but had there been nothing more than vanity in him, was Samuel Johnson the man of men to whom he must attach himself? At the date when Johnson was a poor rusty-coated "scholar," dwelling in Temple-lane, and indeed throughout their whole intercourse afterwards, were there not chancellors and prime ministers enough; graceful gentlemen, the glass of fashion; honor-giving noblemen; dinner-giving rich men; renowned fire-eaters, swordsmen, gownsmen, quacks and realities of all hues—any one of whom bulked much larger in the world's eye than Johnson ever did? To any one of whom, by half that submissiveness and assiduity, our Bozzy might have recommended himself; and sat there, the envy of surrounding lickspittles; pocketing now solid emolument, swallowing now well cooked viands and wines of rich red vintage; in each case, also, shone-on by some glittering reflex of renown or notoriety, so as to be the observed of innumerable observers. To no one of whom, however, though otherwise a most diligent solicitor and purveyor, did he so attach himself: such vulgar courtierships were his paid drudgery, or leisure amusement; the worship of Johnson was his grand, ideal, voluntary business. Does not the frothy-hearted, yet enthusiastic man, doffing his advocate's wig, regularly take post, and hurry up to London, for the sake of his sage chiefly; as to a feast of tabernacles,

[7] the ultra-conservative political party.
[8] a famous Jewish teacher under whom St. Paul studied
[9] gluttony.
[10] narrow-minded respectability, made up of the word *gig*, a carriage, and *man*, referring to those people who measure respectability by their being able to keep a carriage.

the Sabbath of his whole year? The plate-licker and wine-bibber dives into Bolt Court, to sip muddy coffee with a cynical old man and a sour-tempered blind old woman[11] (feeling the cups, whether they are full, with her finger); and patiently endures contradictions without end; too happy so he may be but allowed to listen and live. Nay, it does not appear that vulgar vanity could ever have been much flattered by Boswell's relation to Johnson. Mr. Croker[12] says, Johnson was, to the last, little regarded by the great world; from which, for a vulgar vanity, all honor, as from its fountain, descends. Bozzy, even among Johnson's friends and special admirers, seems rather to have been laughed at than envied: his officious, whisking, consequential ways, the daily reproofs and rebuffs he underwent, could gain from the world no golden but only leaden opinions. His devout discipleship seemed nothing more than a mean spanielship, in the general eye. His mighty "constellation," or sun, round whom he, as satellite, observantly gyrated, was, for the mass of men, but a huge ill-snuffed tallow-light, and he a weak night-moth, circling foolishly, dangerously about it, not knowing what he wanted. If he enjoyed Highland dinners and toasts, as henchmen to a new sort of chieftain, Henry Erskine[13] could hand him a shilling "for the sight of his bear." Doubtless the man was laughed at, and often heard himself laughed at for his Johnsonism. To be envied is the grand and sole aim of vulgar vanity; to be filled with good things is that of sensuality: for Johnson perhaps no man living *envied* poor Bozzy; and of good things (except himself paid for them) there was no vestige in that acquaintanceship. Had nothing other or better than vanity and sensuality been there, Johnson and Boswell had never come together, or had soon and finally separated again.

In fact, the so copious terrestrial dross that welters chaotically, as the outer sphere of this man's character, does but render for us more remarkable, more touching, the celestial spark of goodness, of light, and reverence for wisdom which dwelt in the interior, and could struggle through such encumbrances, and in some degree illuminate and beautify them. There is much lying yet undeveloped in the love of Boswell for Johnson. A cheering proof, in a time which else utterly wanted and still wants such, that living wisdom is quite *infinitely* precious to man, is the symbol of the god-like to him, which even weak eyes may discern; that loyalty, discipleship, all that was ever meant by *hero-worship*, lives perennially in the human bosom, and waits, even in these dead days, only for occasions to unfold it, and inspire all men with it, and make again the world alive! James Boswell we can regard as a practical witness, or real *martyr*, to this high everlasting truth. A wonderful martyr, if you will; and in a time which made such martyrdom doubly wonderful: yet the time and its martyr perhaps suited each other. For a decrepit, death-sick era, when Cant had first decisively opened her poison-breathing lips to proclaim that God-worship and Mammon-worship were one and the same, that life was a *lie*, and the earth Beelzebub's, which the *Supreme Quack* should inherit, and so all things were fallen into the yellow leaf, and fast hastening to noisome corruption: for such an era, perhaps no better prophet than a parti-colored zany[14] prophet, concealing, from himself and others, his prophetic significance in such unexpected vestures, was deserved, or would have been in place. A precious medicine lay hidden in floods of coarsest, most composite treacle; the world swallowed the treacle, for it suited the world's palate; and now, after half a century, may the medicine also begin to show itself! James Boswell belonged, in his corruptible part, to the lowest classes of mankind; a foolish, inflated creature, swimming in an element of self-conceit: but in his corruptible there dwelt an incorruptible, all the more impressive and indubitable for the strange lodging it had taken.

Consider, too, with what force, diligence, and vivacity he has rendered back all this which, in Johnson's neighborhood, his "open sense" had so eagerly and freely taken in. That loose-flowing, careless-looking work of his is as a picture by one of nature's own artists; the best possible remembrance of a reality; like the very image thereof in a clear mirror. Which indeed it was: let but the mirror be *clear*, this is the great point; the picture must and will be genuine. How the babbling Bozzy, inspired only by love, and the recognition which love can lend, epitomizes nightly the words of wisdom, the deeds and aspects of wisdom, and so, by little and little, unconsciously works together for us a whole *Johnsoniad*[15] a more free, perfect,

[11] See I, pp. 911, 938

[12] the editor of Boswell's *Johnson*, 1831, which Carlyle is reviewing; for Macaulay's review of the same work, see p. 673

[13] a Scottish aristocrat who was presented to Johnson by Boswell in 1773.

[14] a jester who mimicked professional jesters.

[15] an epic about Johnson; cf. *Iliad*.

sunlit and spirit-speaking likeness than for many centuries had been drawn by man of man! Scarcely since the days of Homer has the feat been equalled; indeed, in many senses, this also is a kind of heroic poem. The fit "Odyssey" of our unheroic age was to be written, not sung; of a thinker, not of a fighter; and (for want of a Homer) by the first open soul that might offer—looked such even through the organs of a Boswell. We do the man's intellectual endowment great wrong, if we measure it by its mere logical outcome; though, here too, there is not wanting a light ingenuity, a figurativeness and fanciful sport, with glimpses of insight far deeper than the common. But Boswell's grand intellectual talent was, as such ever is, an *unconscious* one, of far higher reach, and significance than logic; and showed itself in the whole, not in parts. Here again we have that old saying verified, "The heart sees further than the head."

Thus does poor Bozzy stand out to us an ill-assorted, glaring mixture of the highest and the lowest. What, indeed, is man's life generally but a kind of beast godhood; the god in us triumphing in us more and more over the beast; striving more and more to subdue it under his feet? Did not the ancients, in their wise, perenially-significant way, figure nature itself, in their sacred ALL, or PAN, as a portentous commingling of these two discords; as musical, humane, oracular in its upper part, yet ending below in the cloven hairy feet of a goat? The union of melodious, celestial free-will and reason with foul irrationality and lust; in which, nevertheless, dwelt a mysterious unspeakable fear and half mad *panic* awe; as for mortals there well might! And is not man a microcosm, or epitomized mirror of that same universe; or rather, is not that universe even himself, the reflex of his own fearful and wonderful being, "the waste fantasy of his own dream?" No wonder that man, that each man, and James Boswell like the others, should resemble it! The peculiarity in his case was the unusual defect of amalgamation and subordination: the highest lay side by side with the lowest; not morally combined with it and spiritually transfiguring it, but tumbling in half-mechanical juxtaposition with it, and from time to time, as the mad alternation chanced, irradiating it, or eclipsed by it.

The world, as we said, has been but unjust to him; discerning only the outer terrestrial and often sordid mass; without eye, as it generally is, for his inner divine secret; and thus figuring him nowise as a god Pan, but simply of the bestial species, like the cattle on a thousand hills. Nay, sometimes a strange enough hypothesis has been stated of him; as if it were in virtue even of these same bad qualities that he did his good work; as if it were the very fact of his being among the worst men in this world that had enabled him to write one of the best books therein! Falser hypothesis, we may venture to say, never rose in human soul. *Bad* is by its nature negative, and can do *nothing*; whatsoever enables us to do anything is by its very nature *good*. Alas, that there should be teachers in Israel, or even learners, to whom this world-ancient fact is still problematical, or even deniable! Boswell wrote a good book because he had a heart and an eye to discern wisdom, and an utterance to render it forth; because of his free insight, his lively talent—above all, of his love and open-mindedness. His sneaking sycophancies, his greediness and forwardness, whatever was bestial and earthy in him, are so many blemishes in his book, which still disturb us in its clearness; wholly hindrances, not helps. Towards Johnson, however, his feeling was not sycophancy, which is the lowest, but reverence, which is the highest of human feelings. None but a *reverent* man (which so unspeakably few are) could have found his way from Boswell's environment to Johnson's: if such worship for real God-made superiors, showed itself also as worship for apparent tailor-made superiors, even as hollow interested mouth-worship for such—the case, in this composite human nature of ours, was not miraculous, the more was the pity! But for ourselves, let every one of us cling to this last article of faith, and know it as the beginning of all knowledge worthy the name: That neither James Boswell's good book, nor any other good thing, in any time or in any place, was, is, or can be performed by any man in virtue of his *badness*, but always and solely in spite thereof.

(1832)

Thomas Babington Macaulay

(1800-1859)

Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire, on October 25, 1800. His father, Zachary Macaulay, was a prominent philanthropist especially interested in the abolition of the slave trade. The atmosphere of Macaulay's boyhood was pietistic to the extreme. By the age of four Thomas was already manifesting a precocity almost unbelievable. Throughout his life he was to have such a power of voluminous reading and ready comprehension that his fund of information was the marvel of his contemporaries.

In 1826, after a distinguished career at Trinity College, Cambridge, Macaulay was admitted to the bar. But his time was mostly spent in the gallery of the House of Commons, where he learned valuable lessons in English politics. He was also beginning his serious career as a writer. The *Edinburgh Review* published, in August 1825, his essay on Milton (see p. 675), which immediately established the literary reputation he was ever afterward to enjoy.

Though Macaulay was later apologetic about this essay, it formed a milestone in the history of English prose. The brilliant antitheses and the finely wrought periods were reminiscent of the best writers of the previous century; but he added to these his own characteristics, the absolute clarity of each paragraph with its definitely stated topic sentence and logical development. Even today students learn to write paragraphs on the model of Macaulay. The best of them, of course, soon depart from the strict confines of their model, but, if they have pondered their lesson well, they have learned from him the virtues of careful planning of each paragraph and have become aware of a multitude of devices by which a thought may be developed effectively.

In the essay on Milton Macaulay was already showing his interest in politics. With him, history was always to be written from a partisan point of view. Although he labored diligently on sources, there was never any doubt in his mind that in all the crises of English history the Whig party or its predecessors had upheld the cause of righteousness. Thus he takes the occasion of his treatment of Milton to draw the contrast between the Puritan and the Cavalier. After almost two centuries of misunderstanding and misrepresentation, the essential patriotism and the genuine qualities of Milton and his party received adequate appreciation.

By the time he was thirty, Macaulay had already established himself in the best London society because of his brilliant conversational abilities. In spite of the financial failure of his father at an inopportune moment for Macaulay's ambitions, he was admitted, in 1830, to the House of Commons. For a man of Macaulay's talents the time of his entry was most fortunate. In the long series of debates on the Reform Bill he made a number of speeches which caused him to be regarded as a leader in English politics. Until 1847 he was prominent either in Parliament or in colonial government. Among other services which he performed was the formation of the Penal Code for

India. During the 1840's he held several cabinet positions. In the election of 1847 he lost his seat in Parliament and, except for a temporary return, retired to private life where he could carry out the plan for his great history.

By the spring of 1843 Macaulay had written thirty-six critical essays, and these he published in three volumes. The essays were on all kinds of subjects, some literary, some historical, some political. The tendencies of these essays have already been indicated in the remarks about his study of Milton. The stylistic effects were, if anything, exaggerated as time went on. But the public had acquired a taste for his tricks of style, and he secured a large and popular following. The antitheses which he had taught them to expect they now demanded, and Macaulay supplied them even when his subject did not always justify his action. What he has done to James Boswell (see p. 673) with his sharp contrast between Boswell the man and Boswell the author will be seen by comparing Carlyle's much more accurate and penetrating study of the same subject (see p. 667).

In 1842 Macaulay published his only attempt at poetry, his famous *Lays of Ancient Rome*. This group of poems, recounting in facile verse dramatic episodes from the early history of Rome, was very popular in his day and many of the poems, such as *Horatius*, have been learned by generations of schoolboys. But Macaulay had no real gifts as a poet and wisely refrained from further effort.

Most of the energies of his last years were given to the composition of his *History of England*. He planned to write the history of his country "from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living." In preparation for this task he spent years in the examination of records and the reading of Parliamentary reports, diaries, and letters. He traveled to remote places to check his information and to acquaint himself with topography. As a result, he reconstructed in his own mind the life of the seventeenth century as no man of his generation had done.

In many ways the most interesting part of this history is in the introductory chapters, in which he sketches briefly yet vividly the stirring history of the two generations preceding the accession of James and in which he pictures with great detail everyday life in the England of 1685. Macaulay had set out to make history not only accurate but also as interesting as a novel. That he achieved his goal is seen by its remarkable popular success. The check for twenty thousand pounds which he received stood for a long time as a record in the rewards of authorship. The first two volumes of the *History* appeared in 1849, the third and fourth in 1855, and the fifth two years after his death. Macaulay was never able to carry the work beyond the death of William the Third. Thus the main treatment actually covers but seventeen years, and not the century and more which the author had proposed to treat. A later generation has tended to discount as too superficial his abilities as a literary critic and as a poet, and it sees his politics as too blindly partisan to show real independence of thought. His most lasting fame will doubtless be based on his *History*.

Macaulay was one of the most successful and respected men of his day. During most of his life he moved easily in the best society, gracing with his witty conversation the tables of its leaders. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage with the title Baron Macaulay of Rothley. In his last years he found increasing pleasure in the family of his sister Hannah, the wife of Sir Charles Trevelyan. A nephew, George Trevelyan, who thus came to know him in the intimacy of the home, was later to commemorate him in one of the masterpieces of English biography (1876).

Boswell

This selection is from Macaulay's review of John Wilson Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. It should be compared with Carlyle's portrait of Boswell on page 667.

The "Life of Johnson" is assuredly a great, a very great work. Homer is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has no second. He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere.

We are not sure that there is in the whole history of the human intellect so strange a phenomenon as this book. Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography. Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was, if we are to give any credit to his own account or to the united testimony of all who knew him, a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. Johnson described him as a fellow who had missed his only chance of immortality by not having been alive when the "Dunciad" was written. Beauclerk[1] used his name as a proverbial expression for a bore. He was the laughing-stock of the whole of that brilliant society which has owed to him the greater part of its fame. He was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon. He was always earning some ridiculous nickname, and then "binding it as a crown unto him," not merely in metaphor, but literally. He exhibited himself, at the Shakespeare Jubilee, to all the crowd which filled Stratford-on-Avon, with a placard round his hat bearing the inscription of Corsica Boswell.[2] In his Tour, he proclaimed to all the world that at Edinburgh he was known by the appellation of Paoli Boswell. Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a talebearer, and eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London, so curious to know everybody that was talked about, that, Tory and High Churchman as he was, he manœuvered, we have been told, for an introduction to Tom Paine;[3] so vain of the most childish distinctions, that when he had been to Court, he drove to the office where his book was printing without changing his clothes, and summoned all the printer's devils to admire his new ruffles and sword; such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be. Everything which another man would have hidden, everything the publication of which would have made another man hang himself, was matter of gay and clamorous exultation to his weak and diseased mind. What silly things he said, what bitter retorts he provoked, how at one place he was troubled with evil presentiments which came to nothing, how at another place, on waking from a drunken doze, he read the prayer-book and took a hair of the dog that had bitten him, how he went to see men hanged and came away maudlin, how he added five hundred pounds to the fortune of one of his babies because she was not scared at Johnson's ugly face, how he was frightened out of his wits at sea, and how the sailors quieted him as they would have quieted a child, how tipsy he was at Lady Cork's one evening and how much his merriment annoyed the ladies, how impertinent he was to the Duchess of Argyle and with what stately contempt she put down his impertinence, how Colonel Macleod sneered to his face at his impudent obtrusiveness, how his father, and the very wife of his bosom laughed and fretted at his fooleries—all these things he proclaimed to all the world, as if they had been subjects for pride and ostentatious rejoicing. All caprices of his temper, all the illusions of his vanity, all his hypochondriac whimsies, all his castles in the air, he displayed with a cool self-complacency, a perfect unconsciousness that he was making a fool of himself, to which it is impossible to find a parallel in the whole history of mankind. He had used many people ill; but assuredly he has used nobody so ill as himself.

That such a man should have written one of the best books in the world is strange enough. But this is not all. Many persons who have conducted themselves foolishly in active life, and whose conversation has indicated no superior powers of mind, have left us valuable works. Goldsmith was very justly described by one of his contemporaries as an inspired idiot,[4] and by another[5] as a being

[1] Topham Beauclerk, who frequently appears in company with Johnson.

[2] Boswell had been in Corsica, where he visited General Paoli, the Corsican patriot; see I, pp. 927-28.

[3] author of *The Rights of Man*; see p. 94.

[4] a remark by Horace Walpole.

[5] David Garrick, the actor.

"Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll."

La Fontaine[6] was in society a mere simpleton. His blunders would not come in amiss among the stories of Hierocles.[7] But these men attained literary eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it by reason of his weaknesses. If he had not been a great fool, he would never have been a great writer. Without all the qualities which made him the jest and the torment of those among whom he lived, without the officiousness, the inquisitiveness, the effrontery, the toad-eating, the insensibility to all reproof, he never could have produced so excellent a book. He was a slave proud of his servitude, a Paul Pry,[8] convinced that his own curiosity and garrulity were virtues, an unsafe companion who never scrupled to repay the most liberal hospitality by the basest violation of confidence, a man without delicacy, without shame, without sense enough to know when he was hurting the feelings of others or when he was exposing himself to derision; and because he was all this, he has, in an important department of literature, immeasurably surpassed such writers as Tacitus,[9] Clarendon,[10] Alfieri,[11] and his own idol Johnson.

Of the talents which ordinarily raise men to eminence as writers, Boswell had absolutely none. There is not in all his books a single remark of his own on literature, politics, religion, or society, which is not either commonplace or absurd. His dissertations on hereditary gentility, on the slave-trade, and on the entailing of landed estates, may serve as examples. To say that these passages are sophistical would be to pay them an extravagant compliment. They have no pretense to argument, or even to meaning. He has reported innumerable observations made by himself in the course of conversation. Of those observations we do not remember one which is above the intellectual capacity of a boy of fifteen. He has printed many of his own letters, and in these letters he is always ranting or twaddling. Logic, eloquence, wit, taste, all those things which are generally considered as making a book valuable were utterly wanting to him. He had, indeed, a quick observation and a retentive memory. These qualities, if he had been a man of sense and virtue would scarcely of themselves have sufficed to make him conspicuous; but because he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb, they have made him immortal.

Those parts of his book which, considered abstractedly, are most utterly worthless, are delightful when we read them as illustrations of the character of the writer. Bad in themselves, they are good dramatically, like the nonsense of Justice Shallow, the clipped English of Dr. Caius, or the misplaced consonants of Fluellen.[12] Of all confessors, Boswell is the most candid. Other men who have pretended to lay open their own hearts, Rousseau,[13] for example, and Lord Byron,[14] have evidently written with a constant view to effect, and are to be then most distrusted when they seem to be most sincere. There is scarcely any man who would not rather accuse himself of great crimes and of dark and tempestuous passions than proclaim all his little vanities and wild fancies. It would be easier to find a person who would avow actions like those of Cæsar Borgia[15] or Danton,[16] than one who would publish a day-dream like those of Alnaschar[17] and Malvolio.[18] Those weaknesses which most men keep covered up in the most secret places of the mind, not to be disclosed to the eye of friendship or of love, were precisely the weaknesses which Boswell paraded before all the world. He was perfectly frank, because the weakness of his understanding and the tumult of his spirits prevented him from knowing when he made himself ridiculous. His book resembles nothing so much as the conversation of the inmates of the Palace of Truth.

His fame is great; and it will, we have no doubt, be lasting; but it is fame of a peculiar kind, and indeed marvellously resembles infamy. We remember no other case in which the world has made so great a distinction between a book and its author. The case of Boswell is an exception, we think the only exception, to this rule. His work is universally allowed to be interesting, instructive, eminently

[6] Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695), French author, famous for his fables.

[7] an ancient collection of jests and anecdotes.

[8] an inquisitive character in a contemporary play of that name.

[9] Roman historian of the first century A D

[10] Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1608-1674), historian of the English Civil Wars.

[11] Vittiorio Alfieri (1749-1803), Italian autobiographer.

[12] All of these characters are from Shakespeare's plays.

[13] See p. 1136.

[14] See p. 218.

[15] an Italian cardinal and warrior' (1478-1507) noted for his cruelty and corruption.

[16] Georges Jacques Danton (1759-1794), celebrated French revolutionist.

[17] a character in the *Arabian Nights* proverbial as a dreamer.

[18] the foolish steward in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.*

original; yet it has brought him nothing but contempt. All the world reads it; yet we do not remember ever to have read or ever to have heard any expression of respect and admiration for the man to whom we owe so much instruction and amusement. While edition after edition of his book was coming forth, his son, as Mr. Croker[19] tells us, was ashamed of it, and hated to hear it mentioned. This feeling was natural and reasonable. Sir Alexander saw that, in proportion to the celebrity of the work, was the degradation of the author. The very editors of this unfortunate gentleman's books have forgotten their allegiance, and like those Puritan casuists who took arms by the authority of the king against his person, have attacked the writer while doing homage to his writings. Mr. Croker, for example, has published two thousand five hundred notes on the life of Johnson, and yet scarcely ever mentions the biographer whose performance he has taken such pains to illustrate without some expression of contempt.

An ill-natured man Boswell certainly was not; yet the malignity of the most malignant satirist could scarcely cut deeper than his thoughtless loquacity. Having himself no sensibility to derision and contempt, he took it for granted that all others were equally callous. He was not ashamed to exhibit to the whole world as a common spy, a common tattler, a humble companion without the excuse of poverty, and to tell a hundred stories of his own pertness and folly, and of the insults which his pertness and folly brought upon him. It was natural that he should show little discretion in cases in which the feelings or the honor of others might be concerned. No man, surely, ever published such stories respecting persons whom he professed to love and revere. He would infallibly have made his hero as contemptible as he has made himself, had not his hero really possessed some moral and intellectual qualities of a very high order. The best proof that Johnson was really an extraordinary man is that his character, instead of being degraded, has, on the whole, been decidedly raised by a work in which all his vices and weaknesses are exposed more unsparingly than they ever were exposed by Churchill or by Kenrick.[20]

Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fulness of his fame and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Everything about him, his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish sauce and veal pie with plums, his inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge and the negro Frank, all are as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood. (1831)

From *Milton*

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned, according as the resistance of the people to Charles I[1] shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage-ground, but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority that we are not unwilling to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm that every reason which can be urged in favor of the Revolution of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favor of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a Papist; we say in name and pro-

[19] the editor of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, whose edition Macaulay is reviewing

[1] The king of England, 1625-49.

[20] contemporaries of Dr. Johnson, who wrote attacks upon him

fession, because both Charles himself and his creature Laud,[2] while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices—a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant, but we say that his Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent they pass by what is essential and take only what is accidental; they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be anything unsound, these flesh flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype, that their

> "Labor must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil."

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights—liberty, security, toleration—all go for nothing with them. One sect[3] there was which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire[4] there was so unhappily circumstanced that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them, not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America: they stand forth zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right, which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William[5] is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury[6] are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era! The very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory.[7] They may truly boast that they look not at men, but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it; the arbitrary Charles or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic or Frederick the Protestant.[8] On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James II was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant revolution.

But this certainly was not the case, nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's *Abridgment* believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily, not to Popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic, but they excluded Catholics from the Crown because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this: "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688 must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this: Had Charles I broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations

[2] William Laud (1573-1645), Archbishop of Canterbury.
[3] Roman Catholics
[4] Ireland.
[5] William III.
[6] John Somers (1652-1716) and Charles Talbot, Earl and Duke of Shrewsbury (1660-1718). They assisted William III.
[7] of James II.
[8] Ferdinand V of Castile (1452-1516); Frederick the Great of Germany (1712-86).

brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the king himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament[9] had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion mention one act of James II to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of Parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of Parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate. The right of petition was grossly violated. Arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the Parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship money had been given up, the Star Chamber had been abolished, provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of Parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He, too, had offered to call a free Parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had, no doubt, passed salutary laws; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives, but where was the security that he would not resume them? The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind; a man who made and broke promises with equal facility; a man whose honor had been a hundred times pawned and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right.[10] The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent; the subsidies are voted; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim—by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase—infringed by the perfidious king who had recognized them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another Parliament. Another chance was given to our fathers; were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut*?[11] Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James II no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more

[9] The Long Parliament lasted from 1640 to 1660.

[10] An act of Parliament passed in 1628 in order to restrain the prerogatives of the king.

[11] The king wills it

sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath, and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates,[12] and the defense is that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, "a good man, but a bad king." We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors.[13] This point Hume[14] has labored, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them, but those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford.[15] They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers reveling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy men[16] shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag—all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the Civil War. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the

[12] Laud.

[13] the monarchs of England from 1485 to 1603.

[14] David Hume (1711-1776), Scottish philosopher and historian.

[15] Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford (1593-1641), one of the counselors of Charles I, was executed in 1641.

[16] a religious sect which expected that the kingdom of Christ was about to be established on earth.

outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people, and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our Civil War. The heads of the Church and State reaped only that which they had sown. The government had prohibited free discussion; it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres.[17] It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion, and, after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, skepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance, and then ask in scorn where the promised splendor and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto[18] tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her; accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces, and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to hear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down, as a self-evident proposition that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of public liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favorite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the king. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many

[17] a town in Spain from which sherry wine gets its name.
[18] See I, p. 1073.

eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputation which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides.[19] We have, throughout, abstained from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter? The king can do no wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister, only, ought to be responsible for the acts of the sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffreys[20] and retain James? The person of a king is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To discharge cannon against an army in which a king is known to be posted is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters. When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the 5th of November, thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our king and governor, can, on the 30th of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as "a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy"; but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage; his heir, to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father; they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the Regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred, and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion, but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If anything more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius[21] would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the *"Æneæ magni dextra,"*[22] gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject, on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell—his conduct during the administration of the Protector.[23] That an enthusiastic votary of

[19] those judges who condemned King Charles I to death.

[20] George Jeffreys (1648-1689), a notoriously cruel judge.

[21] Claudius Salmasius (1588-1653), a French classical scholar who wrote a book defending the absolutism of Charles I.

[22] The right hand of the great Æneas.

[23] Oliver Cromwell, who was made Lord Protector of England.

liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But, even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon.[24] For himself he demanded, indeed, the first place in the Commonwealth, but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a voice on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandizing himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his Parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then it must be acknowledged he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the Protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honor been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government and the Humble Petition and Advice,[25] were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second Protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the Parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love; of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices; the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds; the golden age of the coward,

[24] Edward Hyde (1608-1674), author of the *History of the Rebellion*.

[25] The former was the deed by which Parliament gave powers to Cromwell in 1653; the latter replaced this in 1657.

the bigot, and the slave. The king cringed to his rival[26] that he might trample on his people; sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed with complacent infamy her degrading insults and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots and the jests of buffoons regulated the policy of the State. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha[27] of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch;[28] and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race, accursed of God and man, was a second time driven forth to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a byword and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And for that purpose it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of campfollowers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose; who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spat in his face in 1649; who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn; who dined on calves' heads or on broiled rumps,[29] and cut down oak branches[30] or stuck them up, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learned. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

> *"Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio*
> *Che mortali perigli in se contiene:*
> *Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,*
> *Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene."*[31]

Those who roused the people to resistance; who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years; who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen; who trampled down king, church, and aristocracy; who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth,—were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents

[26] Louis XIV of France.

[27] a double curse.

[28] See I, pp. 626 ff.

[29] "Calves Head" was a club which dined on January 30 to celebrate the execution of Charles I; "rump" has reference to the Rump Parliament of 1648.

[30] Charles hid in an oak tree after his escape from the battle of Worcester.

[31] This is the fount of laughter, and this is the stream that contains within itself deadly perils; it behooves us here to hold our desire in check and to be very careful. —Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*.

mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles I, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles II was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play,[32] turn from the specious caskets which contain only the death's-head and the fool's-head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging in general terms an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know Him, to serve Him, to enjoy Him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with Him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but His favor; and, confident of that favor, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems, crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged, on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed His will by the pen of the Evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men: the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker, but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane,[33] he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood,[34] he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid His face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and

[32] Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*.

[33] Sir Henry Vane (1612-1662), leader of the extreme Puritans.

[34] Charles Fleetwood (d. 1692), son-in-law of Cromwell

their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had cleared their mind from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus[35] with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain; not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach; and we know that, in spite of their hatred of Popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system—intolerance and extravagant austerity; that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstans,[36] and their De Montforts,[37] their Dominics[38] and their Escobars.[39] Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathen, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios[40] with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshipers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines[41] of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candor. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse boys, gamblers, and bravoes, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favorable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the king was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ—with the mutes who throng their ante-chambers, and the Janissaries[42] who mount guard at their gates. Our Royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction, dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valor, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honor, the prejudices of childhood and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and, like the Red Cross Knight,[43] they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth, they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries those

[35] See Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, V, 1

[36] St. Dunstan (924-988), Archbishop of Canterbury.

[37] Simon de Montfort (1150-1218) carried on a cruel crusade against the Albigenses.

[38] St. Dominic (1170-1221), founder of the Dominican friars.

[39] Antonio Escobar y Mendoza (1589-1669), Spanish Jesuit.

[40] For his indifference in the conflict between Paul and the Jews, see *Acts*, 18:12-17.

[41] the followers of Jean Pierre Brissot.

[42] the Turkish standing army and bodyguard of the sultan.

[43] See Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, book I

qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues—courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle[44] and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye."[45]

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest skeptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolized by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honor and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as harmonize best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master and not the slave. Like the hero[46] of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listed to the song of the Sirens, yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe, but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendor, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the "Penseroso,"[47] which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents, but his hand is firm. He does naught in hate, but all in honor. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendor still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a foresworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for the species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against ship money and the Star Chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press[48] and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the king and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem,[49] who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

[44] a secret religious meeting in defiance of the laws of the Established Church.

[45] See Milton's sonnet, I, p. 604.

[46] Odysseus.

[47] See I, p. 606.

[48] See *Areopagitica*, I, p. 637

[49] *Comus.*

"Oh, ye mistook, ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast; without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed, and motionless."

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle, but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system,[50] in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded—the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But, when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapors, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide.[51] He attacked the prevailing systems of education.[52] His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility:

"Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cætera, vincit Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi." [53]

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should in our time be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyze the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the *Areopagitica* and the nervous rhetoric of the *Iconoclast*, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the treatise *Of Reformation* and the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging;

[50] in *Areopagitica*.

[51] in the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643); and *Eikonoklastes* (1649).

[52] in *Of Education* (1644).

[53] I contend against opposition; nor does that force which conquers all things else conquer me, and I ride on in a contrary way to the rapid heavens.—Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, II, 72, 73.

that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction. We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word; the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it; the earnestness with which we should endeavor to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues; the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Ellwood,[54] the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize, and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr[55] of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he labored for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

(1825)

John Henry Newman

(1801-1890)

In all the currents and cross-currents of English religious life in the nineteenth century no figure is so outstanding as that of the Oxford preacher whose progress from evangelicalism, through various intermediate stages, to the cardinalate of the Roman Catholic Church engaged the attention of his whole generation. John Henry Newman was born in London on February 21, 1801, the son of a banker. As a boy he was quiet, imaginative, and devoted to reading. His religious experiences began in 1816, when he was "converted" to a strong faith in the existence of God. But the strict Calvinism of the group which he had joined could have brought little satisfaction to the sweet-tempered youth; it is indeed interesting to remark that at this time Newman accepted the anti-Papist dicta of his friends. In the same year he entered Trinity College, Oxford. Because of the failure of his father's bank, he was compelled to live on the meager scholarships he won. After an unsuccessful move

[54] Thomas Ellwood (1629-1713), who gives an account of Milton in his *Autobiography*.
[55] in Massinger's play of that name.

toward a legal career, he decided upon taking holy orders. In 1822 he was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

He now came under the influence of the liberal Whately, read Butler's *Analogy*, and developed a preference for "intellectual excellence to moral." Undergoing a constant self-scrutiny, in which he lost his evangelical convictions, he accepted the curacy of St. Clements, Oxford (1824), and thus began his clerical life. During the next few years he occupied various positions in the university town until, in 1831-32, he became Preacher before the University. All this while he had been developing a greater antipathy toward the rationalistic and "liberal" tendencies in the Anglican Church.

With his friend, Hurrell Froude, he took a Mediterranean tour to seek for better physical health and to clarify his ideas. At Rome he was convinced that the religion practiced there was idolatrous. In June 1833, en route home to England, he was becalmed, and wrote *Lead, Kindly Light* (see p. 551). During this year he also composed most of his *Lyra Apostolica*. Back in England, he hailed the sermon preached at Oxford on "National Apostasy" as the inception of a new movement to revive the spirituality and authority of the Church Fathers. Into this "Oxford Movement" Newman threw himself with great zest, and began to issue his pamphlets, *Tracts for the Times*, in which he tried to establish a basis, midway between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, for doctrine and discipline in the Church. The *Tracts* sold with great rapidity, and people flocked to Oxford to hear Newman's Sunday sermons on reason and faith. By 1839 he was at the height of his influence at Oxford, and his followers used to cry: "Credo in Newmannum." The next four years found him shifting his ground very rapidly. His untiring efforts to prove the tenability of the Anglican dogma had brought great doubts to his mind. Numbers of his disciples had already joined the Roman Catholic Church. In 1842 he retired with a few faithful followers to Littlemore, there to lead an almost monastic life. The next year he published an anonymous retraction of all he had said and written against the Roman Catholic Church. On October 9, 1845, he became a Roman Catholic, and the following year was ordained a priest and granted the D.D. degree by the Pope. He joined the order of the Oratorians, and returned to England to settle at the Oratory at Egbaston, near Birmingham, where he remained as head for more than thirty years. He also established the London Oratory.

In 1850 he delivered his brilliant series of sermons on *The Present Position of Catholics in England*. In the fifth of these he accused Dr. Achilli, an ex-friar who was strongly anti-Catholic, of gross immorality. He thus became involved in a libel suit, and after a long trial was fined £100 and ordered to pay £14,000 of costs. These large sums were raised by popular subscription in England and America, and a property was bought for him on the Lickey Hills at Rednal, where today he lies buried. He was now invited to become the rector of the new Catholic University at Dublin (1852). Though he kept this position for only four years, he here delivered some of his most famous lectures—those on *The Idea of a University*.

The most dramatic event in Newman's life was his quarrel with Charles Kingsley. The latter, in a review which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* for January 1864, had said: "Truth for its own sake had never been a virtue with the Roman clergy. Father Newman informs us it need not be, and on the whole ought not to be." Newman exchanged letters with Kingsley, who made a partial half-apology, and then rendered matters worse with a pamphlet, *What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?* This was Newman's great opportunity, and he seized it by writing his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, which first appeared as a series of pamphlets in 1864. It is a magnificent religious autobiography, simple and sincere, which routed his enemies, made manifest his integrity, and restored him to high popular favor.

In 1866 he published his beautiful poem, *The Dream of Gerontius* (see p. 552), "the

happiest effort to represent the unseen world since the time of Dante." In 1870 he reinforced the *Apologia* with his *Grammar of Assent*. By 1878, when he was made Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, he was universally revered and esteemed. The highest honor, except the papacy itself, was accorded him by the church of his adoption when he was made cardinal in 1879 During the last eleven years of his life as church dignitary, he produced practically no literary work. He died on August 11, 1890.

The Oxford Movement had revived the sermon as a literary form, and Newman's efforts did much to give it a new lease on literary life. It must be remembered that he did little writing unconnected with his activities as a religious leader. He brought to his sermons a taste for classical balance and delicate rhythm which make his prose style the most elegant of the nineteenth century. Its gravity, high purpose, and revelation of his own beautifully mild character have won it many admirers.

From *The Idea of a University*

The nine lectures which form the main part of *The Idea of a University* were delivered at Dublin from May 10 to June 7, 1852 They were composed under extremely adverse circumstances. Though Pope Pius IX had sanctioned the formation of a new Catholic university in Ireland, the poverty of the Irish people made it difficult to raise the necessary funds. Moreover, the Irish bishops were by no means agreed that the country needed a Catholic university. Everywhere Newman turned, he encountered indifference, jealousy, and even hostility. Despite these discouragements and the uncomfortable fact that he was the invited head of a university that was still in the realm of the projected, Newman's lectures were a success. A century later, in a world far more confused about the aims of the university, educators are still turning to his clear, far-sighted views on liberal education.

Discourse V
Liberal Knowledge Its Own End

A University may be considered with reference either to its Students or to its Studies; and the principle, that all Knowledge is a whole and the separate Sciences parts of one, which I have hitherto been using in behalf of its studies, is equally important when we direct our attention to its students. Now then I turn to the students, and shall consider the education which, by virtue of this principle, a University will give them; and thus I shall be introduced, Gentlemen, to the second question, which I proposed to discuss, viz., whether and in what sense its teaching, viewed relatively to the taught, carries the attribute of Utility along with it.

1

I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance, each other. This consideration, if well-founded, must be taken into account, not only as regards the attainment of truth, which is their common end, but as regards the influence which they exercise upon those whose education consists in the study of them. I have said already, that to give undue prominence to one is to be unjust to another; to neglect or supersede these is to divert those from their proper object. It is to unsettle the boundary lines between science and science, to disturb their action, to destroy the harmony which binds them together. Such a proceeding will have a corresponding effect when introduced into a place of education. There is no science but tells a different tale, when viewed

as a portion of a whole, from what it is likely to suggest when taken by itself, without the safeguard, as I may call it, of others.

Let me make use of an illustration. In the combination of colors, very different effects are produced by a difference in their selection and juxtaposition; red, green, and white change their shades, according to the contrast to which they are submitted. And, in like manner, the drift and meaning of a branch of knowledge varies with the company in which it is introduced to the student. If his reading is confined simply to one subject, however such division of labor may favor the advancement of a particular pursuit, a point into which I do not here enter, certainly it has a tendency to contract his mind. If it is incorporated with others, it depends on those others as to the kind of influence which it exerts upon him. Thus the Classics, which in England are the means of refining the taste, have in France subserved the spread of revolutionary and deistical doctrines. In Metaphysics, again, Butler's *Analogy of Religion* which has had so much to do with the conversion of members of the University of Oxford, appeared to Pitt and others, who had received a different training, to operate only in the direction of infidelity. And so again, Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, as I think he tells us in the narrative of his life, felt the science of Mathematics to indispose the mind to religious belief, while others see in its investigations the best defence of the Christian Mysteries. In like manner, I suppose, Arcesilaus[1] would not have handled logic as Aristotle, nor Aristotle have criticized poets as Plato; yet reasoning and poetry are subject to scientific rules.

It is a great point then to enlarge the range of studies which a University professes, even for the sake of the students; and, though they cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called "Liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former Discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. This is the main purpose of a University in its treatment of its students.

And now the question is asked me, What is the *use* of it? And my answer will constitute the main subject of the Discourses which are to follow.

2

Cautious and practical thinkers, I say, will ask of me, what, after all, is the gain of this Philosophy, of which I make such account, and from which I promise so much. Even supposing it to enable us to give the degree of confidence exactly due to every science respectively, and to estimate precisely the value of every truth which is anywhere to be found, how are we better for this master view of things, which I have been extolling? Does it not reverse the principle of the division of labor? will practical objects be obtained better or worse by its cultivation? to what then does it lead? where does it end? what does it do? how does it profit? what does it promise? Particular sciences are respectively the basis of definite arts, which carry on to results tangible and beneficial the truths which are the subjects of the knowledge attained; what is the Art of this science of sciences? what is the fruit of such a Philosophy? what are we proposing to effect, what inducements do we hold out to the Catholic community, when we set about the enterprise of founding a University?

I am asked what is the end of University Education, and of the Liberal or Philosophical Knowledge which I conceive it to impart: I answer, that

[1] Greek skeptical philosopher (316?-241? B.C.).

what I have already said has been sufficient to show that it has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward. And if this is true of all knowledge, it is true also of that special Philosophy, which I have made to consist in a comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearings, and their respective values. What the worth of such an acquirement is, compared with other objects which we seek—wealth or power or honor or the conveniences and comforts of life, I do not profess here to discuss; but I would maintain, and mean to show, that it is an object, in its own nature so really and undeniably good, as to be the compensation of a great deal of thought in the compassing, and a great deal of trouble in the attaining.

Now, when I say that Knowledge is, not merely a means to something beyond it, or the preliminary of certain arts into which it naturally resolves, but an end sufficient to rest in and to pursue for its own sake, surely I am uttering no paradox, for I am stating what is both intelligible in itself, and has ever been the common judgment of philosophers and the ordinary feeling of mankind. I am saying what at least the public opinion of this day ought to be slow to deny, considering how much we have heard of late years, in opposition to Religion, of entertaining, curious, and various knowledge. I am but saying what whole volumes have been written to illustrate, viz., by a "selection from the records of Philosophy, Literature, and Art, in all ages and countries, of a body of examples, to show how the most unpropitious circumstances have been unable to conquer an ardent desire for the acquisition of knowledge." That further advantages accrue to us and redound to others by its possession, over and above what it is in itself, I am very far indeed from denying; but, independent of these, we are satisfying a direct need of our nature in its very acquisition; and, whereas our nature, unlike that of the inferior creation, does not at once reach its perfection, but depends, in order to it, on a number of external aids and appliances, Knowledge, as one of the principal of these, is valuable for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of a habit, even though it be turned to no further account, nor subserve any direct end.

3

Hence it is that Cicero, in enumerating the various heads of mental excellence, lays down the pursuit of Knowledge for its own sake, as the first of them. "This pertains most of all to human nature," he says, "for we are all of us drawn to the pursuit of Knowledge; in which to excel we consider excellent, whereas to mistake, to err, to be ignorant, to be deceived, is both an evil and a disgrace." And he considers Knowledge the very first object to which we are attracted, after the supply of our physical wants. After the calls and duties of our animal existence, as they may be termed, as regards ourselves, our family, and our neighbors, follows, he tells us, "the search after truth. Accordingly, as soon as we escape from the pressure of necessary cares, forthwith we desire to see, to hear, and to learn; and consider the knowledge of what is hidden or is wonderful a condition of our happiness."

This passage, though it is but one of many similar passages in a multitude of authors, I take for the very reason that it is so familiarly known to us; and I wish you to observe, Gentlemen, how distinctly it separates the pursuit of Knowledge from those ulterior objects to which certainly it can be made to conduce, and which are, I suppose, solely contemplated by the persons who would ask of me the use of a University or Liberal Education. So far from dreaming of the cultivation of Knowledge directly and mainly in order to our physical comfort and enjoyment, for the sake of life and person, of health, of the conjugal and family union, of the social tie and civil security, the great Orator implies, that it is only after our physical and political needs are supplied, and when we are "free from necessary duties and cares," that we are in a condition for "desiring to see, to hear, and to learn." Nor does he contemplate in the least degree the reflex or subsequent action of Knowledge, when acquired, upon those material goods which we set out by securing before we seek it; on the contrary, he expressly denies its bearing upon social life altogether, strange as such a procedure is to those who live after the rise of the Baconian[2] philosophy, and he cautions us against such a cultivation of it as will interfere with our duties to our fellow-creatures. "All these methods," he says, "are engaged in the investigation of truth; by the pursuit of which to be carried

[2] Francis Bacon (see I, p. 377) is largely responsible for the experimental method of modern science.

off from public occupations is a transgression of duty. For the praise of virtue lies altogether in action; yet intermissions often occur, and then we recur to such pursuits; not to say that the incessant activity of the mind is vigorous enough to carry us on in the pursuit of knowledge, even without any exertion of our own." The idea of benefiting society by means of "the pursuit of science and knowledge" did not enter at all into the motives which he would assign for their cultivation.

This was the ground of the opposition which the elder Cato made to the introduction of Greek Philosophy among his countrymen, when Carneades[3] and his companions, on occasion of their embassy, were charming the Roman youth with their eloquent expositions of it. The fit representative of a practical people, Cato estimated everything by what it produced; whereas the Pursuit of Knowledge promised nothing beyond Knowledge itself. He despised that refinement or enlargement of mind of which he had no experience.

4

Things, which can bear to be cut off from everything else and yet persist in living, must have life in themselves; pursuits, which issue in nothing, and still maintain their ground for ages, which are regarded as admirable, though they have not as yet proved themselves to be useful, must have their sufficient end in themselves, whatever it turn out to be. And we are brought to the same conclusion by considering the force of the epithet, by which the knowledge under consideration is popularly designated. It is common to speak of "*liberal* knowledge," of the "*liberal* arts and studies," and of a "*liberal* education," as the especial characteristic or property of a University and of a gentleman; what is really meant by the word? Now, first, in its grammatical sense it is opposed to *servile*; and by "servile work" is understood, as our catechisms inform us, bodily labor, mechanical employment, and the like, in which the mind has little or no part. Parallel to such works are those arts, if they deserve the name, of which the poet speaks, which owe their origin and their method to hazard, not to skill; as, for instance, the practice and operations of an empiric. As far as this contrast may be considered as a guide into the meaning of the word, liberal knowledge and liberal pursuits are exercises of mind, of reason, of reflection.

But we want something more for its explanation, for there are bodily exercises which are liberal, and mental exercises which are not so. For instance, in ancient times the practitioners in medicine were commonly slaves; yet it was an art as intellectual in its nature, in spite of the pretence, fraud, and quackery with which it might then, as now, be debased, as it was heavenly in its aim. And so in like manner, we contrast a liberal education with a commercial education or a professional; yet no one can deny that commerce and the professions afford scope for the highest and most diversified powers of mind. There is then a great variety of intellectual exercises, which are not technically called "liberal"; on the other hand, I say, there are exercises of the body which do receive that appellation. Such, for instance, was the palæstra,[4] in ancient times; such the Olympic games,[5] in which strength and dexterity of body as well as of mind gained the prize. In Xenophon[6] we read of the young Persian nobility being taught to ride on horseback and to speak the truth; both being among the accomplishments of a gentleman. War, too, however rough a profession, has ever been accounted liberal, unless in cases when it becomes heroic, which would introduce us to another subject.

Now comparing these instances together, we shall have no difficulty in determining the principle of this apparent variation in the application of the term which I am examining. Manly games, or games of skill, or military prowess, though bodily, are, it seems, accounted liberal; on the other hand, what is merely professional, though highly intellectual, nay, though liberal in comparison of trade and manual labor, is not simply called liberal, and mercantile occupations are not liberal at all. Why this distinction? because that alone is liberal knowledge, which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be *informed* (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation. The most ordinary pursuits have this specific character, if they are self-sufficient and complete; the highest lose it, when they minister to something beyond them. It is absurd to balance, in point of worth and importance, a treatise on reducing fractures with a game of cricket or a

[3] Greek skeptical philosopher (213?-129 B.C.).

[4] gymnastic school.

[5] See p. 1133.

[6] *The Cyropaedia* of Xenophon, a Greek writer of history and philosophy (430?-357? B.C.).

fox-chase; yet of the two the bodily exercise has that quality which we call "liberal," and the intellectual has it not. And so of the learned professions altogether, considered merely as professions; although one of them be the most popularly beneficial, and another the most politically important, and the third the most intimately divine of all human pursuits, yet the very greatness of their end, the health of the body, or of the commonwealth, or of the soul, diminishes, not increases, their claim to the appellation "liberal," and that still more, if they are cut down to the strict exigencies of that end. If, for instance, Theology, instead of being cultivated as a contemplation, be limited to the purposes of the pulpit or be represented by the catechism, it loses—not its usefulness, not its divine character, not its meritoriousness (rather it increases these qualities by such charitable condescension)—but it does lose the particular attribute which I am illustrating; just as a face worn by tears and fasting loses its beauty, or a laborer's hand loses its delicateness;—for Theology thus exercised is not simple knowledge, but rather is an art or a business making use of Theology. And thus it appears that even what is supernatural need not be liberal, nor need a hero be a gentleman, for the plain reason that one idea is not another idea. And in like manner the Baconian Philosophy, by using its physical sciences in the service of man, does thereby transfer them from the order of Liberal Pursuits to, I do not say the inferior, but the distinct class of the Useful. And, to take a different instance, hence again, as is evident, whenever personal gain is the motive, still more distinctive an effect has it upon the character of a given pursuit; thus racing, which was a liberal exercise in Greece, forfeits its rank in times like these, so far as it is made the occasion of gambling.

All that I have been now saying is summed up in a few characteristic words of the great Philosopher. "Of possessions," he says, "those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those *liberal, which tend to enjoyment.* By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable, where *nothing accrues of consequence beyond the use.*"[6a]

5

Do not suppose, Gentlemen, that in thus appealing to the ancients, I am throwing back the world two thousand years, and fettering Philosophy with the reasonings of paganism. While the world lasts, will Aristotle's doctrine on these matters last, for he is the oracle of nature and of truth. While we are men, we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelians, for the great Master does but analyze the thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions of human kind. He has told us the meaning of our own words and ideas, before we were born. In many subject-matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle; and we are his disciples whether we will or no, though we may not know it. Now, as to the particular instance before us, the word "liberal" as applied to Knowledge and Education, expresses a specific idea, which ever has been, and ever will be, while the nature of man is the same, just as the idea of the Beautiful is specific, or of the Sublime, or of the Ridiculous, or of the Sordid. It is in the world now, it was in the world then; and, as in the case of the dogmas of faith, it is illustrated by a continuous historical tradition, and never was out of the world, from the time it came into it. There have indeed been differences of opinion from time to time, as to what pursuits and what arts came under that idea, but such differences are but an additional evidence of its reality. That idea must have a substance in it, which has maintained its ground amid these conflicts and changes, which has ever served as a standard to measure things withal, which has passed from mind to mind unchanged, when there was so much to color, so much to influence any notion or thought whatever, which was not founded in our very nature. Were it a mere generalization, it would have varied with the subjects from which it was generalized; but though its subjects vary with the age, it varies not itself. The palæstra may seem a liberal exercise to Lycurgus,[7] and illiberal to Seneca;[8] coach-driving and prize-fighting may be recognized in Elis,[9] and be condemned in England; music may be despicable in the eyes of certain moderns, and be in the highest place with Aristotle and Plato—(and the case is the same in the particular application of the idea of Beauty, or of Goodness, or of Moral Virtue, there is a difference of tastes, a difference of judgments)—still these variations imply, instead of discrediting, the archetypal idea, which is but a previous hypothesis or condition, by means of which issue is joined between contending opinions, and without which there would be nothing to dispute about.

I consider, then, that I am chargeable with no

[6a] Aristot., *Rhet.* I, 5. (Newman.)

[7] Lycurgus (c. 396-325 B.C.), who reconstructed the gymnasium in the Lyceum.

[8] Roman philosopher (4 B.C.- 65 A.D.).

[9] the district in Greece where the Olympic games were held.

paradox, when I speak of a Knowledge which is its own end, when I call it liberal knowledge, or a gentleman's knowledge, when I educate for it, and make it the scope of a University. And still less am I incurring such a charge, when I make this acquisition consist, not in Knowledge in a vague and ordinary sense, but in that Knowledge which I have especially called Philosophy or, in an extended sense of the word, Science; for whatever claims Knowledge has to be considered as a good, these it has in a higher degree when it is viewed not vaguely, not popularly, but precisely and transcendently as Philosophy. Knowledge, I say, is then especially liberal, or sufficient for itself, apart from every external and ulterior object, when and so far as it is philosophical, and this I proceed to show.

6

Now bear with me, Gentlemen, if what I am about to say, has at first sight a fanciful appearance. Philosophy, then, or Science, is related to Knowledge in this way:—Knowledge is called by the name of Science or Philosophy, when it is acted upon, informed, or if I may use a strong figure, impregnated by Reason. Reason is the principle of that intrinsic fecundity of Knowledge, which, to those who possess it, is its especial value, and which dispenses with the necessity of their looking abroad for any end to rest upon external to itself. Knowledge, indeed, when thus exalted into a scientific form, is also power; not only is it excellent in itself, but whatever such excellence may be, it is something more, it has a result beyond itself. Doubtless; but that is a further consideration, with which I am not concerned. I only say that, prior to its being a power, it is a good; that it is, not only an instrument, but an end. I know well it may resolve itself into an art, and terminate in a mechanical process, and in tangible fruit; but it also may fall back upon that Reason, which informs it, and resolve itself into Philosophy. In one case it is called Useful Knowledge, in the other Liberal. The same person may cultivate it in both ways at once; but this again is a matter foreign to my subject; here I do but say that there are two ways of using Knowledge, and in matter of fact those who use it in one way are not likely to use it in the other, or at least in a very limited measure. You see, then, here are two methods of Education; the end of the one is, to be philosophical, of the other to be mechanical; the one rises towards general ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external. Let me not be thought to deny the necessity, or to decry the benefit, of such attention to what is particular and practical, as belongs to the useful or mechanical arts; life could not go on without them; we owe our daily welfare to them; their exercise is the duty of the many, and we owe to the many a debt of gratitude for fulfilling that duty. I only say that Knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be Knowledge. It is a question whether Knowledge can in any proper sense be predicated of the brute creation; without pretending to metaphysical exactness of phraseology, which would be unsuitable to an occasion like this, I say, it seems to me improper to call that passive sensation, or perception of things which brutes seem to possess, by the name of Knowledge. When I speak of Knowledge, I mean something intellectual, something which grasps what it perceives through the senses; something which takes a view of things; which sees more than the senses convey; which reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees; which invests it with an idea. It expresses itself, not in a mere enunciation but by an enthymeme: it is of the nature of science from the first, and in this consists its dignity. The principle of real dignity in Knowledge, its worth, its desirableness, considered irrespectively of its results, is this germ within it of a scientific or a philosophical process. This is how it comes to be an end in itself; this is why it admits of being called Liberal. Not to know the relative disposition of things is the state of slaves or children; to have mapped out the Universe is the boast, or at least the ambition, of Philosophy.

Moreover, such knowledge is not a mere extrinsic or accidental advantage, which is ours to-day and another's to-morrow, which may be got up from a book, and easily forgotten again, which we can command or communicate at our pleasure, which we can borrow for the occasion, carry about in our hand, and take into the market; it is an acquired illumination, it is a habit, a personal possession, and an inward endowment. And this is the reason, why it is more correct, as well as more usual, to speak of a University as a place of education, than of instruction, though, when knowledge is concerned, instruction would at first sight have seemed the more appropriate word. We are instructed, for instance, in manual exercises, in the fine and useful arts, in trades, and in ways of business; for these are methods, which have little or no effect upon the mind itself, are contained in rules committed to memory, to tradition, or to use, and bear upon an

end external to themselves. But education is a higher word; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connection with religion and virtue. When, then, we speak of the communication of Knowledge as being Education, we thereby really imply that that Knowledge is a state or condition of mind; and since cultivation of mind is surely worth seeking for its own sake, we are thus brought once more to the conclusion, which the word "Liberal" and the word "Philosophy" have already suggested, that there is a Knowledge, which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure, and a sufficient remuneration of years of labor.

7

This, then, is the answer which I am prepared to give to the question with which I opened this Discourse. Before going on to speak of the object of the Church in taking up Philosophy, and the uses to which she puts it, I am prepared to maintain that Philosophy is its own end, and, as I conceive, I have now begun proving it. I am prepared to maintain that there is a knowledge worth possessing for what it is, and not merely for what it does; and what minutes remain to me to-day I shall devote to the removal of some portion of the indistinctness and confusion with which the subject may in some minds be surrounded.

It may be objected then, that, when we profess to seek Knowledge for some end or other beyond itself, whatever it be, we speak intelligibly; but that, whatever men may have said, however obstinately the idea may have kept its ground from age to age, still it is simply unmeaning to say that we seek Knowledge for its own sake, and for nothing else; for that it ever leads to something beyond itself, which therefore is its end, and the cause why it is desirable;—moreover, that this end is twofold, either of this world or of the next; that all knowledge is cultivated either for secular objects or for eternal; that if it is directed to secular objects, it is called Useful Knowledge, if to eternal, Religious or Christian Knowledge;—in consequence, that if, as I have allowed, this Liberal Knowledge does not benefit the body or estate, it ought to benefit the soul; but if the fact be really so, that it is neither a physical or a secular good on the one hand, nor a moral good on the other, it cannot be a good at all, and is not worth the trouble which is necessary for its acquisition.

And then I may be reminded that the professors of this Liberal or Philosophical Knowledge have themselves, in every age, recognized this exposition of the matter, and have submitted to the issue in which it terminates; for they have ever been attempting to make men virtuous; or, if not, at least have assumed that refinement of mind was virtue, and that they themselves were the virtuous portion of mankind. This they have professed on the one hand; and on the other, they have utterly failed in their professions, so as ever to make themselves a proverb among men, and a laughing-stock both to the grave and the dissipated portion of mankind, in consequence of them. Thus they have furnished against themselves both the ground and the means of their own exposure, without any trouble at all to any one else. In a word, from the time that Athens was the University of the world, what has Philosophy taught men, but to promise without practising, and to aspire without attaining? What has the deep and lofty thought of its disciples ended in but eloquent words? Nay, what has its teaching ever meditated, when it was boldest in its remedies for human ill, beyond charming us to sleep by its lessons, that we might feel nothing at all? like some melodious air, or rather like those strong and transporting perfumes, which at first spread their sweetness over everything they touch, but in a little while do but offend in proportion as they once pleased us. Did Philosophy support Cicero[10] under the disfavor of the fickle populace, or nerve Seneca to oppose an imperial tyrant?[11] It abandoned Brutus,[12] as he sorrowfully confessed, in his greatest need, and it forced Cato,[13] as his panegyrist strangely boasts, into the false position of defying heaven. How few can be counted among its professors, who, like Polemo,[14] were thereby converted from a profligate course, or like Anaxagoras,[15] thought the world well lost in exchange for its possession? The philosopher in *Rasselas*[16] taught a superhuman doctrine, and then succumbed without an effort to a trial of human affection.

"He discoursed," we are told, "with great energy on the government of the passions. His look was

[10] Cicero, the great Roman orator and statesman (106-43 B.C.), lost his life in the disorders of the revolt against Julius Caesar.

[11] the Emperor Nero.

[12] the leader of the conspiracy against Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.

[13] Roman statesman, general and writer (234-149 B.C.).

[14] Athenian philosopher (d. 273 B.C.).

[15] Greek philosopher (500?-428? B.C.).

[16] See I, p. 918.

venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He showed, with great strength of sentiment and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher. He communicated the various precepts given, from time to time, for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory, after which man is no longer the slave of fear, nor the fool of hope. . . . He enumerated many examples of heroes immovable by pain or pleasure, who looked with indifference on those modes or accidents to which the vulgar give the names of good and evil."

Rasselas in a few days found the philosopher in a room half darkened, with his eyes misty, and his face pale. "Sir," said he, "you have come at a time when all human friendship is useless; what I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be supplied. My daughter, my only daughter, from whose tenderness I expected all the comforts of my age, died last night of a fever." "Sir," said the prince, "mortality is an event by which a wise man can never be surprised; we know that death is always near, and it should therefore always be expected." "Young man," answered the philosopher, "you speak like one who has never felt the pangs of separation." "Have you, then, forgot the precept," said Rasselas, "which you so powerfully enforced? . . . consider that external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same." "What comfort," said the mourner, "can truth and reason afford me? Of what effect are they now, but to tell me that my daughter will not be restored?"

8

Better, far better, to make no professions, you will say, than to cheat others with what we are not, and to scandalize them with what we are. The sensualist, or the man of the world, at any rate is not the victim of fine words, but pursues a reality and gains it. The Philosophy of Utility, you will say, Gentlemen, has at least done its work; and I grant it,—it aimed low, but it has fulfilled its aim. If that man of great intellect[17] who has been its Prophet in the conduct of life played false to his own professions, he was not bound by his philosophy to be true to his friend or faithful in his trust. Moral virtue was not the line in which he undertook to instruct men; and though, as the poet calls him, he were the "meanest" of mankind, he was so in what may be called his private capacity, and without any prejudice to the theory of induction. He had a right to be so, if he chose, for anything that the Idols of the den or the theatre had to say to the contrary. His mission was the increase of physical enjoyment and social comfort[18]; and most wonderfully, most awfully has he fulfilled his conception and his design. Almost day by day have we fresh and fresh shoots, and buds, and blossoms, which are to ripen into fruit, on that magical tree of Knowledge which he planted, and to which none of us perhaps, except the very poor, but owes, if not his present life, at least his daily food, his health, and general well-being. He was the divinely provided minister of temporal benefits to all of us so great, that, whatever I am forced to think of him as a man, I have not the heart, from mere gratitude, to speak of him severely. And, in spite of the tendencies of his philosophy, which are, as we see at this day, to depreciate, or to trample on Theology, he has himself, in his writings, gone out of his way, as if with a prophetic misgiving of those tendencies, to insist on it as the instrument of that beneficent Father,[19] who, when He came on earth in visible form, took on Him first and most prominently the office of assuaging the bodily wounds of human nature. And truly, like the old mediciner in the tale, "he sat diligently at his work, and hummed, with cheerful countenance, a pious song;" and then in turn "went out singing into the meadows so gaily, that those who had seen him from afar might well have thought it was a youth gathering flowers for his beloved, instead of an old physician gathering healing herbs in the morning dew?"[20]

Alas, that men, in the action of life or in their heart of hearts, are not what they seem to be in their moments of excitement, or in their trances or intoxications of genius—so good, so noble, so serene! Alas, that Bacon too in his own way should after all be but the fellow of those heathen philosophers who in their disadvantages had some excuse for their inconsistency, and who surprise us rather in what they did say than in what they did not do! Alas, that he too, like Socrates or Seneca, must be stripped of his holy-day coat, which looks so fair, and should be but a mockery amid his most majestic gravity of

[17] Francis Bacon; see I, p. 377.

[18] It will be seen that on the whole I agree with Lord Macaulay in his Essay on Bacon's Philosophy. I do not know whether he would agree with me (Newman.)

[19] See Bacon's *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, IV, 2.

[20] from *The Unknown Patient* by Friedrich Fouqué (1777-1843), German author

phrase; and, for all his vast abilities, should, in the littleness of his own moral being, but typify the intellectual narrowness of his school! However, granting all this, heroism after all was not his philosophy: I cannot deny he has abundantly achieved what he proposed. His is simply a Method whereby bodily discomforts and temporal wants are to be most effectually removed from the greatest number; and already, before it has shown any signs of exhaustion, the gifts of nature, in their most artificial shapes and luxurious profusion and diversity, from all quarters of the earth, are, it is undeniable, by its means brought even to our doors, and we rejoice in them.

9

Useful Knowledge then, I grant, has done its work; and Liberal Knowledge as certainly has not done its work—supposing, that is, as the objectors assume, its direct end, like Religious Knowledge, is to make men better; but this I will not for an instant allow, and unless I allow it, those objectors have said nothing to the purpose. I admit, rather I maintain, what they have been urging, for I consider Knowledge to have its end in itself. For all its friends, or its enemies, may say, I insist upon it, that it is as real a mistake to burden it with virtue or religion as with the mechanical arts. Its direct business is not to steel the soul against temptation, or to console it in affliction, any more than to set the loom in motion, or to direct the steam carriage; be it ever so much the means or the condition of both material and moral advancement, still, taken by and in itself, it as little mends our hearts as it improves our temporal circumstances. And if its eulogists claim for it such a power, they commit the very same kind of encroachment on a province not their own as the political economist who should maintain that his science educated him for casuistry or diplomacy. Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life;—these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University: I am advocating, I shall illustrate and insist upon them; but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness, they may attach to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless—pleasant, alas, and attractive as he shows when decked out in them. Taken by themselves, they do but seem to be what they are not; they look like virtue at a distance, but they are detected by close observers, and on the long run; and hence it is that they are popularly accused of pretence and hypocrisy, not, I repeat, from their own fault, but because their professors and their admirers persist in taking them for what they are not, and are officious in arrogating for them a praise to which they have no claim. Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against these giants, the passion and the pride of man.

Surely we are not driven to theories of this kind in order to vindicate the value and dignity of Liberal Knowledge. Surely the real grounds on which its pretensions rest are not so very subtle or abstruse, so very strange or improbable. Surely it is very intelligible to say, and that is what I say here, that Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence. Every thing has its own perfection, be it higher or lower in the scale of things; and the perfection of one is not the perfection of another. Things animate, inanimate, visible, invisible, all are good in their kind, and have a *best* of themselves, which is an object of pursuit. Why do you take such pains with your garden or your park? You see to your walks and turf and shrubberies; to your trees and drives; not as if you meant to make an orchard of the one, or corn or pasture land of the other, but because there is a special beauty in all that is goodly in wood, water, plain, and slope, brought all together by art into one shape, and grouped into one whole. Your cities are beautiful, your palaces, your public buildings, your territorial mansions, your churches; and their beauty leads to nothing beyond itself. There is a physical beauty and a moral: there is a beauty of person, there is a beauty of our moral being, which is natural virtue; and in like manner there is a beauty, there is a perfection, of the intellect. There is an ideal perfection in these various subject-matters, towards which individual instances are seen to rise, and which are the standards for all instances whatever. The Greek divinities and demigods, as the statuary has molded them, with their

symmetry of figure, and their high forehead and their regular features, are the perfection of physical beauty. The heroes, of whom history tells, Alexander, or Cæsar, or Scipio, or Saladin, are the representatives of that magnanimity or self-mastery which is the greatness of human nature. Christianity too has its heroes, and in the supernatural order, and we call them Saints. The artist puts before him beauty of feature and form; the poet, beauty of mind; the preacher, the beauty of grace: then intellect too, I repeat, has its beauty, and it has those who aim at it. To open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know, and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address, eloquent expression, is an object as intelligible (for here we are inquiring, not what the object of a Liberal Education is worth, nor what use the Church makes of it, but what it is in itself), I say, an object as intelligible as the cultivation of virtue, while, at the same time, it is absolutely distinct from it.

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This indeed is but a temporal object, and a transitory possession: but so are other things in themselves which we make much of and pursue. The moralist will tell us that man, in all his functions, is but a flower which blossoms and fades, except so far as a higher principle breathes upon him, and makes him and what he is immortal. Body and mind are carried on into an eternal state of being by the gifts of Divine Munificence; but at first they do but fail in a failing world; and if the powers of intellect decay, the powers of the body have decayed before them, and, as an Hospital or an Almshouse, though its end be ephemeral, may be sanctified to the service of religion, so surely may a University, even were it nothing more than I have as yet described it. We attain to heaven by using this world well, though it is to pass away; we perfect our nature, not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own.

(1852)

From *Apologia pro Vita Sua*

Newman wrote his *Apologia* with intensity, sometimes for as many as twenty-two hours at a stretch. It must have cost him much to pen it, for he was not only defending himself against Kingsley's attacks, but living over his Oxford days. A friend records that Newman was frequently in tears over the "well nigh impossibly painful task of public confession." But the *Apologia* is accurate and never bitter, self-indulgent, or egoistical. Kingsley was forced to acknowledge that he had "crossed swords with one who was too strong for him."

Chapter V

The Infallibility of the Church

Starting, then, with the being of a God (which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence, though when I try to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape I find a difficulty in doing so in mood and figure to my satisfaction), I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is, in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself. If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into this living, busy world and see no reflection of its Creator. This is to me one of those great difficulties of this absolute primary truth, to which I referred just now. Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist or a pantheist or a polytheist when I looked into the world. I am speaking for myself only, and I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God, drawn from the general facts of human society and the course of history; but these do not warm me or enlighten me; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold and the leaves grow within me, and my moral

being rejoice. The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of "lamentations and mourning and woe."[1]

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, and many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements; the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes; the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity; the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish; the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary, hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race so fearfully yet exactly described in the apostle's words, "having no hope and without God in the world,"—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery which is absolutely beyond human solution.

What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence. Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birthplace or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one of whom, from one cause or other, his parents were ashamed. Thus only should I be able to account for the contrast between the promise and the condition of his being. And so I argue about the world:—*If* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact, a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God.

And now, supposing it were the blessed and loving will of the Creator to interfere in this anarchical condition of things, what are we to suppose would be the methods which might be necessarily or naturally involved in His purpose of mercy? Since the world is in so abnormal a state, surely it would be no surprise to me if the interposition were of necessity equally extraordinary—or what is called miraculous. But that subject does not directly come into the scope of my present remarks. Miracles as evidence involve a process of reason, or an argument; and of course I am thinking of some mode of interference which does not immediately run into argument. I am rather asking what must be the face-to-face antagonist by which to withstand and baffle the fierce energy of passion and the all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect in religious inquiries? I have no intention at all of denying that truth is the real object of our reason, and that if it does not attain to truth, either the premise or the process is in fault; but I am not speaking here of right reason, but of reason as it acts in fact and concretely in fallen man. I know that even the unaided reason, when correctly exercised, leads to a belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in a future retribution; but I am considering the faculty of reason actually and historically, and in this point of view I do not think I am wrong in saying that its tendency is towards a simple unbelief in matters of religion. No truth, however sacred, can stand against it in the long run; and hence it is that in the pagan world, when our Lord came, the last traces of the religious knowledge of former times were all but disappearing from those portions of the world in which the intellect had been active, and had had a career.

And in these latter days, in like manner, outside the Catholic Church things are tending—with far greater rapidity than in that old time, from the circumstance of the age—to atheism in one shape or other. What a scene, what a prospect, does the whole of Europe present at this day! and not only Europe, but every government and every civilization through the world, which is under the influence of the European mind! Especially (for it most concerns us) how sorrowful, in the view of religion, even taken in its most elementary, most attenuated form, is the spectacle presented to us by the educated intellect of England, France, and Germany! Lovers of their country and of their race, religious men, external to the Catholic Church, have attempted various expedients to arrest fierce, wilful human nature in its onward course and to bring it into subjection. The necessity of some form of religion for the interests of humanity has been

[1] *Ezekiel*, 2:10.

generally acknowledged; but where was the concrete representative of things invisible, which would have the force and the toughness necessary to be a breakwater against the deluge? Three centuries ago the establishment of religion, material, legal, and social, was generally adopted as the best expedient for the purpose, in those countries which separated from the Catholic Church; and for a long time it was successful; but now the crevices of those establishments are admitting the enemy. Thirty years ago education was relied upon; ten years ago there was a hope that wars would cease forever, under the influence of commercial enterprise and the reign of the useful and fine arts; but will any one venture to say that there is anything anywhere on this earth which will afford a fulcrum for us, whereby to keep the earth from moving onwards?

The judgment which experience passes, whether on establishments or on education, as a means of maintaining religious truth in this anarchical world, must be extended even to Scripture, though Scripture be divine. Experience proves surely that the Bible does not answer a purpose for which it was never intended. It may be accidentally the means of the conversion of individuals; but a book, after all, cannot make a stand against the wild, living intellect of man, and in this day it begins to testify, as regards its own structure and contents, to the power of that universal solvent which is so successfully acting upon religious establishments.

Supposing, then, it to be the will of the Creator to interfere in human affairs, and to make provisions for retaining in the world a knowledge of Himself so definite and distinct as to be proof against the energy of human skepticism, in such a case,—I am far from saying that there was no other way,—but there is nothing to surprise the mind if He should think fit to introduce a power into the world, invested with the prerogative of infallibility in religious matters. Such a provision would be a direct, immediate, active, and prompt means of withstanding the difficulty; it would be an instrument suited to the need; and when I find that this is the very claim of the Catholic Church, not only do I feel no difficulty in admitting the idea, but there is a fitness in it which recommends it to my mind. And thus I am brought to speak of the Church's infallibility as a provision adapted by the mercy of the Creator to preserve religion in the world, and to restrain that freedom of thought which of course in itself is one of the greatest of our natural gifts, and to rescue it from its own suicidal excesses. And let it be observed that, neither here nor in what follows, shall I have occasion to speak directly of Revelation in its subject-matter, but in reference to the sanction which it gives to truths which may be known independently of it—as it bears upon the defence of natural religion. I say that a power possessed of infallibility in religious teaching is happily adapted to be a working instrument, in the course of human affairs, for smiting hard and throwing back the immense energy of the aggressive, capricious, untrustworthy intellect:—and in saying this, as in the other things that I have to say, it must still be recollected that I am all along bearing in mind my main purpose, which is a defence of myself.

I am defending myself here from a plausible charge brought against Catholics, as will be seen better as I proceed. The charge is this: that I, as a Catholic, not only make profession to hold doctrines which I cannot possibly believe in my heart, but that I also believe in the existence of a power on earth which at its own will imposes upon men any new set of *credenda*,[2] when it pleases, by a claim to infallibility; in consequence, that my own thoughts are not my own property; that I cannot tell that to-morrow I may not have to give up what I hold to-day; and that the necessary effect of such a condition of mind must be a degrading bondage, or a bitter inward rebellion relieving itself in secret infidelity, or the necessity of ignoring the whole subject of religion in a sort of disgust, and of mechanically saying everything that the Church says, and leaving to others the defence of it. As, then, I have above spoken of the relation of my mind towards the Catholic creed, so now I shall speak of the attitude which it takes up in the view of the Church's infallibility.

And, first, the initial doctrine of the infallible teacher must be an emphatic protest against the existing state of mankind. Mankind had rebelled against his Maker. It was this that caused the divine interposition, and to proclaim it must be the first act of the divinely-accredited messenger. The Church must denounce rebellion as of all possible evils the greatest. She must have no terms with it; if she would be true to her Master, she must ban and anathematize it. This is the meaning of a statement of mine which has furnished matter for one of those special accusations to which I am at present replying: I have, however, no fault at all to confess in regard to it; I have nothing to withdraw, and in consequence I here deliberately repeat it. I said, "The Catholic Church holds it better for the sun

[2] doctrines to be believed.

and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse." I think the principle here enunciated to be the mere preamble in the formal credentials of the Catholic Church, as an act of Parliament might begin with a "Whereas." It is because of the intensity of the evil which has possession of mankind, that a suitable antagonist has been provided against it; and the initial act of that divinely-commissioned power is of course to deliver her challenge and to defy the enemy. Such a preamble, then, gives a meaning to her position in the world, and an interpretation to her whole course of teaching and action.

In like manner she has ever put forth, with most energetic distinctness, those other great elementary truths which either are an explanation of her mission or give a character to her work. She does not teach that human nature is irreclaimable, else wherefore should she be sent? not that it is to be shattered and reversed, but to be extricated, purified, and restored; not that it is a mere mass of hopeless evil, but that it has the promise upon it of great things, and even now, in its present state of disorder and excess, has a virtue and a praise proper to itself. But in the next place, she knows and she preaches that such a restoration as she aims at effecting in it must be brought about, not simply through certain outward provisions of preaching and teaching, even though they be her own, but from an inward spiritual power or grace imparted directly from above, and of which she is the channel. She has it in charge to rescue human nature from its misery, but not simply by restoring it on its own level, but by lifting it up to a higher level than its own. She recognizes in it real moral excellence though degraded, but she cannot set it free from earth except by exalting it towards heaven. It was for this end that a renovating grace was put into her hands; and therefore, from the nature of the gift, as well as from the reasonableness of the case, she goes on, as a further point, to insist that all true conversion must begin with the first springs of thought, and to teach that each individual man must be in his own person one whole and perfect temple of God, while he is also one of the living stones which build up a visible religious community. . . . (1864)

William Makepeace Thackeray

(1811-1863)

Thackeray was born on July 11, 1811, at Calcutta, the only son of Richmond Thackeray, whose family had figured imposingly in the building of England's empire in the East. The elder Thackeray died when the boy was four years of age. In 1817 the lad was sent to school in England, but he much preferred drawing to the studies enforced upon him. His mother remarried, and Thackeray, who now attended Charterhouse School (1822-28), was very happy in his stepfather. In 1829 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became friends with Tennyson and FitzGerald. He visited Paris and Weimar the next year, and studied law, which he presently dropped as too uninteresting.

While contributing to *Fraser's Magazine*, he studied art in Paris (1834). Two years later he published his first book, *Flore et Zéphyr* (1836), with his own illustrations. During the same year he married Isabella Shawe, who a few years later became mentally deranged after the birth of their third daughter. In the meantime, his stepfather's business having failed, Thackeray undertook to discharge with him all his debts—a burden that he was not to be free of for ten years.

He began to write steadily: for *Fraser's* he composed the *Yellowplush Papers* (1837-38) and *Barry Lyndon* (1844); to *Punch* he contributed *Miss Tickletoby's Lectures on English History* (1842) and *The Snobs of England* (1846-47). His *Paris Sketch Book* appeared in 1840, and his first Christmas Book, *Mrs. Perkins' Ball*, in 1847. But great success came only with *Vanity Fair* (1848). He was lionized in Paris, wrote the satirical parodies known as *Punch's Prize Novelists*, published *Pendennis* (1850), and lectured successfully on *The*

English Humorists in England, Scotland, and America (1852-53). *Henry Esmond* was published in 1852 and *The Newcomes* in 1855. In the latter year he delivered his lectures on *The Four Georges* and four years later published *The Virginians* (1859).

After a considerable amount of traveling, he became editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, to which he contributed the essays later collected as the *Roundabout Papers*. Montaigne's *Essays* (see I, p. 402) was his bedside book, and when wakeful he would allow it, as he put it, to "prattle me to sleep again." It was not until the end of his career, however, that Thackeray found the serene egoism of his French master. He died a broken man at fifty-two, and his insane wife survived him by thirty years. Yet, though his marriage had early turned to tragedy, Thackeray could say: "I would do it again, for behold, Love is the crown and completion of all earthly good."

Tunbridge Toys

The familiar essay, which flourished in the Romantic period, was a less popular form among the great Victorians. The earnest prophets of the age—Carlyle, Macaulay, Newman, Ruskin, Arnold, and Huxley—were too busy pulpiteering to relax often into the informality of a Montaigne or a Lamb. Between the publication of the second volume of Elia (1833) and Stevenson's *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), the most distinguished collection of familiar essays is Thackeray's *Roundabout Papers* (1863), from which "Tunbridge Toys" is taken.

I wonder whether those little silver pencil-cases with a movable almanac at the butt-end are still favorite implements with boys, and whether pedlars still hawk them about the country? Are there pedlars and hawkers still, or are rustics and children grown too sharp to deal with them? Those pencil-cases, as far as my memory serves me, were not of much use. The screw, upon which the movable almanac turned, was constantly getting loose. The 1 of the table would work from its moorings, under Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case might be, and you would find, on examination, that Th. or W. was the 23½ of the month (which was absurd on the face of the thing), and in a word your cherished pencil-case an utterly unreliable time-keeper. Nor was this a matter of wonder. Consider the position of a pencil-case in a boy's pocket. You had hardbake[1] in it; marbles, kept in your purse when the money was all gone; your mother's purse, knitted so fondly and supplied with a little bit of gold, long since—prodigal little son!—scattered amongst the swine—I mean amongst brandy-balls, open tarts, three-cornered puffs, and similar abominations. You had a top and string; a knife; a piece of cobbler's wax; two or three bullets; a "Little Warbler"; and I, for my part, remember, for a considerable period, a brass-barrelled pocket-pistol (which would fire beautifully, for with it I shot off a button from Butt Major's jacket);—with all these things, and ever so many more, clinking and rattling in your pockets, and your hands, of course, keeping them in perpetual movement, how could you expect your movable almanac not to be twisted out of its place now and again—your pencil-case to be bent—your liquorice water not to leak out of your bottle over the cobbler's wax, your bull's eyes not to ram up the lock and barrel of your pistol, and so forth?

In the month of June, thirty-seven years ago, I bought one of those pencil-cases from a boy whom I shall call Hawker, and who was in my form. Is he dead? Is he a millionaire? Is he a bankrupt now? He was an immense screw at school, and I believe to this day that the value of the thing for which I owed and eventually paid three-and-sixpence,[2] was in reality not one-and-nine.[3]

I certainly enjoyed the case at first a good deal, and amused myself with twiddling round the movable calendar. But this pleasure wore off. The jewel, as I said, was not paid for, and Hawker, a large and violent boy, was exceedingly unpleasant as a creditor. His constant remark was, "When are you going to pay me that three-and-six-pence? What sneaks your relations must be! They come to see you. You go out to them on Saturdays and Sundays, and they never give you anything! Don't

[1] a sweetmeat of sugar or molasses and almonds.

[2] about eighty-five cents. [3] about forty-three cents.

tell *me*, you little humbug!" and so forth. The truth is that my relations were respectable; but my parents were making a tour in Scotland; and my friends in London, whom I used to go and see, were most kind to me, certainly, but somehow never tipped me. That term, of May to August 1823, passed in agonies, then, in consequence of my debt to Hawker. What was the pleasure of a calendar pencil-case in comparison with the doubt and torture of mind occasioned by the sense of the debt, and the constant reproach in that fellow's scowling eyes and gloomy coarse reminders? How was I to pay off such a debt out of sixpence a week? ludicrous! Why did not some one come to see me, and tip me? Ah! my dear sir, if you have any little friends at school, go and see them, and do the natural thing by them. You won't miss the sovereign.[4] You don't know what a blessing it will be to them. Don't fancy they are too old—try 'em. And they will remember you, and bless you in future days; and their gratitude shall accompany your dreary after-life; and they shall meet you kindly when thanks for kindness are scant. Oh mercy! shall I ever forget that sovereign you gave me,.Captain Bob? or the agonies of being in debt to Hawker? In that very term, a relation of mine was going to India. I actually was fetched from school in order to take leave of him. I am afraid I told Hawker of this circumstance. I own I speculated upon my friend's giving me a pound. A pound? Pooh! A relation going to India, and deeply affected at parting from his darling kinsman, might give five pounds to the dear fellow! . . . There was Hawker when I came back—of course there he was. As he looked in my scared face, his turned livid with rage. He muttered curses, terrible from the lips of so young a boy. My relation, about to cross the ocean to fill a lucrative appointment, asked me with much interest about my progress at school, heard me construe a passage of Eutropius, the pleasing Latin work on which I was then engaged; gave me a God bless you, and sent me back to school; upon my word of honor, without so much as a half-crown![5] It is all very well, my dear sir, to say that boys contract habits of expecting tips from their parents' friends, that they become avaricious, and so forth. Avaricious! fudge! Boys contract habits of tart and toffee-eating, which they do not carry into after life. On the contrary, I wish I *did* like 'em. What raptures of pleasure one could have now for five shillings, if one could but pick it off the pastry-cook's tray! No. If you have any little friends at school, out with your half-crowns, my friend, and impart to those little ones the little fleeting joys of their age.

Well, then. At the beginning of August 1823, Bartlemytide[6] holidays came, and I was to go to my parents, who were at Tunbridge Wells.[7] My place in the coach was taken by my tutor's servants—"Bolt-in-Tun," Fleet Street, seven o'clock in the morning, was the word. My tutor, the Reverend Edward P——, to whom I hereby present my best compliments, had a parting interview with me: gave me my little account for my governor: the remaining part of the coach-hire; five shillings for my own expenses; and some five-and-twenty shillings on an old account which had been overpaid, and was to be restored to my family.

Away I ran and paid Hawker his three-and-six. Ouf! what a weight it was off my mind! (He was a Norfolk boy, and used to go home from Mrs. Nelson's "Bell Inn," Aldgate—but that is not to the point.) The next morning, of course, we were an hour before the time. I and another boy shared a hackney-coach, two-and-six; porter for putting luggage on coach, threepence. I had no more money of my own left. Rasherwell, my companion, went into the "Bolt-in-Tun" coffee-room, and had a good breakfast. I couldn't: because, though I had five-and-twenty shillings of my parents' money, I had none of my own, you see.

I certainly intended to go without breakfast, and still remember how strongly I had that resolution in my mind. But there was that hour to wait. A beautiful August morning—I am very hungry. There is Rasherwell "tucking" away in the coffee-room. I pace the street, as sadly almost as if I had been coming to school, not going thence. I turn into a court by mere chance—I vow it was by mere chance—and there I see a coffee-shop with a placard in the window. "Coffee, Twopence, Round of buttered toast, Twopence." And here am I, hungry, penniless, with five-and-twenty shillings of my parents' money in my pocket.

What would you have done? You see I had had my money, and spent it in that pencil-case affair. The five-and-twenty shillings were a trust—by me to be handed over.

But then would my parents wish their only child

[4] a gold coin worth about five dollars.
[5] a silver coin worth about sixty-two cents.
[6] the Feast of St. Bartholomew, August 24.
[7] a watering-place thirty-one miles southeast of London.

to be actually without breakfast? Having this money and being so hungry, so *very* hungry, mightn't I take ever so little? Mightn't I at home eat as much as I chose?

Well, I went into the coffee-shop, and spent fourpence. I remember the taste of the coffee and toast to this day—a peculiar, muddy, not-sweet-enough, most fragrant coffee—a rich, rancid, yet not-buttered-enough, delicious toast. The waiter had nothing. At any rate, fourpence, I know, was the sum I spent. And the hunger appeased, I got on the coach a guilty being.

At the last stage,—what is its name? I have forgotten in seven-and-thirty years,—there is an inn with a little green and trees before it; and by the trees there is an open carriage. It is our carriage. Yes, there are Prince and Blucher, the horses; and my parents in the carriage. Oh! how I had been counting the days until this one came! Oh! how happy had I been to see them yesterday! But there was that fourpence. All the journey down the toast had choked me, and the coffee poisoned me.

I was in such a state of remorse about the fourpence, that I forgot the maternal joy and caresses, the tender paternal voice. I pulled out the twenty-four shillings and eightpence with a trembling hand.

"Here's your money," I gasp out, "which Mr. P—— owes you, all but fourpence. I owed three-and-sixpence to Hawker out of my money for a pencil-case, and I had none left, and I took fourpence of yours, and had some coffee at a shop."

I suppose I must have been choking whilst uttering this confession.

"My dear boy," says the governor, "why didn't you go and breakfast at the hotel?"

"He must be starved," says my mother.

I had confessed; I had been a prodigal; I had been taken back to my parents' arms again. It was not a very great crime as yet, or a very long career of prodigality; but don't we know that a boy who takes a pin which is not his own, will take a thousand pounds when occasion serves, bring his parents' grey heads with sorrow to the grave, and carry his own to the gallows? Witness the career of Dick Idle, upon whom our friend Mr. Sala has been discoursing. Dick only began by playing pitch-and-toss[8] on a tombstone: playing fair, for what we know: and even for that sin he was promptly caned by the beadle. The bamboo was ineffectual to cane that reprobate's bad courses out of him. From pitch-and-toss he proceeded to manslaughter if necessary: to highway robbery; to Tyburn and the rope there. Ah! Heaven be thanked, my parents' heads are still above the grass, and mine still out of the noose.

As I look up from my desk, I see Tunbridge Wells Common and the rocks, the strange familiar place which I remember forty years ago. Boys saunter over the green with stumps and cricket-bats. Other boys gallop by on the riding-master's hacks. I protest it is "Cramp, Riding Master," as it used to be in the reign of George IV, and that Centaur Cramp must be at least a hundred years old. Yonder comes a footman with a bundle of novels from the library. Are they as good as *our* novels? Oh! how delightful they were! Shades of Valancour, awful ghost of Manfroni,[9] how I shudder at your appearance! Sweet image of Thaddeus of Warsaw, how often has this almost infantile hand tried to depict you in a Polish cap and richly embroidered tights! And as for Corinthian Tom in light blue pantaloons and hessians, and Jerry Hawthorn from the country, can all the fashion, can all the splendor of real life which these eyes have subsequently beheld, can all the wit I have heard or read in later times, compare with your fashion, with your brilliancy, with your delightful grace, and sparkling vivacious rattle?

Who knows? They *may* have kept those very books at the library still—at the well-remembered library on the Pantiles, where they sell that delightful, useful Tunbridge ware. I will go and see. I wend my way to the Pantiles, the queer little old-world Pantiles, where, a hundred years since so much good company came to take its pleasure Is it possible, that in the past century, gentlefolks of the first rank (as I read lately in a lecture on George II in the *Cornhill Magazine*) assembled here and entertained each other with gaming, dancing, fiddling, and tea? There are fiddlers, harpers, and trumpeters performing at this moment in a weak little old balcony, but where is the fine company? Where are the earls, duchesses, bishops, and magnificent embroidered gamesters? A half-dozen of children and their nurses are listening to the musicians; an old lady or two in a poke bonnet passes; and for the rest, I see but an uninteresting population of native tradesmen. As for the library, its window is full of pictures of burly theologians, and their works, sermons, apologues, and so forth.

[8] a game in which the victor in pitching coins at a mark tosses all the pitched coins in the air and wins those that fall heads up.

[9] novels popular in Thackeray's youth.

Can I go in and ask the young ladies at the counter for "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," and "Life in London, or the Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, Esquire, and their friend Bob Logic"?—absurd. I turn away abashed from the casement—from the Pantiles—no longer Pantiles—but Parade. I stroll over the Common and survey the beautiful purple hills around, twinkling with a thousand bright villas, which have sprung up over this charming ground since first I saw it. What an admirable scene of peace and plenty! What a delicious air breathes over the heath, blows the cloud-shadows across it, and murmurs through the full-clad trees! Can the world show a land fairer, richer, more cheerful? I see a portion of it when I look up from the window at which I write. But fair scene, green woods, bright terraces gleaming in sunshine, and purple clouds swollen with summer rain—nay, the very pages over which my head bends—disappear from before my eyes. They are looking backwards, back into forty years off, into a dark room, into a little house hard by on the Common here, in the Bartlemytide holidays. The parents have gone to town for two days: the house is all his own, his own and a grim old maidservant's, and a little boy is seated at night in the lonely drawing-room, poring over "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," so frightened that he scarcely dares to turn round.

(1860)

John Ruskin

(1819-1900)

One of the most high-minded of men, John Ruskin was not more remarkable for his gifts as a writer than for the beauty of his personal character. Many thinkers have entertained high ideals for the alleviation of a suffering humanity, but few have been willing to make personal sacrifices to set an example of unselfishness. Ruskin inherited something of a fortune from his father, and he gave it away in the furtherance of his beliefs. But though many of the reforms he fought for have since been realized, his life was crowned not with triumph but with apparent failure.

His interest in social problems was a natural development of his concern with the arts. And hence his career falls into the two periods during which first the arts and later political economy were the ruling passions of his life.

He was born on February 8, 1819, in London, the only child of a well-to-do wine merchant. Honesty and sobriety of demeanor were part of the atmosphere in the Ruskin household. His education, of which he has given us a fascinating account in his autobiography, *Praeterita,* was entrusted to his mother's care. Chief among the studies upon which she insisted was his mastery of the Bible from "the first verse of Genesis . . . to the last verse of the Apocalypse." To his full knowledge of the Bible Ruskin attributed his feeling for style and the values of words. The garden of their house at Herne Hill encouraged the child to become early a close observer of plant and animal life. At the age of eight he was writing verse, and at ten he was being tutored in languages and mathematics. He was never during their life separated from his parents. When he entered Christ Church College, Oxford, his mother took lodgings near him, and his father came to see him on week-ends. The Ruskins traveled about considerably and their son imbibed profound impressions of nature from their visits to the Lake District, Scotland, Wales, and the Continent. When he was fourteen he had his first view of the Alps, an experience that deeply affected him. His parents were careful not only to instill in him a veneration for nature but also to cultivate his tastes for the best in art. Two years which he spent in Italy because of ill health were devoted to a study of medieval painting. At college he read

widely, did a great deal of drawing, and won the Newdigate Prize for poetry. His childhood and young manhood were, in short, sheltered from any knowledge but that of the beautiful. When, therefore, he became aware, in later life, of the sordidness of life among the working class, the shock was so violent as to wrench him out of the pattern in which he had been living.

In 1832 he was given as a present a volume of Rogers's poem, *Italy*, which contained designs by the painter J. M. W. Turner. His discovery of this great artist was an event of crucial importance. When *Blackwood's* severely criticized some newly exhibited pictures of Turner's in 1836, Ruskin penned a defense which, though unpublished, was sent to the painter. One day in May 1842, the year in which he took his degree, Ruskin learned the secret of painting from nature. On the road to Norwood, he tells us, "I noticed a bit of ivy round a thorn stem. . . . I proceeded to make a light-and-shade pencil study of it. . . . When it was done I saw that I had virtually lost all my time since I was twelve years old, because no one had ever told me to draw what was really there." Now Ruskin at last began to understand Turner's canvases, and decided to write a book to explain them to the world. In May 1843 the first volume of *Modern Painters* appeared. Reproducing in word-pictures the meaning of Turner's pigment, Ruskin taught England to re-evaluate a master to whom great praise and blame had been apportioned without true appreciation of what he had accomplished. *Modern Painters*, whose beauty was of a new order in English prose, became an immediate success, and went through many editions. Turner was rediscovered, and Ruskin's reputation as art critic was made.

Ruskin eventually issued four more volumes of *Modern Painters*, the last of them appearing in 1860. But before they were written, he undertook an ambitious course of preparation. On the Continent he studied landscape, the sea, rocks, the Old Masters, and literature. And after the second volume (1846), convinced that art must express more than form and color if it were to contribute to the dignity of mankind, he began to widen his scope. Greater breadth is already to be seen in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), which deals with seven concepts which humanity has expressed in its great buildings: sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience. The moral import of the fine arts, which had always been a consideration with Ruskin, here assumes a new dominance. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* is also Ruskin's first strong argument in support of Gothic architecture. Accompanied by his own careful drawings, his essay had an enormous effect in clarifying nineteenth-century concepts of medieval ideals, and has affected the history of architecture itself.

His master work of this period of his writing is *The Stones of Venice*, published 1851-53, which contains some of its author's most beautiful prose and soundest ideas. Besides its magnificent description and fascinating history of the architectural wonders of Venice—there is still no better guide to the beauties of that city—the book offers a vindication of that revival of respect for the medieval which had been inspiring English poets since the mid-eighteenth century. Ruskin argues that the great creations of his beloved Middle Ages were due to the moral grandeur of those centuries, and that the degradation which he believed characteristic of the later Renaissance could be explained by the decay of Venetian moral life.

Carlyle hailed the book with enthusiasm. And Ruskin, whose examination of art had turned his attention more closely to the conditions of society which had produced it, was drawn more and more to agree with Carlyle's powerful advocacy of the doctrine of salvation by work. The two men became more intimate, and Ruskin was soon acknowledging himself to be something of a disciple, though he surpassed his master in insight and intellectual balance. Like Carlyle, he came to understand that the current order of industrial society was depriving humanity of decency and dignity. But unlike his teacher, he placed no hopes for better things in dictators. Nor did he, like Kings-

ley, suppose that improvement was to be expected from awakening benevolence in employers and in teaching better manners to employees.

His transition was rapid. In 1854 he became associated with F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, F. J. Furnivall, and Thomas Hughes in establishing the Workingmen's College in London, and soon was writing for his pupils manuals on *The Elements of Drawing* and *The Elements of Perspective*. At Manchester in 1858 he lectured on *The Political Economy of Art*. His contacts with workingmen convinced him that the whole structure of society required reorganization, and he set to studying economics. In 1860 he began to write, for Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine*, the series known as *Unto This Last*, in which he attacked industrial economics, with its defense of the *status quo*, and insisted that "there is no Wealth but Life." His message in the concluding section is, "Care in no wise to make more of money, but care to make much of it; remembering always the great, palpable, inevitable fact—the root and rule of all economy—that which one person has, another cannot have; and that every atom of substance, of whatever kind, used or consumed, is so much human life spent; which, if it issue in the saving present life or gaining more, is well spent, but if not is either so much life prevented, or so much slain." He advocates: "training schools for youth at government cost"; founding of "government manufactories and workshops for the sale of every necessary of life, and for the exercise of every useful art"; the employment of the unemployed, after suitable training, in government shops; and provisions for the old and destitute.

The outcry against *Unto This Last* was so great that the series was discontinued by the magazine. The same fate was allotted to his articles, *Munera Pulveris* (1862-63), which he wrote for *Fraser's Magazine* until the editor, Froude, was forced by public pressure to stop them. Here Ruskin outlined a system of economy based on a theory of value as "the strength or availing of anything towards the sustaining of life." The hostile reception of his socialistic theories only intensified his determination to develop them. He continued his lectures in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), to which *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts* was later added, and in *A Crown of Wild Olive* (1866). From 1869 to 1884 he was Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford; and he was able to arouse such enthusiasm among his students that numbers of them joined him in his project of building a road with their own hands, to prove the dignity of labor.

Ruskin's economics are doubtless confused. He was too much the artist and too much concerned with moral issues to attain to the cold objectivity demanded of the science. But he understood better than most of his contemporaries the general nature of the problem. And the example of selflessness which he set was an inspiration to his disciples. Finally, as a modern commentator puts it: "His proposals were 'lunatic,' but many of them have achieved the stamp of sanity between the sober covers of the statute-book, and it is possible that even his more thorough-going principles may some day be adopted."

From *Modern Painters*, Part I

Some Sea Pictures of Turner[1]

In the autumn of 1842, when Ruskin had returned from his fifth visit to the Alps, he began to write the first part of his *Modern Painters*. As Frederic Harrison states the young man's purposes: "Brimful of the Alps, of the mountains, lakes, castles, and churches of the Rhine, Switzerland, and Italy, Cumberland, and Perthshire, the personal friend of Turner, the possessor of some of his best pieces, the pupil of Copley Fielding and Harding, the honorary class-man of Oxford and prize poet, he now fell with zeal to enlarge his . . .

[1] J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), English landscape painter.

pleading for Turner. . . . The dominant idea of his trumpet call to painters was to fling aside the traditions of the Academies, to go humbly to nature, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, scorning nothing. . . . It was set forth with a splendor of declamation, and a torrent of illustration, with word-pictures and word-scourges, such as had never yet been dreamed of in the stolid commonplaces of conventional criticism."

The careless observation of some literary historians that Ruskin discovered Turner is entirely inaccurate. Turner had been made a member of the Royal Academy long before Ruskin was born, and he had not suffered any eclipse of fame. But what Ruskin did do was to free Turner from the gross misunderstanding with which his paintings had been criticized, and to prove that nothing was more erroneous than the charge that Turner had been untrue to nature. Ruskin, to make his argument the more powerful, devoted many pages to describing and analyzing the appearances of nature. His method was something new and wonderful.

Though Turner was "rather overwhelmed" by his young friend's enthusiasm, many discriminating people were delighted with *Modern Painters*—Wordsworth, the Brownings, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Tennyson, and Jowett, among others. Young artists, particularly Holman Hunt, William Morris, and Burne-Jones of the Pre-Raphaelite group, were inspired to new endeavors by it.

Few people, comparatively, have ever seen the effect on the sea of a powerful gale continued without intermission for three or four days and nights, and to those who have not, I believe it must be unimaginable, not from the mere force or size of surge, but from the complete annihilation of the limit between sea and air. The water from its prolonged agitation is beaten, not into mere creaming foam, but into masses of accumulated yeast, which hang in ropes and wreaths from wave to wave, and where one curls over to break, form a festoon like a drapery, from its edge; these are taken up in wind, not in dissipating dust, but bodily, in writhing, hanging, coiling masses, which make the air white and thick as with snow, only the flakes are a foot or two long each; the surges themselves are full of foam in their very bodies, underneath, making them white all through, as the water is under a great cataract; and their masses, being thus half water and half air, are torn to pieces by the wind whenever they rise, and carried away in roaring smoke, which chokes and strangles like actual water. Add to this that when the air has been exhausted of its moisture by long rain, the spray of the sea is caught by it as described above (Section III, chap. vi., § 13), and covers its surface not merely with the smoke of finely divided water, but with boiling mist; imagine also the low rain-clouds brought down to the very level of the sea, as I have often seen them, whirling and flying in rags and fragments from wave to wave; and finally, conceive the surges themselves in their utmost pitch of power, velocity, vastness, and madness, lifting themselves in precipices and peaks, furrowed with the whirl of ascent, through all this chaos; and you will understand that there is indeed no distinction left between the sea and air; that no object, nor horizon, nor any landmark or natural evidence of position is left; that the heaven is all spray, and the ocean all cloud, and that you can see no farther in any direction than you could see through a cataract. Suppose the effect of the first sunbeam sent from above to show this annihilation to itself, and you have the sea picture of the Academy, 1842—the Snowstorm, one of the very grandest statements of sea-motion, mist, and light, that has ever been put on canvas, even by Turner. Of course it was not understood; his finest works never are; but there was some apology for the public's not comprehending this, for few people have had the opportunity of seeing the sea at such a time, and when they have, cannot face it. To hold by a mast or a rock, and watch it, is a prolonged endurance of drowning which few people have the courage to go through. To those who have, it is one of the noblest lessons of nature.

But I think the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of the Slave Ship, the chief Academy picture of the exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are partially moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous

swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges, the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendor which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamplike fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight,—and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. Its daring conception—ideal in the highest sense of the word—is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life; its color is absolutely perfect, not one false or morbid hue in any part or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvas is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as fearless; the ship buoyant, bending, and full of motion; its tones as true as they are wonderful; and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions—(completing the perfect system of all truth, which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works)—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable sea.

(1843)

From *The Stones of Venice*

Ruskin described his purpose in writing *The Stones of Venice* as being "to show that the Gothic architecture of Venice had risen out of, and indicated in all its features, a state of pure national faith, and of domestic virtue; and that its Renaissance architecture had arisen out of, and in all its features indicated, a state of concealed national infidelity, and of domestic corruption. . . . Good architecture is the work of good and believing men." The first of the two volumes of this work was composed in Venice and London during 1849 and 1850. He had made a careful study of St Mark's Cathedral, the Ducal Palace, and other public buildings, seeking the history of balconies, colonnades, and capitals. In 1852 he went again to Venice, and the rest of *The Stones of Venice* appeared in 1853. The selection which we reprint from Volume II is one of the most famous descriptive passages in our prose. Here all the wealth and luxuriance of Ruskin's style are to be seen at their best, manipulated with fine artistry, and in perfect harmony with the subject matter.

St. Mark's

And now I wish that the reader, before I bring him into St. Mark's Place,[1] would imagine himself for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town, and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral. Let us go together up the more retired street, at the end of which we can see the pinnacles of one of the towers, and then through the low gray gateway, with its battlemented top and small latticed window in the centre, into the inner private-looking road or close, where nothing goes in but the carts of the tradesmen who supply the bishop and the chapter, and where there are little shaven grass-plots, fenced in by neat rails, before old-fashioned groups of somewhat diminutive and excessively

[1] the principal square in Venice.

trim houses, with little oriel and bay windows jutting out here and there, and deep wooden cornices and eaves painted cream color and white, and small porches to their doors in the shape of cockle-shells, or little, crooked, thick, indescribable wooden gables warped a little on one side; and so forward till we come to larger houses, also old-fashioned, but of red brick, and with gardens behind them, and fruit walls, which show here and there, among the nectarines, the vestiges of an old cloister arch or shaft, and looking in front on the cathedral square itself, laid out in rigid divisions of smooth grass and gravel walk, yet not uncheerful, especially on the sunny side, where the canons' children are walking with their nursery-maids. And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep-pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered, and gray, and grisly with heads of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and colored on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries, though they are rude and strong, and only sees like a drift of eddying black points, now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangor of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea.

Think for a little while of that scene, and the meaning of all its small formalisms, mixed with its serene sublimity. Estimate its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidence of the sense and steady performance of such kind of duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock; and weigh the influence of those dark towers on all who have passed through the lonely square at their feet for centuries, and on all who have seen them rising far away over the wooded plain, or catching on their square masses the last rays of the sunset, when the city at their feet was indicated only by the mist at the bend of the river. And then let us quickly recollect that we are in Venice, and land at the extremity of the Calla Lunga San Moisè, which may be considered as there answering to the secluded street that led us to our English cathedral gateway.

We find ourselves in a paved alley, some seven feet wide where it is widest, full of people, and resonant with cries of itinerant salesmen,—a shriek in their beginning, and dying away into a kind of brazen ringing, all the worse for its confinement between the high houses of the passage along which we have to make our way. Over-head, an inextricable confusion of rugged shutters, and iron balconies and chimney flues, pushed out on brackets to save room, and arched windows with projecting sills of Istrian stone, and gleams of green leaves here and there where a fig-tree branch escapes over a lower wall from some inner cortile,[2] leading the eye up to the narrow stream of blue sky high over all. On each side, a row of shops, as densely set as may be, occupying, in fact, intervals between the square stone shafts, about eight feet high, which carry the first floors: intervals of which one is narrow and serves as a door; the other is, in the more respectable shops, wainscotted to the height of the counter and glazed above, but in those of the poorer tradesmen left open to the ground, and the wares laid on benches and tables in the open air, the light in all cases entering at the front only, and fading away in a few feet from the threshold into a gloom which the eye from without cannot penetrate, but which is generally broken by a ray or two from a feeble lamp at the back of the shop, suspended before a print of the Virgin. The less pious shopkeeper sometimes leaves his lamp unlighted, and is contented with a penny print; the more religious one has his print colored and set in a little shrine with a gilded or figured fringe, with perhaps a faded flower or two on each side, and his lamp burning brilliantly. Here, at the fruiterer's, where the dark-green watermelons are heaped upon the counter like cannon balls, the Madonna has a tabernacle of fresh laurel leaves; but the pewterer next door has let his lamp out, and there is nothing to be seen in his shop but the dull gleam of the studded patterns on the copper pans, hanging from his roof in the darkness. Next comes a "Vendita Frittole e Liquori,"[3] where the Virgin, enthroned in a very humble manner beside a tallow candle on a back shelf, presides over certain ambrosial morsels of a nature too ambiguous to be

[2] an enclosed courtyard in a large house.
[3] fritter and liquor shop.

defined or enumerated. But a few steps farther on, at the regular wine-shop of the calle, where we are offered "Vino Nostrani a Soldi 28.32," the Madonna is in great glory, enthroned above ten or a dozen large red casks of three-year-old vintage, and flanked by goodly ranks of bottles of Maraschino, and two crimson lamps; and for the evening, when the gondoliers will come to drink out, under her auspices, the money they have gained during the day, she will have a whole chandelier.

A yard or two farther, we pass the hostelry of the Black Eagle, and, glancing as we pass through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well, with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moisè, whence to the entrance into St. Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful façade of San Moisè, which we will pause at another time to examine, and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians. We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the "Bocca di Piazza," and then we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away;—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory,—sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to kiss"—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labors of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these, another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's Lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore[4] had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval! There is a type of it in the very birds that haunt them; for, instead of the restless crowd, hoarse-voiced and sable-winged, drifting on the bleak upper air, the St. Mark's porches are full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years.

And what effect has this splendor on those who pass beneath it? You may walk from sunrise to sunset, to and fro, before the gateway of St. Mark's, and you will not see an eye lifted to it, nor a countenance brightened by it. Priest and layman,

[4] an island near Venice used for bathing and other amusements.

soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly. Up to the very recesses of the porches, the meanest tradesmen of the city push their counters; nay, the foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats—not "of them that sell doves" for sacrifice, but of the vendors of toys and caricatures. Round the whole square in front of the church there is almost a continuous line of cafés, where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals; in its center the Austrian bands play during the time of vespers, their martial music jarring with the organ notes,—the march drowning the miserere, and the sullen crowd thickening round them,—a crowd, which, if it had its will, would stiletto every soldier that pipes to it.[5] And in the recesses of the porches, all day long, knots of men of the lowest classes, unemployed and listless, lie basking in the sun like lizards; and unregarded children,—every heavy glance of their young eyes full of desperation and stony depravity, and their throats hoarse with cursing,—gamble, and fight, and snarl, and sleep, hour after hour, clashing their bruised centesimi[6] upon the marble ledges of the church porch. And the images of Christ and His angels look down upon it continually.

(1851-3)

From *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts*

In 1868 Ruskin delivered at Dublin a lecture on *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts*. Frederic Harrison says: "It contains much of Ruskin's most memorable work. It is full of sadness, of religious musing, and of passionate exhortation to work out a social reformation, to feel the mystery and the power that lies dormant in each human soul, and more passionate reprobation of the materialism and selfishness which society breeds in our generation so as to hide the mystery and pervert that power."

In 1871 this lecture was issued together with two others under the title of *Sesame and Lilies*.

. . . We have sat at the feet of the poets who sang of heaven, and they have told us their dreams. We have listened to the poets who sang of earth, and they have chanted to us dirges and words of despair. But there is one class of men more:—men, not capable of vision, nor sensitive to sorrow, but firm of purpose—practiced in business; learned in all that can be, (by handling,) known. Men, whose hearts and hopes are wholly in this present world, from whom, therefore, we may surely learn, at least, how, at present, conveniently to live in it. What will *they* say to us, or show us by example? These kings—these councillors—these statesmen and builders of kingdoms—these capitalists and men of business, who weigh the earth, and the dust of it, in a balance. They know the world, surely; and what is the mystery of life to us, is none to them. They can surely show us how to live, while we live, and to gather out of the present world what is best.

I think I can best tell you their answer by telling you a dream I had once. For though I am no poet, I have dreams sometimes:—I dreamed I was at a child's May-day party, in which every means of entertainment had been provided for them, by a wise and kind host. It was in a stately house, with beautiful gardens attached to it; and the children had been set free in the rooms and gardens, with no care whatever but how to pass their afternoon rejoicingly. They did not, indeed, know much about what was to happen next day; and some of them, I thought, were a little frightened, because there was a chance of their being sent to a new school where there were examinations; but they kept the thoughts of that out of their heads as well as they could, and resolved to enjoy themselves. The house, I said, was in a beautiful garden, and in the garden were all kinds of flowers; sweet, grassy banks for rest; and smooth lawns for play; and pleasant streams and woods; and rocky places for climbing. And the children were happy for a little while, but presently they separated themselves into parties; and then each party declared it would have a piece of the garden for its own, and that none of the others should have anything to do with that piece. Next, they quarreled violently which pieces they would have; and at last

[5] Venice at that time was under the control of the hated Austrian army.

[6] small Italian coins worth about one-fifth of a cent.

the boys took up the thing, as boys should do, "practically," and fought in the flower beds till there was hardly a flower left standing; then they trampled down each other's bits of the garden out of spite; and the girls cried till they could cry no more; and so they all lay down at last breathless in the ruin, and waited for the time when they were to be taken home in the evening.[1]

Meanwhile, the children in the house had been making themselves happy also in their manner. For them, there had been provided every kind of indoor pleasure: there was music for them to dance to; and the library was open, with all manner of amusing books; and there was a museum full of the most curious shells, and animals, and birds; and there was a workshop, with lathes and carpenter's tools, for the ingenious boys; and there were pretty fantastic dresses, for the girls to dress in; and there were microscopes, and kaleidoscopes; and whatever toys a child could fancy; and a table, in the dining-room, loaded with everything nice to eat.

But, in the midst of all this, it struck two or three of the more "practical" children, that they would like some of the brassheaded nails that studded the chairs; and so they set to work to pull them out. Presently, the others, who were reading, or looking at shells, took a fancy to do the like; and, in a little while, all the children, nearly, were spraining their fingers, in pulling out brassheaded nails. With all that they could pull out, they were not satisfied; and then, everybody wanted some of somebody else's. And at last, the really practical and sensible ones declared, that nothing was of any real consequence, that afternoon, except to get plenty of brassheaded nails; and that the books, and the cakes, and the microscopes were of no use at all in themselves, but only, if they could be exchanged for nail heads. And at last they began to fight for nail heads, as the others fought for the bits of garden. Only here and there, a despised one shrank away into a corner, and tried to get a little quiet with a book, in the midst of the noise; but all the practical ones thought of nothing else but counting nail heads all the afternoon—even though they knew they would not be allowed to carry so much as one brass knob away with them. But no—it was—"who has most nails? I have a hundred, and you have fifty; or, I have a thousand, and you have two. I must have as many as you before I leave the house, or I cannot possibly go home in peace." At last, they made so much noise that I awoke, and thought to myself, "What a false dream that is, of *children*!" The child is the father of the man; and wiser. Children never do such foolish things. Only men do.

But there is yet one last class of persons to be interrogated. ~~The wise religious men we have asked in vain; the wise contemplative men,~~ in vain; ~~the wise worldly men, in vain. But there~~ is another group yet. In the midst of this vanity of empty religion—of tragic contemplation—of wrathful and wretched ambition, and dispute for dust, there is yet one great group of persons, by whom all these disputers live—the persons who have determined, or have had it by a beneficent Providence determined for them, ~~that they will do something~~ useful; that whatever may be prepared for them hereafter, or happen to them here, they will, at least, deserve the food that God gives them by winning it honorably: and that, however fallen from the purity, or far from the peace, of Eden, they will carry out the duty of human dominion, though they have lost its felicity; and dress and keep the wilderness, though they no more can dress or keep the garden.

These,—hewers of wood, and drawers of water, —these, bent under burdens, or torn of scourges—these, that dig and weave—that plant and build; workers in wood, and in marble, and in iron—by whom all food, clothing, habitation, furniture, and means of delight are produced, for themselves, and for all men besides; men, whose deeds are good, though their words may be few; men, whose lives are serviceable, be they never so short, and worthy of honor, be they never so humble;—from these, surely, at least, we may receive some clear message of teaching; and pierce, for an instant, into the mystery of life, and of its arts.

Yes; from these, at last, we do receive a lesson. But I grieve to say, or rather—for that is the deeper truth of the matter—I rejoice to say—this message of theirs can only be received by joining them—not by thinking about them.

You sent for me to talk to you of art; and I have obeyed you in coming. But the main thing I have to tell you is,—that art must not be talked about. The fact that there is talk about it at all, signifies that it is ill done, or cannot be done. No true painter ever speaks, or ever has spoken, much of his art. The greatest speak nothing. Even

[1] I have sometimes been asked what this means. I intended it to set forth the wisdom of men in war contending for kingdoms, and what follows to set forth their wisdom in peace, contending for wealth. [Ruskin.]

Reynolds[2] is no exception, for he wrote of all that he could not himself do, and was utterly silent respecting all that he himself did.

The moment a man can really do his work he becomes speechless about it. All words become idle to him—all theories.

Does a bird need to theorize about building its nest, or boast of it when built? All good work is essentially done that way—without hesitation, without difficulty, without boasting; and in the doers of the best, there is an inner and involuntary power which approximates literally to the instinct of an animal—nay, I am certain that in the most perfect human artists, reason does *not* supersede instinct, but is added to an instinct as much more divine than that of the lower animals as the human body is more beautiful than theirs; that a great singer sings not with less instinct than the nightingale, but with more—only more various, applicable, and governable; that a great architect does not build with less instinct than the beaver or the bee, but with more—with an innate cunning of proportion that embraces all beauty, and a divine ingenuity of skill that improvises all construction. But be that as it may—be the instinct less or more than that of inferior animals—like or unlike theirs, still the human art is dependent on that first, and then upon an amount of practice, of science,—and of imagination disciplined by thought, which the true possessor of it knows to be incommunicable, and the true critic of it, inexplicable, except through long process of laborious years. That journey of life's conquest, in which hills over hills, and Alps on Alps arose, and sank,—do you think you can make another trace it painlessly by talking? Why, you cannot even carry us up an Alp, by talking. You can guide us up it, step by step, no otherwise—even so, best silently. You girls, who have been among the hills, know how the bad guide chatters and gesticulates, and it is "Put your foot here"; and "Mind how you balance yourself there"; but the good guide walks on quietly, without a word, only with his eyes on you when need is, and his arm like an iron bar, if need be.

In that slow way, also, art can be taught—if you have faith in your guide, and will let his arm be to you as an iron bar when need is. But in what teacher of art have you such faith? Certainly not in me; for, as I told you at first, I know well enough it is only because you think I can talk, not because you think I know my business, that you let me speak to you at all. If I were to tell you anything that seemed to you strange you would not believe it, and yet it would only be in telling you strange things that I could be of use to you. I could be of great use to you—infinite use—with brief saying, if you would believe it; but you would not, just because the thing that would be of real use would displease you. You are all wild, for instance, with admiration of Gustave Doré.[3] Well, suppose I were to tell you, in the strongest terms I could use, that Gustave Doré's art was bad—bad, not in weakness,—not in failure, —but bad with dreadful power—the power of the Furies and the Harpies mingled, enraging, and polluting; that so long as you looked at it, no perception of pure or beautiful art was possible for you. Suppose I were to tell you that! What would be the use? Would you look at Gustave Doré less? Rather, more, I fancy. On the other hand, I could soon put you into good humor with me, if I chose. I know well enough what you like, and how to praise it to your better liking. I could talk to you about moonlight, and twilight, and spring flowers, and autumn leaves, and the Madonnas of Raphael —how motherly! and the Sibyls of Michelangelo—how majestic! and the Saints of Angelico—how pious! and the Cherubs of Correggio[4]—how delicious! Old as I am, I could play you a tune on the harp yet, that you would dance to. But neither you nor I should be a bit the better or wiser; or, if we were, our increased wisdom could be of no practical effect. For, indeed, the arts, as regards teachableness, differ from the sciences also in this, that their power is founded not merely on facts which can be communicated, but on dispositions which require to be created. Art is neither to be achieved by effort of thinking, nor explained by accuracy of speaking. It is the instinctive and necessary result of power, which can only be developed through the mind of successive generations, and which finally burst into life under social conditions as slow of growth as the faculties they regulate. Whole eras of mighty history are summed, and the passions of dead myriads are concentrated, in the existence of a noble art; and if that noble art were among us, we should feel it and rejoice; not caring in the least to hear lectures on it; and since it is not among us, be assured we have to go back to the root of it, or, at least, to the place

[2] Sir Joshua Reynolds, the celebrated English portrait painter of the eighteenth century.

[3] Gustave Doré (1832-1883), French painter well known for his illustrations of Dante.

[4] Michelangelo (1475-1564); Fra Angelico (1387-1455); Correggio (1494-1534), famous Italian painters.

where the stock of it is yet alive, and the branches began to die. . . .

And now, returning to the broader question, what these arts and labors of life have to teach us of its mystery, this is the first of their lessons—that the more beautiful the art, the more it is essentially the work of people who *feel themselves wrong*;—who are striving for the fulfillment of a law, and the grasp of a loveliness, which they have not yet attained, which they feel even farther and farther from attaining the more they strive for it. And yet, in still deeper sense, it is the work of people who know also that they are right. The very sense of inevitable error from their purpose marks the perfectness of that purpose, and the continued sense of failure arises from the continued opening of the eyes more clearly to all the sacredest laws of truth.

This is one lesson. The second is a very plain, and greatly precious one: namely—that whenever the arts and labors of life are fulfilled in this spirit of striving against misrule, and doing whatever we have to do, honorably and perfectly, they invariably bring happiness, as much as seems possible to the nature of man. In all other paths by which that happiness is pursued there is disappointment, or destruction: for ambition and for passion there is no rest—no fruition; the fairest pleasures of youth perish in a darkness greater than their past light: and the loftiest and purest love too often does but inflame the cloud of life with endless fire of pain. But, ascending from lowest to highest, through every scale of human industry, that industry worthily followed, gives peace. Ask the laborer in the field, at the forge, or in the mine; ask the patient, delicate-fingered artisan, or the strong-armed, fiery-hearted worker in bronze, and in marble, and with the colors of light; and none of these, who are true workmen, will ever tell you, that they have found the law of heaven an unkind one—that in the sweat of their face they should eat bread, till they return to the ground[5]; nor that they ever found it an unrewarded obedience, if, indeed, it was rendered faithfully to the command—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do—do it with thy might."[6]

These are the two great and constant lessons which our laborers teach us of the mystery of life. But there is another, and a sadder one, which they cannot teach us, which we must read on their tombstones.

"Do it with thy might." There have been myriads upon myriads of human creatures who have obeyed this law—who have put every breath and nerve of their being into its toil—who have devoted every hour, and exhausted every faculty—who have bequeathed their unaccomplished thoughts at death—who, being dead, have yet spoken, by majesty of memory, and strength of example. And, at last, what has all this "Might" of humanity accomplished, in six thousand years of labor and sorrow? What has it *done*? Take the three chief occupations and arts of men, one by one, and count their achievements. Begin with the first—the lord of them all—Agriculture. Six thousand years have passed since we were set to till the ground, from which we were taken. How much of it is tilled? How much of that which is, wisely or well? In the very center and chief garden of Europe[7]—where the two forms of parent Christianity have had their fortresses—where the noble Catholics of the Forest Cantons, and the noble Protestants of the Vaudois valleys, have maintained, for dateless ages, their faiths and liberties—there the unchecked Alpine rivers yet run wild in devastation; and the marshes, which a few hundred men could redeem with a year's labor, still blast their helpless inhabitants into fevered idiotism. That is so, in the center of Europe! While, on the near coast of Africa, once the Garden of the Hesperides, an Arab woman, but a few sunsets since, ate her child, for famine. And, with all the treasures of the East at our feet, we, in our own dominion, could not find a few grains of rice, for a people that asked of us no more; but stood by, and saw five hundred thousand of them perish of hunger.[8]

Then, after agriculture, the art of kings, take the next head of human arts—Weaving; the art of queens, honored of all noble Heathen women, in the person of their virgin goddess—honored of all Hebrew women, by the word of their wisest king—"She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff; she stretcheth out her hand to the poor. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself covering of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant."[9] What have we done in all these thousands of years with this bright art of Greek maid

[5] See *Genesis*, 3:19.
[6] See *Ecclesiastes*, 9:10
[7] Switzerland.
[8] This refers to the famine in Orissa, India.
[9] See *Proverbs*, 31:19-22, 24

and Christian matron? Six thousand years of weaving, and have we learned to weave? Might not every naked wall have been purple with tapestry, and every feeble breast fenced with sweet colors from the cold? What have we done? Our fingers are too few, it seems, to twist together some poor covering for our bodies. We set our streams to work for us, and choke the air with fire, to turn our spinning-wheels—and,—*are we yet clothed?* Are not the streets of the capitals of Europe foul with sale of cast clouts and rotten rags? Is not the beauty of your sweet children left in wretchedness of disgrace, while, with better honor, nature clothes the brood of the bird in its nest, and the suckling of the wolf in her den? And does not every winter's snow robe what you have not robed, and shroud what you have not shrouded; and every winter's wind bear up to heaven its wasted souls, to witness against you hereafter, by the voice of their Christ,—"I was naked, and ye clothed me not"?[10]

Lastly—take the Art of Building—the strongest —proudest—most orderly—most enduring of the arts of man; that of which the produce is in the surest manner accumulative, and need not perish, or be replaced; but if once well done, will stand more strongly than the unbalanced rocks—more prevalently than the crumbling hills. The art which is associated with all civic pride and sacred principle; with which men record their power—satisfy their enthusiasm—make sure their defense—define and make dear their habitation. And in six thousand years of building, what have we done? Of the greater part of all that skill and strength, *no* vestige is left, but fallen stones, that encumber the fields and impede the streams. But, from this waste of disorder, and of time, and of rage, what *is* left to us? Constructive and progressive creatures that we are, with ruling brains, and forming hands, capable of fellowship, and thirsting for fame, can we not contend, in comfort, with the insects of the forest, or, in achievement, with the worm of the sea? The white surf rages in vain against the ramparts built by poor atoms of scarcely nascent life; but only ridges of formless ruin mark the places where once dwelt our noblest multitudes. The ant and the moth have cells for each of their young, but our little ones lie in festering heaps, in homes that consume them like graves; and night by night, from the corners of our streets, rises up the cry of the homeless—"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in."[11]

[10] See *Matthew*, 25·43

[11] See *Matthew*, 25 43.

Must it be always thus? Is our life forever to be without profit—without possession? Shall the strength of its generations be as barren as death; or cast away their labor, as the wild fig tree casts her untimely figs? Is it all a dream then—the desire of the eyes and the pride of life—or, if it be, might we not live in nobler dream than this? The poets and prophets, the wise men, and the scribes, though they have told us nothing about a life to come, have told us much about the life that is now. They have had—they also,—their dreams, and we have laughed at them. They have dreamed of mercy, and of justice; they have dreamed of peace and good will; they have dreamed of labor undisappointed, and of rest undisturbed; they have dreamed of fullness in harvest, and overflowing in store; they have dreamed of wisdom in council, and of providence in law; of gladness of parents, and strength of children, and glory of gray hairs. And at these visions of theirs we have mocked, and held them for idle and vain, unreal and unaccomplishable. What have we accomplished with our realities? Is this what has come of our worldly wisdom, tried against their folly? this, our mightiest possible, against their impotent ideal? or, have we only wandered among the spectra of a baser felicity, and chased phantoms of the tombs, instead of visions of the Almighty; and walked after the imaginations of our evil hearts, instead of after the counsels of Eternity, until our lives—not in the likeness of the cloud of heaven, but of the smoke of hell—have become "as a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"?[12]

Does it vanish then? Are you sure of that?—sure, that the nothingness of the grave will be a rest from this troubled nothingness; and that the coiling shadow, which disquiets itself in vain, cannot change into the smoke of the torment that ascends forever? Will any answer that they *are* sure of it, and that there is no fear, nor hope, nor desire, nor labor, whither they go? Be it so: will you not, then, make as sure of the Life that now is, as you are of the Death that is to come? Your hearts are wholly in this world—will you not give them to it wisely, as well as perfectly? And see, first of all, that you *have* hearts, and sound hearts, too, to give. Because you have no heaven to look for, is that any reason that you should remain ignorant of this wonderful and infinite earth, which is firmly and instantly given you in possession? Although your days are numbered, and the following darkness sure, is it necessary that you should share the deg-

[12] See *James*, 4 14

radation of the brute, because you are condemned to its mortality; or live the life of the moth, and of the worm, because you are to companion them in the dust? Not so; we may have but a few thousands of days to spend, perhaps hundreds only—perhaps tens; nay, the longest of our time and best, looked back on, will be but as a moment, as the twinkling of an eye; still we are men, not insects; we are living spirits, not passing clouds. "He maketh the winds His messengers; the momentary fire, His minister";[13] and shall we do less than *these*? Let us do the work of men while we bear the form of them; and, as we snatch our narrow portion of time out of Eternity, snatch also our narrow inheritance of passion out of Immortality—even though our lives *be* as a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

But there are some of you who believe not this—who think this cloud of life has no such close—that it is to float, revealed and illumined, upon the floor of heaven, in the day when He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him. Some day, you believe, within these five, or ten, or twenty years, for every one of us the judgment will be set, and the books opened. If that be true, far more than that must be true. Is there but one day of judgment? Why, for us every day is a day of judgment—every day is a *Dies Iræ*,[14] and writes its irrevocable verdict in the flame of its West. Think you that judgment waits till the doors of the grave are opened? It waits at the doors of your houses—it waits at the corners of your streets; we are in the midst of judgment—the insects that we crush are our judges—the moments we fret away are our judges—the elements that feed us, judge, as they minister—and the pleasures that deceive us, judge, as they indulge. Let us, for our lives, do the work of Men while we bear the form of them, if indeed those lives are *Not* as a vapor, and do *Not* vanish away.

"The work of men"—and what is that? Well, we may any of us know very quickly, on the condition of being wholly ready to do it. But many of us are for the most part thinking, not of what we are to do, but of what we are to get; and the best of us are sunk into the sin of Ananias, and it is a mortal one—we want to keep back part of the price; and we continually talk of taking up our cross, as if the only harm in a cross was the *weight* of it—as if it was only a thing to be carried, instead of to be—crucified upon. "They that are His have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."[15] Does that mean, think you, that in time of national distress, of religious trial, of crisis for every interest and hope of humanity—none of us will cease jesting, none cease idling, none put themselves to any wholesome work, none take so much as a tag of lace off their footmen's coats, to save the world? Or does it rather mean, that they are ready to leave houses, lands, and kindreds—yes, and life, if need be? Life!—some of us are ready enough to throw that away, joyless as we have made it. But "*station* in Life"—how many of us are ready to quit *that*? Is it not always the great objection, where there is question of finding something useful to do—"We cannot leave our stations in Life"?

Those of us who really cannot—that is to say, who can only maintain themselves by continuing in some business or salaried office, have already something to do; and all that they have to see to is, that they do it honestly and with all their might. But with most people who use that apology, "remaining in the station of life to which Providence has called them" means keeping all the carriages, and all the footmen and large houses they can possibly pay for; and, once for all, I say that if ever Providence *did* put them into stations of that sort—which is not at all a matter of certainty—Providence is just now very distinctly calling them out again. Levi's station in life was the receipt of custom; and Peter's, the shore of Galilee; and Paul's, the antechambers of the High Priest,[16]—which "station in life" each had to leave, with brief notice.

And, whatever our station in life may be, at this crisis, those of us who mean to fulfill our duty ought first to live on as little as we can; and, secondly, to do all the wholesome work for it we can, and to spend all we can spare in doing all the sure good we can.

And sure good is, first in feeding people, then in dressing people, then in lodging people, and lastly in rightly pleasing people, with arts, or sciences, or any other subject of thought.

I say first in feeding; and, once for all, do not let yourselves be deceived by any of the common talk of "indiscriminate charity." The order to us is not to feed the deserving hungry, nor the industrious hungry, nor the amiable and well-intentioned hungry, but simply to feed the hungry. It is quite

[13] See *Psalms*, 104:4.

[14] "Day of wrath," the opening words of one of the most famous of medieval hymns.

[15] See *Galatians*, 5:24.

[16] This refers to the various apostles who left their daily work to take up the preaching of Christ's gospel.

true, infallibly true, that if any man will not work, neither should he eat[17]—think of that, and every time you sit down to your dinner, ladies and gentlemen, say solemnly, before you ask a blessing, "How much work have I done today for my dinner?" But the proper way to enforce that order on those below you, as well as on yourselves, is not to leave vagabonds and honest people to starve together, but very distinctly to discern and seize your vagabond; and shut your vagabond up out of honest people's way, and very sternly then see that, until he has worked, he does *not* eat. But the first thing is to be sure you have the food to give; and, therefore, to enforce the organization of vast activities in agriculture and in commerce, for the production of the wholesomest food, and proper storing and distribution of it, so that no famine shall any more be possible among civilized beings. There is plenty of work in this business alone, and at once, for any number of people who like to engage in it.

Secondly, dressing people—that is to say, urging everyone within reach of your influence to be always neat and clean, and giving them means of being so. In so far as they absolutely refuse, you must give up the effort with respect to them, only taking care that no children within your sphere of influence shall any more be brought up with such habits; and that every person who is willing to dress with propriety shall have encouragement to do so. And the first absolutely necessary step toward this is the gradual adoption of a consistent dress for different ranks of persons, so that their rank shall be known by their dress; and the restriction of the changes of fashion within certain limits. All which appears for the present quite impossible; but it is only so far even difficult as it is difficult to conquer our vanity, frivolity, and desire to appear what we are not. And it is not, nor ever shall be, creed of mine, that these mean and shallow vices are unconquerable by Christian women.

And then, thirdly, lodging people, which you may think should have been put first, but I put it third, because we must feed and clothe people where we find them, and lodge them afterward. And providing lodgment for them means a great deal of vigorous legislation, and cutting down of vested interests that stand in the way, and after that, or before that, so far as we can get it, thorough sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have; and then the building of more, strongly, beautifully, and in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams, and walled round, so that there may be no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within, and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass, and sight of far horizon, might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This is the final aim; but in immediate action every minor and possible good to be instantly done, when, and as, we can; roofs mended that have holes in them—fences patched that have gaps in them—walls buttressed that totter—and floors propped that shake; cleanliness and order enforced with our own hands and eyes, till we are breathless, every day. And all the fine arts will healthily follow. I myself have washed a flight of stone stairs all down, with bucket and broom, in a Savoy inn, where they hadn't washed their stairs since they first went up them; and I never made a better sketch than that afternoon.

These, then, are the three first needs of civilized life; and the law for every Christian man and woman is, that they shall be in direct service toward one of these three needs, as far as is consistent with their own special occupation, and if they have no special business, then wholly in one of these services. And out of such exertion in plain duty all other good will come; for in this direct contention with material evil, you will find out the real nature of all evil; you will discern by the various kinds of resistance, what is really the fault and main antagonism to good; also you will find the most unexpected helps and profound lessons given, and truths will come thus down to us which the speculation of all our lives would never have raised us up to. You will find nearly every educational problem solved, as soon as you truly want to do something; everybody will become of use in their own fittest way, and will learn what is best for them to know in that use. Competitive examination will then, and not till then, be wholesome, because it will be daily, and calm, and in practice; and on these familiar arts, and minute, but certain and serviceable knowledges, will be surely edified and sustained the greater arts and splendid theoretical sciences.

But much more than this. On such holy and simple practice will be founded, indeed, at last, an infallible religion. The greatest of all the mysteries of life, and the most terrible, is the corruption of even the sincerest religion, which is not daily founded on rational, effective, humble, and helpful action. Helpful action, observe! for there is just

[17] See *II Thessalonians*, 3·10

one law, which obeyed, keeps all religions pure—forgotten, makes them all false. Whenever in any religious faith, dark or bright, we allow our minds to dwell upon the points in which we differ from other people, we are wrong, and in the devil's power. That is the essence of the Pharisee's thanksgiving—"Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." At every moment of our lives we should be trying to find out, not in what we differ with other people, but in what we agree with them; and the moment we find we can agree as to anything that should be done, kind or good, (and who but fools couldn't?) then do it; push at it together: you can't quarrel in a side-by-side push; but the moment that even the best men stop pushing, and begin talking, they mistake their pugnacity for piety, and it's all over. I will not speak of the crimes which in past times have been committed in the name of Christ, nor of the follies which are at this hour held to be consistent with obedience to Him; but I *will* speak of the morbid corruption and waste of vital power in religious sentiment, by which the pure strength of that which should be the guiding soul of every nation, the splendor of its youthful manhood, and spotless light of its maidenhood, is averted or cast away. You may see continually girls who have never been taught to do a single useful thing thoroughly; who cannot sew, who cannot cook, who cannot cast an account, nor prepare a medicine, whose whole life has been passed either in play or in pride; you will find girls like these, when they are earnest-hearted, cast all their innate passion of religious spirit, which was meant by God to support them through the irksomeness of daily toil, into grievous and vain meditation over the meaning of the great Book, of which no syllable was ever yet to be understood but through a deed; all the instinctive wisdom and mercy of their womanhood made vain, and the glory of their pure consciences warped into fruitless agony concerning questions which the laws of common serviceable life would have either solved for them in an instant, or kept out of their way. Give such a girl any true work that will make her active in the dawn, and weary at night, with the consciousness that her fellow-creatures have indeed been the better for her day, and the powerless sorrow of her enthusiasm will transform itself into a majesty of radiant and beneficent peace.

So with our youths. We once taught them to make Latin verses, and called them educated; now we teach them to leap and to row, to hit a ball with a bat, and call them educated. Can they plough, can they sow, can they plant at the right time, or build with a steady hand? Is it the effort of their lives to be chaste, knightly, faithful, holy in thought, lovely in word and deed? Indeed it is, with some, nay, with many, and the strength of England is in them, and the hope; but we have to turn their courage from the toil of war to the toil of mercy; and their intellect from dispute of words to discernment of things; and their knighthood from the errantry of adventure to the state and fidelity of a kingly power. And then, indeed, shall abide, for them and for us, an incorruptible felicity, and an infallible religion; shall abide for us Faith, no more to be assailed by temptation, no more to be defended by wrath and by fear—shall abide with us Hope, no more to be quenched by the years that overwhelm, or made ashamed by the shadows that betray:—shall abide for us, and with us, the greatest of these; the abiding will, the abiding name of our Father. For the greatest of these is Charity.[18]

(1871)

[18] See *I Corinthians*, 13 13.

Matthew Arnold

(1822-1888)

[For a summary of Arnold's life and works, see page 571.]

Preface to *Essays in Criticism*

(FIRST SERIES)

Several of the Essays which are here collected and reprinted had the good or the bad fortune to be much criticized at the time of their first appearance. I am not now going to inflict upon the reader a reply to those criticisms; for one or two explanations which are desirable, I shall elsewhere, perhaps, be able some day to find an opportunity; but, indeed, it is not in my nature,—some of my critics would rather say, not in my power,—to dispute on behalf of any opinion, even my own, very obstinately. To try and approach truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, nor to persist in pressing forward, on any one side, with violence and self-will,—it is only thus, it seems to me, that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious Goddess, whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline. He who will do nothing but fight impetuously towards her on his own, one, favorite, particular line, is inevitably destined to run his head into the folds of the black robe in which she is wrapped.

So it is not to reply to my critics that I write this Preface, but to prevent a misunderstanding, of which certain phrases that some of them use make me apprehensive. Mr. Wright, one of the many translators of Homer, has published a letter to the Dean of Canterbury, complaining of some remarks of mine, uttered now a long while ago, on his version of the *Iliad*.[1] One cannot be always studying one's own works, and I was really under the impression, till I saw Mr. Wright's complaint, that I had spoken of him with all respect. The reader may judge of my astonishment, therefore, at finding, from Mr. Wright's pamphlet, that I had "declared with much solemnity that there is not any proper reason for his existing." That I never said; but, on looking back at my Lectures on Translating Homer, I find that I did say, not that Mr. Wright, but that Mr. Wright's version of the *Iliad*, repeating in the main the merits and defects of Cowper's version, as Mr. Sotheby's repeated those of Pope's version, had, if I might be pardoned for saying so, no proper reason for existing. Elsewhere I expressly spoke of the merit of his version; but I confess that the phrase, qualified as I have shown, about its want of a proper reason for existing, I used. Well, the phrase had, perhaps, too much vivacity; we have all of us a right to exist, we and our works; an unpopular author should be the last person to call in question this right. So I gladly withdraw the offending phrase, and I am sorry for having used it; Mr. Wright, however, would perhaps be more indulgent to my vivacity, if he considered that we are none of us likely to be lively much longer. My vivacity is but the last sparkle of flame before we are all in the dark, the last glimpse of color before we all go into drab,—the drab of the earnest, prosaic, practical, austerely literal future. Yes, the world will soon be the Philistines'! and then, with every voice, not of thunder, silenced, and the whole earth filled and ennobled every morning by the magnificent roaring of the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph*, we shall all yawn in one another's faces with the dismalest, the most unimpeachable gravity.

But I return to my design in writing this Preface. That design was, after apologizing to Mr. Wright for my vivacity of five years ago, to beg him and others to let me bear my own burdens, without saddling the great and famous University to which I have the honor to belong with any portion of them. What I mean to deprecate is such phrases as, "his professorial assault," "his assertions issued *ex cathedra*,"[2] "the sanction of his name as the representative of poetry," and so on. Proud as I am of my connection with the University of Oxford,[3] I can truly say that, knowing how unpopular a task one is undertaking when one tries to pull out a few more stops in that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman, I have sought always to stand by myself, and to compromise others as little as possible. Besides this, my native modesty is such that I have always been shy of assuming the honorable

[1] in Arnold's *On Translating Homer*.

[2] from the throne.

[3] as Professor of Poetry.

style of Professor, because this is a title I share with so many distinguished men,—Professor Pepper, Professor Anderson, Professor Frickel, and others, —who adorn it, I feel, much more than I do.

However, it is not merely out of modesty that I prefer to stand alone, and to concentrate on myself, as a plain citizen of the republic of letters, and not as an office-bearer in a hierarchy, the whole responsibility for all I write; it is much more out of genuine devotion to the University of Oxford, for which I feel, and always must feel, the fondest, the most reverential attachment. In an epoch of dissolution and transformation, such as that on which we are now entered, habits, ties, and associations are inevitably broken up, the action of individuals becomes more distinct, the shortcomings, errors, heats, disputes, which necessarily attend individual action, are brought into greater prominence. Who would not gladly keep clear, from all these passing clouds, an august institution which was there before they arose, and which will be there when they have blown over?

It is true, the *Saturday Review* maintains that our epoch of transformation is finished; that we have found our philosophy; that the British nation has searched all anchorages for the spirit, and has finally anchored itself, in the fulness of perfected knowledge, on Benthamism.[4] This idea at first made a great impression on me; not only because it is so consoling in itself, but also because it explained a phenomenon which in the summer of last year had, I confess, a good deal troubled me. At that time my avocations led me to travel almost daily on one of the Great Eastern Lines,—the Woodford Branch. Every one knows that the murderer, Müller, perpetrated his detestable act on the North London Railway, close by. The English middle class, of which I am myself a feeble unit, travel on the Woodford Branch in large numbers. Well, the demoralization of our class,—the class which (the newspapers are constantly saying it, so I may repeat it without vanity) has done all the great things which have ever been done in England,—the demoralization, I say, of our class, caused by the Bow tragedy, was something bewildering. Myself a transcendentalist (as the *Saturday Review* knows), I escaped the infection; and, day after day, I used to ply my agitated fellow-travellers with all the consolations which my transcendentalism would naturally suggest to me. I reminded them how Caesar refused to take precautions against assassination, because life was not worth having at the price of an ignoble solicitude for it. I reminded them what insignificant atoms we all are in the life of the world. "Suppose the worst to happen," I said, addressing a portly jeweller from Cheapside; "suppose even yourself to be the victim; *il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire.*[5] We should miss you for a day or two upon the Woodford Branch; but the great mundane movement would still go on, the gravel walks of your villa would still be rolled, dividends would still be paid at the Bank, omnibuses would still run, there would still be the old crush at the corner of Fenchurch Street." All was of no avail. Nothing could moderate, in the bosom of the great English middle class, their passionate, absorbing, almost bloodthirsty clinging to life. At the moment I thought this over-concern a little unworthy; but the *Saturday Review* suggests a touching explanation of it. What I took for the ignoble clinging to life of a comfortable worldling, was, perhaps, only the ardent longing of a faithful Benthamite, traversing an age still dimmed by the last mists of transcendentalism, to be spared long enough to see his religion in the full and final blaze of its triumph. This respectable man, whom I imagined to be going up to London to serve his shop, or to buy shares, or to attend an Exeter Hall meeting, or to assist at the deliberations of the Marylebone Vestry, was even, perhaps, in real truth, on a pious pilgrimage, to obtain from Mr. Bentham's executors a secret bone of his great, dissected master.[6]

And yet, after all, I cannot but think that the *Saturday Review* has here, for once, fallen a victim to an idea,—a beautiful but deluding idea,—and that the British nation has not yet, so entirely as the reviewer seems to imagine, found the last word of its philosophy. No, we are all seekers still! seekers often make mistakes, and I wish mine to redound to my own discredit only, and not to touch Oxford. Beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged, by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!

"There are our young barbarians, all at play!"

And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true

[4] the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).

[5] no man is really necessary.

[6] Bentham gave his body to be dissected and his skeleton to be preserved at University College, London.

goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection,—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?—nearer, perhaps, than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! what example could ever so inspire us to keep down the Philistine in ourselves, what teacher could ever so save us from that bondage to which we are all prone, that bondage which Goethe, in his incomparable lines on the death of Schiller, makes it his friend's highest praise (and nobly did Schiller deserve the praise) to have left miles out of sight behind him;—the bondage of *"was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine!"*[7] She will forgive me, even if I have unwittingly drawn upon her a shot or two aimed at her unworthy son; for she is generous, and the cause in which I fight is, after all, hers. Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this queen of romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone?

(1865)

The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

This is a full statement of Arnold's opposition to the materialism and insularity of his compatriots. His insistence on the creative function of criticism has had important consequences on literary criticism. Originally published in *The National Review* in November, 1864, it was reprinted as the first of the *Essays in Criticism* (1865).

Many objections have been made to a proposition which, in some remarks of mine on translating Homer I ventured to put forth; a proposition about criticism, and its importance at the present day. I said that "of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavor, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." I added, that owing to the operation in English literature of certain causes, "almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires,—criticism"; and that the power and value of English literature was thereby impaired. More than one rejoinder declared that the importance I here assigned to criticism was excessive, and asserted the inherent superiority of the creative effort of the human spirit over its critical effort. And the other day, having been led by an excellent notice of Wordsworth, published in the *North British Review*, to turn again to his biography, I found, in the words of this great man, whom I, for one, must always listen to with the profoundest respect, a sentence passed on the critic's business, which seems to justify every possible disparagement of it. Wordsworth says in one of his letters:

"The writers in these publications" (the Reviews), "while they prosecute their inglorious employment, cannot be supposed to be in a state of mind very favorable for being affected by the finer influences of a thing so pure as genuine poetry."

And a trustworthy reporter of his conversation quotes a more elaborate judgment to the same effect:

"Wordsworth holds the critical power very low, infinitely lower than the inventive; and he said today that if the quantity of time consumed in writing critiques on the works of others were given to original composition, of whatever kind it might be, it would be much better employed; it would make a man find out sooner his own level, and it would do infinitely less mischief. A false or malicious criticism may do much injury to the minds of others; a stupid invention, either in prose or verse, is quite harmless."

It is almost too much to expect of poor human nature, that a man capable of producing some effect in one line of literature, should, for the greater good of society, voluntarily doom himself to impotence and obscurity in another. Still less is this to be expected from men addicted to the composition of the "false or malicious criticism" of which Wordsworth speaks. However, everybody would admit that a false or malicious criticism had better never have been written. Everybody, too, would be willing to admit, as a general proposition, that the critical faculty is lower than the inventive. But is

[7] that which binds us all, the Commonplace.

it true that criticism is really, in itself, a baneful and injurious employment? is it true that all time given to writing critiques on the works of others would be much better employed if it were given to original composition, of whatever kind this may be? Is it true that Johnson had better have gone on producing more *Irenes*[1] instead of writing his *Lives of the Poets*? nay, is it certain that Wordsworth himself was better employed in making his Ecclesiastical Sonnets than when he made his celebrated Preface,[2] so full of criticism, and criticism of the works of others? Wordsworth was himself a great critic, and it is to be sincerely regretted that he has not left us more criticism; Goethe was one of the greatest of critics, and we may sincerely congratulate ourselves that he has left us so much criticism. Without wasting time over the exaggeration which Wordsworth's judgment on criticism clearly contains, or over an attempt to trace the causes,—not difficult, I think, to be traced,—which may have led Wordsworth to this exaggeration, a critic may with advantage seize an occasion for trying his own conscience, and for asking himself of what real service, at any given moment, the practice of criticism either is, or may be made, to his own mind and spirit, and to the minds and spirits of others.

The critical power is of lower rank than the creative. True; but in assenting to this proposition, one or two things are to be kept in mind. It is undeniable that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity, is the true function of man; it is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness. But it is undeniable, also, that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art; if it were not so, all but a very few men would be shut out from the true happiness of all men. They may have it in well-doing, they may have it in learning, they may have it even in criticizing. This is one thing to be kept in mind. Another is, that the exercise of the creative power in the production of great works of literature or art, however high this exercise of it may rank, is not at all epochs and under all conditions possible; and that therefore labor may be vainly spent in attempting it, which might with more fruit be used in preparing for it, in rendering it possible. This creative power works with elements, with materials; what if it has not those materials, those elements, ready for its use? In that case it must surely wait till they are ready. Now, in literature,—I will limit myself to literature, for it is about literature that the question arises,—the elements with which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time. At any rate we may lay it down as certain that in modern literature no manifestation of the creative power not working with these can be very important or fruitful. And I say *current* at the time, not merely accessible at the time; for creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas, that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations, making beautiful works with them, in short. But it must have the atmosphere, it must find itself amidst the order of ideas, in order to work freely; and these it is not so easy to command. This is why great creative epochs in literature are so rare; this is why there is so much that is unsatisfactory in the productions of many men of real genius; because, for the creation of a master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment; the creative power has, for its happy exercise, appointed elements, and those elements are not in its own control.

Nay, they are more within the control of the critical power. It is the business of the critical power, as I said in the words already quoted, "in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." Thus it tends, at last, to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself. It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature.

Or, to narrow our range, and quit these considerations of the general march of genius and of society, —considerations which are apt to become too abstract and impalpable,—every one can see that a poet, for instance, ought to know life and the

[1] A heavy tragedy produced by Johnson in 1749.
[2] Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

world before dealing with them in poetry; and life and the world being in modern times very complex things, the creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, implies a great critical effort behind it; else it would be a comparatively poor, barren, and short-lived affair. This is why Byron's poetry had so little endurance in it, and Goethe's so much; both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe's was nourished by a great critical effort providing the true materials for it, and Byron's was not; Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively and thoroughly than Byron. He knew a great deal more of them, and he knew them much more as they really are.

It has long seemed to me that the burst of creative activity in our literature, through the first quarter of this century, had about it in fact something premature; and that from this cause its productions are doomed, most of them, in spite of the sanguine hopes which accompanied and do still accompany them, to prove hardly more lasting than the productions of far less splendid epochs. And this prematureness comes from its having proceeded without having its proper data, without sufficient materials to work with. In other words, the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety. Wordsworth cared little for books, and disparaged Goethe. I admire Wordsworth, as he is, so much that I cannot wish him different; and it is vain, no doubt, to imagine such a man different from what he is, to suppose that he could have been different. But surely the one thing wanting to make Wordsworth an even greater poet than he is,—his thought richer, and his influence of wider application,—was that he should have read more books, among them, no doubt, those of that Goethe whom he disparaged without reading him.

But to speak of books and reading may easily lead to a misunderstanding here. It was not really books and reading that lacked to our poetry at this epoch; Shelley had plenty of reading, Coleridge had immense reading. Pindar and Sophocles—as we all say so glibly, and often with so little discernment of the real import of what we are saying—had not many books; Shakespeare was no deep reader. True; but in the Greece of Pindar and Sophocles, in the England of Shakespeare, the poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive. And this state of things is the true basis for the creative power's exercise, in this it finds its data, its materials, truly ready for its hand; all the books and reading in the world are only valuable as they are helps to this. Even when this does not actually exist, books and reading may enable a man to construct a kind of semblance of it in his own mind, a world of knowledge and intelligence in which he may live and work. This is by no means an equivalent to the artist for the nationally diffused life and thought of the epochs of Sophocles or Shakespeare; but, besides that it may be a means of preparation for such epochs, it does really constitute, if many share in it, a quickening and sustaining atmosphere of great value. Such an atmosphere the many-sided learning and the long and widely-combined critical effort of Germany formed for Goethe, when he lived and worked. There was no national glow of life and thought there, as in the Athens of Pericles or the England of Elizabeth. That was the poet's weakness. But there was a sort of equivalent for it in the complete culture and unfettered thinking of a large body of Germans. That was his strength. In the England of the first quarter of this century there was neither a national glow of life and thought, such as we had in the age of Elizabeth, nor vet a culture and a force of learning and criticism such as were to be found in Germany. Therefore the creative power of poetry wanted, for success in the highest sense, materials and a basis; a thorough interpretation of the world was necessarily denied to it.

At first sight it seems strange that out of the immense stir of the French Revolution and its age should not have come a crop of works of genius equal to that which came out of the stir of the great productive time of Greece, or out of that of the Renaissance, with its powerful episode the Reformation. But the truth is that the stir of the French Revolution took a character which essentially distinguished it from such movements as these. These were, in the main, disinterestedly intellectual and spiritual movements; movements in which the human spirit looked for its satisfaction in itself and in the increased play of its own activity. The French Revolution took a political, practical character. The movement which went on in France under the old régime, from 1700 to 1789, was far more really akin than that of the Revolution itself to the movement of the Renais-

sance; the France of Voltaire and Rousseau told far more powerfully upon the mind of Europe than the France of the Revolution. Goethe reproached this last expressly with having "thrown quiet culture back." Nay, and the true key to how much in our Byron, even in our Wordsworth, is this!—that they had their source in a great movement of feeling, not in a great movement of mind. The French Revolution, however, that object of so much blind love and so much blind hatred,—found undoubtedly its motive-power in the intelligence of men, and not in their practical sense;—this is what distinguishes it from the English Revolution of Charles the First's time. This is what makes it a more spiritual event than our Revolution, an event of much more powerful and world-wide interest, though practically less successful—it appeals to an order of ideas which are universal, certain, permanent. 1789 asked of a thing, Is it rational? 1642 asked of a thing, Is it legal? or, when it went furthest, Is it according to conscience? This is the English fashion, a fashion to be treated, within its own sphere, with the highest respect; for its success, within its own sphere, has been prodigious. But what is law in one place is not law in another; what is law here to-day is not law even here to-morrow; and as for conscience, what is binding on one man's conscience is not binding on another's. The old woman[3] who threw her stool at the head of the surpliced minister in the Tron Church at Edinburgh obeyed an impulse to which millions of the human race may be permitted to remain strangers. But the prescriptions of reason are absolute, unchanging, of universal validity; *to count by tens is the easiest way of counting*—that is a proposition of which every one, from here to the Antipodes, feels the force; at least I should say so if we did not live in a country where it is not impossible that any morning we may find a letter in the *Times* declaring that a decimal coinage is an absurdity. That a whole nation should have been penetrated with an enthusiasm for pure reason, and with an ardent zeal for making its prescriptions triumph, is a very remarkable thing, when we consider how little of mind or anything so worthy and quickening as mind, comes into the motives which alone, in general, *impel* great masses of men. In spite of the extravagant direction given to this enthusiasm, in spite of the crimes and follies in which it lost itself, the French Revolution derives from the force, truth, and universality of the ideas which it took for its law, and from the passion with which it could inspire a multitude for these ideas, a unique and still living power; it is—it will probably long remain—the greatest, the most animating event in history. And as no sincere passion for the things of the mind even though it turn out in many respects an unfortunate passion, is ever quite thrown away and quite barren of good, France has reaped from hers one fruit,—the natural and legitimate fruit, though not precisely the grand fruit she expected: she is the country in Europe where *the people* is most alive.

But the mania for giving an immediate political and practical application to all these fine ideas of the reason was fatal. Here an Englishman is in his element: on this theme we can all go for hours. And all we are in the habit of saying on it has undoubtedly a great deal of truth. Ideas cannot be too much prized in and for themselves, cannot be too much lived with; but to transport them abruptly into the world of politics and practice, violently to revolutionize this world to their bidding,—that is quite another thing. There is the world of ideas and there is the world of practice; the French are often for suppressing the one and the English the other; but neither is to be suppressed. A member of the House of Commons said to me the other day: "That a thing is an anomaly, I consider to be no objection to it whatever." I venture to think he was wrong; that a thing is an anomaly *is* an objection to it, but absolutely and in the sphere of ideas: it is not necessarily, under such and such circumstances, or at such and such a moment, an objection to it in the sphere of politics and practice. Joubert[4] has said beautifully: "C'est la force et le droit qui règlent toutes choses dans le monde; la force en attendant le droit." Force and right are the governors of this world; force till right is ready. *Force till right is ready;* and till right is ready, force, the existing order of things, is justified, is the legitimate ruler. But right is something moral, and implies inward recognition, free assent of the will; we are not ready for right,—*right,* so far as we are concerned, *is not ready,*—until we have attained this sense of seeing it and willing it. The way in which for us it may change and transform force, the existing order of things, and become, in its turn, the legitimate ruler of the world, will depend on the way in which, when our time comes, we see it and will it. Therefore for other people enamored of their own newly discerned right, to attempt to impose it upon us as ours, and violently to substi-

[3] Janet Geddes, who thus resisted the imposition of the English liturgy in 1637.

[4] Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), a French moralist. Arnold devoted an essay to him

tute their right for our force, is an act of tyranny, and to be resisted. It sets at nought the second great half of our maxim, *force till right is ready*. This was the grand error of the French Revolution; and its movement if ideas, by quitting the intellectual sphere and rushing furiously into the political sphere, ran, indeed, a prodigious and memorable course, but produced no such intellectual fruit as the movement of ideas of the Renaissance, and created, in opposition to itself, what I may call an *epoch of concentration*. The great force of that epoch of concentration was England; and the great voice of that epoch of concentration was Burke. It is the fashion to treat Burke's writings on the French Revolution as superannuated and conquered by the event; as the eloquent but unphilosophical tirades of bigotry and prejudice. I will not deny that they are often disfigured by the violence and passion of the moment, and that in some directions Burke's view was bounded, and his observation therefore at fault. But on the whole, and for those who can make the needful corrections, what distinguishes these writings is their profound, permanent, fruitful, philosophical truth. They contain the true philosophy of an epoch of concentration, dissipate the heavy atmosphere which its own nature is apt to engender round it, and make its resistance rational instead of mechanical.

But Burke is so great because, almost alone in England, he brings thought to bear upon politics, he saturates politics with thought. It is his accident that his ideas were at the service of an epoch of concentration, not of an epoch of expansion; it is his characteristic that he so lived by ideas, and had such a source of them welling up within him, that he could float even an epoch of concentration and English Tory politics with them. It does not hurt him that Dr. Price[5] and the Liberals were displeased with him; it does not even hurt him that George the Third and the Tories were enchanted with him. His greatness is that he lived in a world which neither English Liberalism nor English Toryism is apt to enter;—the world of ideas, not the world of catchwords and party habits. So far is it from being really true of him that he "to party gave up what was meant for mankind," that at the very end of his fierce struggle with the French Revolution, after all his invectives against its false pretensions, hollowness, and madness, with his sincere conviction of its mischievousness, he can close a memorandum on the best means of combating it, some of the last pages he ever wrote,—the *Thoughts on French Affairs*, in December 1791,—with these striking words:—

"The evil is stated, in my opinion, as it exists. The remedy must be where power, wisdom, and information, I hope, are more united with good intentions than they can be with me. I have done with this subject, I believe, for ever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. *If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.*"

That return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed in any literature. That is what I call living by ideas: when one side of a question has long had your earnest support, when all your feelings are engaged, when you hear all round you no language but one, when your party talks this language like a steam-engine and can imagine no other,—still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything *but what the Lord has put in your mouth*. I know nothing more striking, and I must add that I know nothing more un-English.

For the Englishman in general is like my friend the Member of Parliament, and believes, point-blank, that for a thing to be an anomaly is absolutely no objection to it whatever. He is like the Lord Auckland of Burke's day, who, in a memorandum on the French Revolution, talks, of "certain miscreants, assuming the name of philosophers, who have presumed themselves capable of establishing a new system of society." The Englishman has been called a political animal, and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers "miscreants," because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. This would be all very well if the dislike and neglect confined themselves to ideas transported out of their own sphere, and meddling rashly with practice; but they are inevitably extended to ideas as such, and to the whole life of intelligence; practice is everything,

[5] Richard Price (1723-1791), a Unitarian clergyman, whose address in defense of the French Revolution called forth Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*

a free play of the mind is nothing. The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, being an essential provider of elements without which a nation's spirit, whatever compensations it may have for them, must, in the long run, die of inanition, hardly enters into an Englishman's thoughts. It is noticeable that the word *curiosity*, which in other languages is used in a good sense, to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake,—it is noticeable, I say, that this word has in our language no sense of the kind, no sense but a rather bad and disparaging one. But criticism, real criticism, is essentially the exercise of this very quality. It obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind; and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever. This is an instinct for which there is, I think, little original sympathy in the practical English nature, and what there was of it has undergone a long benumbing period of blight and suppression in the epoch of concentration which followed the French Revolution.

But epochs of concentration cannot well endure for ever; epochs of expansion, in the due course of things, follow them. Such an epoch of expansion seems to be opening in this country. In the first place all danger of a hostile forcible pressure of foreign ideas upon our practice has long disappeared; like the traveller in the fable, therefore, we begin to wear our cloak a little more loosely. Then, with a long peace, the ideas of Europe steal gradually and amicably in, and mingle, though in infinitesimally small quantities at a time, with our own notions. Then, too, in spite of all that is said about the absorbing and brutalizing influence of our passionate material progress, it seems to me indisputable that this progress is likely, though not certain, to lead in the end to an apparition of intellectual life; and that man, after he has made himself perfectly comfortable and has now to determine what to do with himself next, may begin to remember that he has a mind, and that the mind may be made the source of great pleasure. I grant it is mainly the privilege of faith, at present, to discern this end to our railways, our business, and our fortune-making; but we shall see if, here as elsewhere, faith is not in the end the true prophet. Our ease, our travelling, and our unbounded liberty to hold just as hard and securely as we please to the practice to which our notions have given birth, all tend to beget an inclination to deal a little more freely with these notions themselves, to canvass them a little, to penetrate a little into their real nature. Flutterings of curiosity, in the foreign sense of the word, appear amongst us, and it is in these that criticism must look to find its account. Criticism first; a time of true creative activity, perhaps,—which, as I have said, must inevitably be preceded amongst us by a time of criticism,—hereafter, when criticism has done its work.

It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course, in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it, and to produce fruit for the future, it ought to take. The rule may be summed up in one word,—disinterestedness. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called "the practical view of things"; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. Its business is, as I have said, simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty, with due ability; but its business is to do no more, and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions which will never fail to have due prominence given to them. Else criticism, besides being really false to its own nature, merely continues in the old rut which it has hitherto followed in this country, and will certainly miss the chance now given to it.

For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of mind the second; so much play of mind as is compatible with the prosecution of those practical ends is all that is wanted. An organ like the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world, existing, it may be said, as

just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not. But we have the *Edinburgh Review*, existing as an organ of the old Whigs, and for as much play of the mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the Tories, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *British Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the political Dissenters, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Times*, existing as an organ of the common, satisfied, well-to-do Englishman, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that. And so on through all the various fractions, political and religious, of our society; every fraction has, as such, its organ of criticism, but the notion of combining all fractions in the common pleasure of a free disinterested play of mind meets with no favor. Directly this play of mind wants to have more scope, and to forget the pressure of practical considerations a little, it is checked, it is made to feel the chain. We saw this the other day in the extinction, so much to be regretted, of the *Home and Foreign Review*. Perhaps in no organ of criticism in this country was there so much knowledge, so much play of mind; but these could not save it. The *Dublin Review* subordinates play of mind to the practical business of English and Irish Catholicism, and lives. It must needs be that men should act in sects and parties, that each of these sects and parties should have its organ, and should make this organ subserve the interests of its action; but it would be well, too, that there should be a criticism, not the minister of these interests, not their enemy, but absolutely and entirely independent of them. No other criticism will ever attain any real authority or make any real way towards its end,—the creating a current of true and fresh ideas.

It is because criticism has so little kept in the pure intellectual sphere, has so little detached itself from practice, has been so directly polemical and controversial, that it has so ill accomplished, in this country, its best spiritual work; which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarizing, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things. A polemical practical criticism makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of this practice, makes them willingly assert its ideal perfection, in order the better to secure it against attack; and clearly this is narrowing and baneful for them. If they were reassured on the practical side, speculative considerations of ideal perfection they might be brought to entertain, and their spiritual horizon would thus gradually widen. Sir Charles Adderley[6] says to the Warwickshire farmers:

"Talk of the improvement of breed! Why, the race we ourselves represent, the men and women, the old Anglo-Saxon race, are the best breed in the whole world. . . . The absence of a too enervating climate, too unclouded skies, and a too luxurious nature, has produced so vigorous a race of people, and has rendered us so superior to all the world."

Mr. Roebuck[7] says to the Sheffield cutlers:

"I look around me and ask what is the state of England? Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect security? I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it? Nothing. I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last."

Now obviously there is a peril for poor human nature in words and thoughts of such exuberant self-satisfaction, until we find ourselves safe in the streets of the Celestial City.

"Das wenige verschwindet leicht dem Blicke
Der vorwarts sieht, wie viel noch übrig bleibt—"

says Goethe; "the little that is done seems nothing when we look forward and see how much we have yet to do." Clearly this is a better line of reflection for weak humanity, so long as it remains on this earthly field of labor and trial.

But neither Sir Charles Adderley nor Mr. Roebuck is by nature inaccessible to considerations of this sort. They only lose sight of them owing to the controversial life we all lead, and the practical form which all speculation takes with us. They have in view opponents whose aim is not ideal, but practical; and in their zeal to uphold their own practice against these innovators, they go so far as even to attribute to this practice an ideal perfection. Somebody has been wanting to introduce a six-pound franchise, or to abolish church-rates, or to collect agricultural statistics by force, or to diminish local self-government. How natural, in reply to such proposals, very likely improper or ill-timed, to go a little beyond the mark and to say stoutly, "Such a race of people as we stand, so superior to all the world! The old Anglo-Saxon race, the best breed

[6] Sir Charles Bowyer Adderley, Baron Norton (1814-1905), a Tory politician.

[7] John Arthur Roebuck (1802-1879), Member of Parliament for Sheffield.

in the whole world! I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last! I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it?" And so long as criticism answers this dithyramb by insisting that the old Anglo-Saxon race would be still more superior to all others if it had no church-rates, or that our unrivalled happiness would last yet longer with a six-pound franchise, so long will the strain, "The best breed in the whole world!" swell louder and louder, everything ideal and refining will be lost out of sight, and both the assailed and their critics will remain in a sphere, to say the truth, perfectly unvital, a sphere in which spiritual progression is impossible. But let criticism leave church-rates and the franchise alone, and in the most candid spirit, without a single lurking thought of practical innovation, confront with our dithyramb this paragraph on which I stumbled in a newspaper immediately after reading Mr. Roebuck:

"A shocking child murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody."

Nothing but that; but, in juxtaposition with the absolute eulogies of Sir Charles Adderley and Mr. Roebuck, how eloquent, how suggestive are those few lines! "Our old Anglo-Saxon breed, the best in the whole world!"—how much that is harsh and ill-favored there is in this best! *Wragg!* If we are to talk of ideal perfection, of "the best in the whole world," has any one reflected what a touch of grossness in our race, what an original shortcoming in the more delicate spiritual perceptions, is shown by the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names,—Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg! In Ionia and Attica they were luckier in this respect than "the best race in the world;" by the Ilissus there was no Wragg, poor thing! And "our unrivalled happiness;"—what an element of grimness, bareness, and hideousness mixes with it and blurs it; the workhouse, the dismal Mapperly Hills,—how dismal those who have seen them will remember;—the gloom, the smoke, the cold, the strangled illegitimate child! "I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it?" Perhaps not, one is inclined to answer; but at any rate, in that case, the world is very much to be pitied. And the final touch,—short, bleak and inhuman: *Wragg is in custody.* The sex lost in the confusion of our unrivalled happiness; or (shall I say?) the superfluous Christian name lopped off by the straightforward vigor of our old Anglo-Saxon breed! There is profit for the spirit in such contrasts as this; criticism serves the cause of perfection by establishing them. By eluding sterile conflict, by refusing to remain in the sphere where alone narrow and relative conceptions have any worth and validity, criticism may diminish its momentary importance, but only in this way has it a chance of gaining admittance for those wider and more perfect conceptions to which all its duty is really owed. Mr. Roebuck will have a poor opinion of an adversary who replies to his defiant songs of triumph only by murmuring under his breath, *Wragg is in custody*; but in no other way will these songs of triumph be induced gradually to moderate themselves, to get rid of what in them is excessive and offensive, and to fall into a softer and truer key.

It will be said that it is a very subtle and indirect action which I am thus prescribing for criticism, and that, by embracing in this manner the Indian virtue of detachment and abandoning the sphere of practical life, it condemns itself to a slow and obscure work. Slow and obscure it may be, but it is the only proper work of criticism. The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are; very inadequate ideas will always satisfy them. On these inadequate ideas reposes, and must repose, the general practice of the world. That is as much as saying that whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle; but it is only by this small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current at all. The rush and roar of practical life will always have a dizzying and attracting effect upon the most collected spectator, and tend to draw him into its vortex; most of all will this be the case where that life is so powerful as it is in England. But it is only by remaining collected, and refusing to lend himself to the point of view of the practical man, that the critic can do the practical man any service; and it is only by the greatest sincerity in pursuing his own course, and by at last convincing even the practical man of his sincerity, that he can escape misunderstandings which perpetually threaten him.

For the practical man is not apt for fine distinctions, and yet in these distinctions truth and the highest culture greatly find their account. But it is not easy to lead a practical man,—unless you reassure him as to your practical intentions, you have no chance of leading him,—to see that a thing which he has always been used to look at from one side only,

which he greatly values, and which, looked at from that side, quite deserves, perhaps, all the prizing and admiring which he bestows upon it,—that this thing, looked at from another side, may appear much less beneficent and beautiful, and yet retain all its claims to our practical allegiance. Where shall we find language innocent enough, how shall we make the spotless purity of our intentions evident enough, to enable us to say to the political Englishman that the British constitution itself, which, seen from the practical side, looks such a magnificent organ of progress and virtue, seen from the speculative side,—with its compromises, its love of facts, its horror of theory, its studied avoidance of clear thoughts,—that, seen from this side, our august constitution sometimes looks,—forgive me, shade of Lord Somers![8]—a colossal machine for the manufacture of Philistines? How is Cobbett[9] to say this and not be misunderstood, blackened as he is with the smoke of a lifelong conflict in the field of political practice? how is Mr. Carlyle to say it and not be misunderstood, after his furious raid into this field with his *Latter-day Pamphlets*? how is Mr. Ruskin, after his pugnacious political economy? I say, the critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere, if he wants to make a beginning for that more free speculative treatment of things, which may perhaps one day make its benefits felt even in this sphere, but in a natural and thence irresistible manner.

Do what he will, however, the critic will still remain exposed to frequent misunderstandings, and nowhere so much as in this country. For here people are particularly indisposed even to comprehend that without this free disinterested treatment of things, truth and the highest culture are out of the question. So immersed are they in practical life, so accustomed to take all their notions from this life and its processes, that they are apt to think that truth and culture themselves can be reached by the processes of this life, and that it is an impertinent singularity to think of reaching them in any other. "We are all *terræ filii*,"[10] cries their eloquent advocate; "all Philistines together. Away with the notion of proceeding by any other way than the way dear to the Philistines; let us have a social movement, let us organize and combine a party to pursue truth and new thought, let us call it *the liberal party*, and let us all stick to each other, and back each other up. Let us have no nonsense about independent criticism, and intellectual delicacy, and the few and the many. Don't let us trouble ourselves about foreign thought; we shall invent the whole thing for ourselves as we go along. If one of us speaks well, applaud him; if one of us speaks ill, applaud him too; we are all in the same movement, we are all liberals, we are all in pursuit of truth." In this way the pursuit of truth becomes really a social, practical, pleasurable affair, almost requiring a chairman, a secretary, and advertisements; with the excitement of a little resistance, an occasional scandal, to give the happy sense of difficulty overcome; but, in general, plenty of bustle and very little thought. To act is so easy, as Goethe says; to think is so hard! It is true that the critic has many temptations to go with the stream, to make one of the party movement, one of these *terræ filii*; it seems ungracious to refuse to be a *terræ filius*, when so many excellent people are; but the critic's duty is to refuse, or, if resistance is vain, at least to cry with Obermann:[11] *Périssons en résistant.*[12]

How serious a matter it is to try and resist, I had ample opportunity of experiencing when I ventured some time ago to criticize the celebrated first volume of Bishop Colenso.[13] The echoes of the storm which was then raised I still, from time to time, hear grumbling round me. That storm arose out of a misunderstanding almost inevitable. It is a result of no little culture to attain to a clear perception that science and religion are two wholly different things; the multitude will for ever confuse them; but happily that is of no great real importance, for while it imagines itself to live by its false science, it does really live by its true religion. Dr. Colenso, however, in his first volume did all he could to strengthen the confusion, and to make it dangerous. He did this with the best intentions, I freely admit, and with the most candid ignorance that this was the natural effect of what he was doing; but, says Joubert, "Ignorance, which in matters of morals extenuates the crime, is itself, in intellectual matters, a crime of the first order." I criticized Bishop Colenso's speculative confusion. Immediately there was a cry raised: "What is this? here is a liberal attacking a liberal. Do not you belong to the movement?

[8] John Somers (1651-1716), a noted defender of the English constitution.

[9] William Cobbett (1762-1835), a democratic agitator.

[10] children of the earth.

[11] the hero of a romance of that name by Etienne Pivert de Sénancourt (1770-1846).

[12] Let us perish in resisting.

[13] J. W. Colenso (1814-1883), Bishop of Natal, who had written a *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch* in which he had contended that the first five books of the Bible are inconsistent with the theory of Mosaic authorship.

are not you a friend of truth? Is not Bishop Colenso in pursuit of truth? then speak with proper respect of his book. Dr. Stanley is another friend of truth, and you speak with proper respect of his book; why make these invidious differences? both books are excellent, admirable, liberal; Bishop Colenso's perhaps the most so, because it is the boldest, and will have the best practical consequences for the liberal cause. Do you want to encourage to the attack of a brother liberal his, and your, and our implacable enemies, the *Church and State Review* or the *Record*,—the High Church rhinoceros and the Evangelical hyæna? Be silent, therefore; or rather speak, speak as loud as ever you can! and go into ecstasies over the eighty and odd pigeons."

But criticism cannot follow this coarse and indiscriminate method. It is unfortunately possible for a man in pursuit of truth to write a book which reposes upon a false conception. Even the practical consequences of a book are to genuine criticism no recommendation of it, if the book is, in the highest sense, blundering. I see that a lady who herself, too, is in pursuit of truth, and who writes with great ability, but a little too much, perhaps, under the influence of the practical spirit of the English liberal movement, classes Bishop Colenso's book and M. Renan's together, in her survey of the religious state of Europe, as facts of the same order, works, both of them, of "great importance;" "great ability, power, and skill;" Bishop Colenso's, perhaps, the most powerful; at least, Miss Cobbe[14] gives special expression to her gratitude that to Bishop Colenso "has been given the strength to grasp, and the courage to teach, truths of such deep import." In the same way, more than one popular writer has compared him to Luther. Now it is just this kind of false estimate which the critical spirit is, it seems to me, bound to resist. It is really the strongest possible proof of the low ebb at which, in England, the critical spirit is, that while the critical hit in the religious literature of Germany is Dr. Strauss's book,[15] in that of France M. Renan's book, the book of Bishop Colenso is the critical hit in the religious literature of England. Bishop Colenso's book reposes on a total misconception of the essential elements of the religious problem, as that problem is now presented for solution. To criticism therefore, which seeks to have the best that is known and thought on this problem, it is, however well meant, of no importance whatever. M. Renan's book attempts a new synthesis of the elements furnished to us by the Four Gospels. It attempts, in my opinion, a synthesis, perhaps premature, perhaps impossible, certainly not successful. Perhaps we shall always have to acquiesce in Fleury's sentence on such recastings of the Gospel-story: *Quiconque s'imagine la pouvoir mieux écrire, ne l'entend pas.*[16] M. Renan had himself passed by anticipation a like sentence on his own work, when he said: "If a new presentation of the character of Jesus were offered to me, I would not have it; its very clearness would be, in my opinion, the best proof of its insufficiency." His friends may with perfect truth rejoin that at the sight of the Holy Land, and of the actual scene of the Gospel-story, all the current of M. Renan's thoughts may have naturally changed, and a new casting of that story irresistibly suggested itself to him; and that this is just a case for applying Cicero's maxim: Change of mind is not inconsistency—*nemo doctus unquam mutationem consilii inconstantiam dixit esse*.[17] Nevertheless, for criticism, M. Renan's first thought must still be the truer one, as long as his new casting so fails more fully to commend itself, more fully (to use Coleridge's happy phrase about the Bible) to *find* us. Still M. Renan's attempt is, for criticism, of the most real interest and importance, since, with all its difficulty, a fresh synthesis of the New Testament *data*,—not a making war on them, in Voltaire's fashion, not a leaving them out of mind in the world's fashion, but the putting a new construction upon them, the taking them from under the old traditional, conventional point of view and placing them under a new one,—is the very essence of the religious problem, as now presented; and only by efforts in this direction can it receive a solution.

Again, in the same spirit in which she judges Bishop Colenso, Miss Cobbe, like so many earnest liberals of our practical race, both here and in America, herself sets vigorously about a positive re-construction of religion, about making a religion of the future out of hand, or at least setting about making it. We must not rest, she and they are always thinking and saying, in negative criticism,

[14] Frances Power Cobbe (1882-1904), a writer on religious topics.

[15] David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), German theologian, and Joseph Ernest Renan (1823-1892), French scholar, both wrote lives of Jesus which strive to rationalize the miraculous events recorded in the Bible.

[16] Whoever imagines that he can write it better does not understand it.

[17] No wise man ever said that a change of mind was an inconsistency.

we must be creative and constructive; hence we have such works as her recent *Religious Duty*, and works still more considerable, perhaps, by others, which will be in every one's mind. These works often have much ability; they often spring out of sincere convictions, and a sincere wish to do good; and they sometimes, perhaps, do good. Their fault is (if I may be permitted to say so) one which they have in common with the British College of Health, in the New Road. Every one knows the British College of Health; it is that building with the lion and the statue of the Goddess Hygeia before it; at least I am sure about the lion, though I am not absolutely certain about the Goddess Hygeia. This building does credit, perhaps, to the resources of Dr. Morrison[18] and his disciples; but it falls a good deal short of one's idea of what a British College of Health ought to be. In England, where we hate public interference and love individual enterprise, we have a whole crop of places like the British College of Health; the grand name without the grand thing. Unluckily, creditable to individual enterprise as they are, they tend to impair our taste by making us forget what more grandiose, noble, or beautiful character properly belongs to a public institution. The same may be said of the religions of the future of Miss Cobbe and others. Creditable, like the British College of Health, to the resources of their authors, they yet tend to make us forget what more grandiose, noble, or beautiful character properly belongs to religious constructions. The historic religions, with all their faults, have had this; it certainly belongs to the religious sentiment, when it truly flowers, to have this; and we impoverish our spirit if we allow a religion of the future without it. What then is the duty of criticism here? To take the practical point of view, to applaud the liberal movement and all its works,—its New Road religions of the future into the bargain,—for their general utility's sake? By no means; but to be perpetually dissatisfied with these works, while they perpetually fall short of a high and perfect ideal.

For criticism, these are elementary laws; but they never can be popular, and in this country they have been very little followed, and one meets with immense obstacles in following them. That is a reason for asserting them again and again. Criticism must maintain its independence of the practical spirit and its aims. Even with well-meant efforts of the practical spirit it must express dissatisfaction, if in the sphere of the ideal they seem impoverishing and limiting. It must not hurry on to the goal because of its practical importance. It must be patient, and know how to wait; and flexible, and know how to attach itself to things and how to withdraw from them. It must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fulness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent. It must be apt to discern the spiritual shortcomings or illusions of powers that in the practical sphere may be beneficent. And this without any notion of favoring or injuring, in the practical sphere, one power or the other; without any notion of playing off, in this sphere, one power against the other. When one looks, for instance, at the English Divorce Court,—an institution which perhaps has its practical conveniences, but which in the ideal sphere is so hideous; an institution which neither makes divorce impossible nor makes it decent, which allows a man to get rid of his wife, or a wife of her husband, but makes them drag one another first, for the public edification, through a mire of unutterable infamy,—when one looks at this charming institution, I say, with its crowded trials, its newspaper reports, and its money compensations, this institution in which the gross unregenerate British Philistine has indeed stamped an image of himself,—one may be permitted to find the marriage theory of Catholicism refreshing and elevating. Or when Protestantism, in virtue of its supposed rational and intellectual origin, gives the law to criticism too magisterially, criticism may and must remind it that its pretensions, in this respect, are illusive and do it harm; that the Reformation was a moral rather than an intellectual event; that Luther's theory of grace no more exactly reflects the mind of the spirit than Bossuet's philosophy of history reflects it; and that there is no more antecedent probability of the Bishop of Durham's stock of ideas being agreeable to perfect reason than of Pope Pius the Ninth's. But criticism will not on that account forget the achievements of Protestantism in the practical and moral sphere; nor that, even in the intellectual sphere, Protestantism, though in a blind and stumbling manner, carried forward the Renaissance, while Catholicism threw itself violently across its path.

I lately heard a man of thought and energy contrasting the want of ardor and movement which he now found amongst young men in this country with what he remembered in his own youth,

[18] Discoverer of pills which were supposed to be a universal remedy.

twenty years ago. What reformers we were then!" he exclaimed; "what a zeal we had! how we canvassed every institution in Church and State, and were prepared to remodel them all on first principles!" He was inclined to regret, as a spiritual flagging, the lull which he saw. I am disposed rather to regard it as a pause in which the turn to a new mode of spiritual progress is being accomplished. Everything was long seen, by the young and ardent amongst us, in inseparable connection with politics and practical life. We have pretty well exhausted the benefits of seeing things in this connection, we have got all that can be got by so seeing them. Let us try a more disinterested mode of seeing them; let us betake ourselves more to the serener life of the mind and spirit. This life, too, may have its excesses and dangers; but they are not for us at present. Let us think of quietly enlarging our stock of true and fresh ideas, and not, as soon as we get an idea or half an idea, be running out with it into the street, and trying to make it rule there. Our ideas will, in the end, shape the world all the better for maturing a little. Perhaps in fifty years' time it will in the English House of Commons be an objection to an institution that it is an anomaly, and my friend the Member of Parliament will shudder in his grave. But let us in the meanwhile rather endeavor that in twenty years' time it may, in English literature, be an objection to a proposition that it is absurd. That will be a change so vast, that the imagination almost fails to grasp it. *Ab integro sæculorum nascitur ordo.*[19]

If I have insisted so much on the course which criticism must take where politics and religion are concerned, it is because, where these burning matters are in question, it is most likely to go astray. I have wished, above all, to insist on the attitude which criticism should adopt toward things in general; on its right tone and temper of mind. But then comes another question as to the subject-matter which literary criticism should seek. Here in general, its course is determined for it by the idea which is the law of its being; the idea of a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas. By the very nature of things, as England is not all the world, much of the best that is known and thought in the world cannot be of English growth, must be foreign; by the nature of things, again, it is just this that we are least likely to know, while English thought is streaming in upon us from all sides, and takes excellent care that we shall not be ignorant of its existence. The English critic, therefore, must dwell much on foreign thought, and with particular heed on any part of it, which, while significant and fruitful in itself, is for any reason specially likely to escape him. Again, judging is often spoken of as the critic's one business, and so in some sense it is; but the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and letting his own judgment pass along with it,—but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract lawgiver,—that he will generally do most good to his readers. Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard (and if this is not done, how are we to get at our *best in the world*?) criticism may have to deal with a subject-matter so familiar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgment; an enunciation and detailed application of principles. Here the great safeguard is never to let oneself become abstract, always to retain an intimate and lively consciousness of the truth of what one is saying, and, the moment this fails us, to be sure that something is wrong. Still, under all circumstances, this mere judgment and application of principles is, in itself, not the most satisfactory work to the critic; like mathematics, it is tautological, and cannot well give us, like fresh learning, the sense of creative activity.

But stop, someone will say; all this talk is of no practical use to us whatever; this criticism of yours is not what we have in our minds when we speak of criticism; when we speak of critics and criticism, we mean critics and criticism of the current English literature of the day; when you offer to tell criticism of its function, it is to this criticism that we expect you to address yourself. I am sorry for it for I am afraid I must disappoint these expectations. I am bound by my own definition of criticism: *a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.* How much of current English literature comes into this "best that is known and thought in the world"? Not very much, I fear; certainly less, at this moment, than of the current literature

[19] From the renewal of the generations order is born.

of France or Germany. Well, then, am I to alter my definition of criticism, in order to meet the requirements of a number of practising English critics, who, after all, are free in their choice of a business? that would be making criticism lend itself to one of those alien practical considerations, which, I have said, are so fatal to it. One may say, indeed, to those who have to deal with the mass—so much better disregarded—of current English literature, that they may at all events endeavor, in dealing with this, to try it, so far as they can, by the standard of the best that is known and thought in the world: one may say, that to get anywhere near this standard, every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own; and the more unlike his own, the better. But, after all, the criticism I am really concerned with—the criticism which alone can much help us for the future, the criticism which, throughout Europe, is at the present moment meant, when so much stress is laid on the importance of criticism and the critical spirit—is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have, for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another. Special, local, and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this programme. And what is that but saying that we too, all of us, as individuals, the more thoroughly we carry it out, shall make the more progress?

There is so much inviting us!—what are we to take? what will nourish us in growth towards perfection? That is the question which, with the immense field of life and literature lying before him, the critic has to answer: for himself first, afterwards for others. In this idea of the critic's business the essays brought together in the following pages have had their origin; in this idea, widely different as are their subjects, they have, perhaps, their unity.

I conclude with what I said at the beginning: to have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and the great proof of being alive, and it is not denied to criticism to have it; but then criticism must be sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever widening its knowledge. Then it may have, in no contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity; a sense which a man of insight and conscience will prefer to what he might derive from a poor, starved, fragmentary, inadequate creation. And at some epochs no other creation is possible.

Still, in full measure, the sense of creative activity belongs only to genuine creation; in literature we must never forget that. But what true man of letters ever can forget it? It is no such common matter for a gifted nature to come into possession of a current of true and living ideas, and to produce amidst the inspiration of them, that we are likely to underrate it. The epochs of Æschylus and Shakespeare make us feel their pre-eminence. In an epoch like those is, no doubt, the true life of literature; there is the promised land, towards which criticism can only beckon. That promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness: but to have desired to enter it, to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity.

(1864)

From *Culture and Anarchy*
Sweetness and Light

Culture and Anarchy, first published as a series in the *Cornhill Magazine* (1867-68), is Arnold's clearest indictment of Philistinism in English middle-class life. *Sweetness and Light,* whose title is taken from a passage in Swift's *Battle of the Books,* is the first of the essays. It is here that Arnold expounds his "Hellenistic" ideal of the pursuit of perfection through culture.

The disparagers of culture make its motive curiosity; sometimes, indeed, they make its motive mere exclusiveness and vanity. The culture which is supposed to plume itself on a smattering of Greek and Latin is a culture which is begotten by nothing so intellectual as curiosity; it is valued either out of sheer vanity and ignorance or else as an engine of social and class distinction, separating

its holder, like a badge or title, from other people who have not got it. No serious man would call this *culture*, or attach any value to it, as culture, at all. To find the real ground for the very different estimate which serious people will set upon culture, we must find some motive for culture in the terms of which may lie a real ambiguity; and such a motive the word *curiosity* gives us.

I have before now pointed out that we English do not, like the foreigners, use this word in a good sense as well as in a bad sense. With us the word is always used in a somewhat disapproving sense. A liberal and intelligent eagerness about the things of the mind may be meant by a foreigner when he speaks of curiosity, but with us the word always conveys a certain notion of frivolous and unedifying activity. In the *Quarterly Review*, some little time ago, was an estimate of the celebrated French critic, M. Sainte-Beuve,[1] and a very inadequate estimate it in my judgment was. And its inadequacy consisted chiefly in this: that in our English way it left out of sight the double sense really involved in the word *curiosity*, thinking enough was said to stamp M. Sainte-Beuve with blame if it was said that he was impelled in his operations as a critic by curiosity, and omitting either to perceive that M. Sainte-Beuve himself, and many other people with him, would consider that this was praiseworthy and not blameworthy, or to point out why it ought really to be accounted worthy of blame and not of praise. For, as there is a curiosity about intellectual matters which is futile, and merely a disease, so there is certainly a curiosity,—a desire after the things of the mind simply for their own sakes and for the pleasure of seeing them as they are,—which is, in an intelligent being, natural and laudable. Nay, and the very desire to see things as they are implies a balance and regulation of mind which is not often attained without fruitful effort, and which is the very opposite of the blind and diseased impulse of mind which is what we mean to blame when we blame curiosity. Montesquieu[2] says: "The first motive which ought to impel us to study is the desire to augment the excellence of our nature, and to render an intelligent being yet more intelligent." This is the true ground to assign for the genuine scientific passion, however manifested, and for culture, viewed simply as a fruit of this passion; and it is a worthy ground, even though we let the term *curiosity* stand to describe it.

But there is of culture another view, in which not solely the scientific passion, the sheer desire to see things as they are, natural and proper in an intelligent being, appears as the ground of it. There is a view in which all the love of our neighbor, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it,—motives eminently such as are called social,—come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and preëminent part. Culture is then properly described not as having its origin in curiosity, but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a *study of perfection*. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good. As, in the first view of it, we took for its worthy motto Montesquieu's words: "To render an intelligent being yet more intelligent!" so, in the second view of it, there is no better motto which it can have than these words of Bishop Wilson:[3] "To make reason and the will of God prevail!"

Only, whereas the passion for doing good is apt to be over-hasty in determining what reason and the will of God say, because its turn is for acting rather than thinking and it wants to be beginning to act; and whereas it is apt to take its own conceptions, which proceed from its own state of development and share in all the imperfections and immaturities of this, for a basis of action; what distinguishes culture is, that it is possessed by the scientific passion as well as by the passion of doing good; that it demands worthy notions of reason and the will of God, and does not readily suffer its own crude conceptions to substitute themselves for them. And knowing that no action or institution can be salutary and stable which is not based on reason and the will of God, it is not so bent on acting and instituting, even with the great aim of diminishing human error and misery ever before its thoughts, but that it can remember that acting and instituting are of little use, unless we know how and what we ought to act and to institute.

This culture is more interesting and more far-reaching than that other, which is founded solely on the scientific passion for knowing. But it needs

[1] Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), a French critic who exerted a strong influence on Arnold.

[2] Montesquieu (1689-1755), author of *The Spirit of Laws* (1748).

[3] Thomas Wilson (d. 1755), author of *Maxims*

times of faith and ardor, times when the intellectual horizon is opening and widening all around us, to flourish in. And is not the close and bounded intellectual horizon within which we have long lived and moved now lifting up, and are not new lights finding free passage to shine in upon us? For a long time there was no passage for them to make their way in upon us, and then it was of no use to think of adapting the world's action to them. Where was the hope of making reason and the will of God prevail among people who had a routine which they had christened reason and the will of God, in which they were inextricably bound, and beyond which they had no power of looking? But now the iron force of adhesion to the old routine—social, political, religious—has wonderfully yielded; the iron force of exclusion of all which is new has wonderfully yielded. The danger now is, not that people should obstinately refuse to allow anything but their old routine to pass for reason and the will of God, but either that they should allow some novelty or other to pass for these too easily, or else that they should underrate the importance of them altogether, and think it enough to follow action for its own sake, without troubling themselves to make reason and the will of God prevail therein. Now, then, is the moment for culture to be of service, culture which believes in making reason and the will of God prevail, believes in perfection, is the study and pursuit of perfection, and is no longer debarred, by a rigid invincible exclusion of whatever is new, from getting acceptance for its ideas, simply because they are new.

The moment this view of culture is seized, the moment it is regarded not solely as the endeavor to see things as they are, to draw towards a knowledge of the universal order which seems to be intended and aimed at in the world, and which it is a man's happiness to go along with or his misery to go counter to,—to learn, in short, the will of God,—the moment, I say, culture is considered not merely as the endeavor to *see* and *learn* this, but as the endeavor, also, to make it *prevail*, the moral, social, and beneficent character of culture becomes manifest. The mere endeavor to see and learn the truth for our own personal satisfaction is indeed a commencement for making it prevail, a preparing the way for this, which always serves this, and is wrongly, therefore, stamped with blame absolutely in itself and not only in its caricature and degeneration. But perhaps it has got stamped with blame, and disparaged with the dubious title of curiosity, because in comparison with this wider endeavor of such great and plain utility it looks selfish, petty, and unprofitable.

And religion, the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself,—religion, that voice of the deepest human experience,—does not only enjoin and sanction the aim which is the great aim of culture, the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail; but also, in determining generally in what human perfection consists, religion comes to a conclusion identical with that which culture—culture seeking the determination of this question through *all* the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history, as well as of religion, in order to give a greater fulness and certainty to its solution—likewise reaches. Religion says: *The kingdom of God is within you;* and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality. It places it in the ever-increasing efficacy and in the general harmonious expansion of those gifts of thought and feeling, which make the peculiar dignity, wealth, and happiness of human nature. As I have said on a former occasion: "It is in making endless additions to itself, in the endless expansion of its powers, in endless growth in wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of the human race finds its ideal. To reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture." Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it; and here, too, it coincides with religion.

And because men are all members of one great whole, and the sympathy which is in human nature will not allow one member to be indifferent to the rest or to have a perfect welfare independent of the rest, the expansion of our humanity, to suit the idea of perfection which culture forms, must be a *general* expansion. Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward. And here, once more, culture lays on us the same obligation as religion, which says, as Bishop Wilson has

admirably put it, that "to promote the kingdom of God is to increase and hasten one's own happiness."

But, finally, perfection—as culture from a thorough disinterested study of human nature and human experience learns to conceive it—is a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest. Here culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived by us.

If culture, then, is a study of perfection, and of harmonious perfection, general perfection, and perfection which consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances,—it is clear that culture, instead of being the frivolous and useless thing which Mr. Bright,[4] and Mr. Frederic Harrison,[5] and many other Liberals are apt to call it, has a very important function to fulfil for mankind. And this function is particularly important in our modern world, of which the whole civilization is, to a much greater degree than the civilization of Greece and Rome, mechanical and external, and tends constantly to become more so. But above all in our own country has culture a weighty part to perform, because here that mechanical character, which civilization tends to take everywhere, is shown in the most eminent degree. Indeed nearly all the characters of perfection, as culture teaches us to fix them, meet in this country with some powerful tendency which thwarts them and sets them at defiance. The idea of perfection as an *inward* condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilization in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us. The idea of perfection as a *general* expansion of the human family is at variance with our strong individualism, our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality, our maxim of "every man for himself." Above all, the idea of perfection as a *harmonious* expansion of human nature is at variance with our want of flexibility, with our inaptitude for seeing more than one side of a thing, with our intense energetic absorption in the particular pursuit we happen to be following. So culture has a rough task to achieve in this country. Its preachers have, and are likely long to have, a hard time of it, and they will much oftener be regarded, for a great while to come, as elegant or spurious Jeremiahs than as friends and benefactors. That, however, will not prevent their doing in the end good service if they persevere. And, meanwhile, the mode of action they have to pursue, and the sort of habits they must fight against, ought to be made quite clear for every one to see, who may be willing to look at the matter attentively and dispassionately.

Faith in machinery is, I said, our besetting danger; often in machinery most absurdly disproportioned to the end which this machinery, if it is to do any good at all, is to serve; but always in machinery, as if it had a value in and for itself. What is freedom but machinery? what is population but machinery? what is coal but machinery? what are railroads but machinery? what is wealth but machinery? what are, even, religious organizations but machinery? Now almost every voice in England is accustomed to speak of these things as if they were precious ends in themselves, and therefore had some of the characters of perfection indisputably joined to them. I have before now noticed Mr. Roebuck's[6] stock argument for proving the greatness and happiness of England as she is, and for quite stopping the mouths of all gainsayers. Mr. Roebuck is never weary of reiterating this argument of his, so I do not know why I should be weary of noticing it. "May not every man in England say what he likes?"—Mr. Roebuck perpetually asks; and that, he thinks, is quite sufficient, and when every man may say what he likes, our aspirations ought to be satisfied. But the aspirations of culture, which is the study of perfection, are not satisfied, unless what men say, when they may say what they like, is worth saying,—has good in it, and more good than bad. In the same way the *Times*, replying to some foreign strictures on the dress, looks, and behavior of the English abroad, urges that the English ideal is that every one should be free to do and to look just as he likes. But culture indefatigably tries, not to make what each raw person may like the rule by which he fashions himself, but to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is indeed beautiful, graceful, and becoming, and to get the raw person to like that.

And in the same way with respect to railroads and coal. Every one must have observed the strange language current during the late discussions as to the possible failure of our supplies of coal. Our coal, thousands of people were saying, is the real

[4] John Bright (1811-1889), a liberal parliamentarian.

[5] Frederic Harrison (1831-1923), leader for many years of the Positivists, who advocated a rationalistic religion.

[6] See *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, p. 728.

basis of our national greatness; if our coal runs short, there is an end of the greatness of England. But what *is* greatness?—culture makes us ask. Greatness is a spiritual condition worthy to excite love, interest, and admiration; and the outward proof of possessing greatness is that we excite love, interest, and admiration. If England were swallowed up by the sea to-morrow, which of the two, a hundred years hence, would most excite the love, interest, and admiration of mankind,—would most, therefore, show the evidences of having possessed greatness,—the England of the last twenty years, or the England of Elizabeth, of a time of splendid spiritual effort, but when our coal, and our industrial operations depending on coal, were very little developed? Well, then, what an unsound habit of mind it must be which makes us talk of things like coal or iron as constituting the greatness of England, and how salutary a friend is culture, bent on seeing things as they are, and thus dissipating delusions of this kind and fixing standards of perfection that are real!

Wealth, again, that end to which our prodigious works for material advantage are directed,—the commonest of commonplaces tells us how men are always apt to regard wealth as a precious end in itself; and certainly they have never been so apt thus to regard it as they are in England at the present time. Never did people believe anything more firmly than nine Englishmen out of ten at the present day believe that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being so very rich. Now, the use of culture is that it helps us, by means of its spiritual standard of perfection, to regard wealth as but machinery, and not only to say as a matter of words that we regard wealth as but machinery, but really to perceive and feel that it is so. If it were not for this purging effect wrought upon our minds by culture, the whole world, the future as well as the present, would inevitably belong to the Philistines. The people who believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich, are just the very people whom we call Philistines. Culture says: "Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it?" And thus culture begets a dissatisfaction which is of the highest possible value in stemming the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community, and which saves the future, as one may hope, from being vulgarized, even if it cannot save the present.

Population, again, and bodily health and vigor, are things which are nowhere treated in such an unintelligent, misleading, exaggerated way as in England. Both are really machinery; yet how many people all around us do we see rest in them and fail to look beyond them! Why, one has heard people, fresh from reading certain articles of the *Times* on the Registrar-General's returns of marriages and births in this country, who would talk of our large English families in quite a solemn strain, as if they had something in itself beautiful, elevating, and meritorious in them; as if the British Philistine would have only to present himself before the Great Judge with his twelve children, in order to be received among the sheep as a matter of right!

But bodily health and vigor, it may be said, are not to be classed with wealth and population as mere machinery; they have a more real and essential value. True; but only as they are more intimately connected with a perfect spiritual condition than wealth or population are. The moment we disjoin them from the idea of a perfect spiritual condition, and pursue them, as we do pursue them, for their own sake and as ends in themselves, our worship of them becomes as mere worship of machinery, as our worship of wealth or population, and as unintelligent and vulgarizing a worship as that is. Every one with anything like an adequate idea of human perfection has distinctly marked this subordination to higher and spiritual ends of the cultivation of bodily vigor and activity. "Bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things," says the author of the Epistle to Timothy. And the utilitarian Franklin says just as explicitly:—"Eat and drink such an exact quantity as suits the constitution of thy body, *in reference to the services of the mind*." But the point of view of culture, keeping the mark of human perfection simply and broadly in view, and not assigning to this perfection, as religion or utilitarianism assigns to it, a special and limited character, this point of view, I say, of culture is best given by these words of Epictetus: "It is a sign of ἀφυία," says he,—that is, of a nature not finely tempered,—"to give yourselves up to things which relate to the body; to make, for instance, a great fuss about exercise, a great fuss about eating, a great fuss about drinking,

a great fuss about walking, a great fuss about riding. All these things ought to be done merely by the way: the formation of the spirit and character must be our real concern." This is admirable; and, indeed, the Greek word εὐφυία, a finely tempered nature, gives exactly the notion of perfection as culture brings us to conceive it: a harmonious perfection, a perfection in which the characters of beauty and intelligence are both present, which unites "the two noblest of things,"—as Swift, who of one of the two, at any rate, had himself all too little, most happily calls them in his *Battle of the Books*,—"the two noblest of things, *sweetness and light*." The εὐφυής is the man who tends towards sweetness and light; the ἀφυής, on the other hand, is our Philistine. The immense spiritual significance of the Greeks is due to their having been inspired with this central and happy idea of the essential character of human perfection; and Mr. Bright's misconception of culture, as a smattering of Greek and Latin, comes itself, after all, from this wonderful significance of the Greeks having affected the very machinery of our education, and is in itself a kind of homage to it.

In thus making sweetness and light to be characters of perfection, culture is of like spirit with poetry, follows one law with poetry. Far more than on our freedom, our population, and our industrialism, many amongst us rely upon our religious organizations to save us. I have called religion a yet more important manifestation of human nature than poetry, because it has worked on a broader scale for perfection, and with greater masses of men. But the idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all its sides, which is the dominant idea of poetry, is a true and invaluable idea, though it has not yet had the success that the idea of conquering the obvious faults of our animality, and of a human nature perfect on the moral side,—which is the dominant idea of religion,—has been enabled to have; and it is destined, adding to itself the religious idea of a devout energy, to transform and govern the other.

The best art and poetry of the Greeks, in which religion and poetry are one, in which the idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all sides adds to itself a religious and devout energy, and works in the strength of that, is on this account of such surpassing interest and instructiveness for us, though it was—as, having regard to the human race in general, and, indeed, having regard to the Greeks themselves, we must own—a premature attempt, an attempt which for success needed the moral and religious fibre in humanity to be more braced and developed than it had yet been. But Greece did not err in having the idea of beauty, harmony, and complete human perfection, so present and paramount. It is impossible to have this idea too present and paramount; only, the moral fibre must be braced too. And we, because we have braced the moral fibre, are not on that account in the right way, if at the same time the idea of beauty, harmony, and complete human perfection, is wanting or misapprehended amongst us; and evidently it *is* wanting or misapprehended at present. And when we rely as we do on our religious organizations, which in themselves do not and cannot give us this idea, and think we have done enough if we make them spread and prevail, then, I say, we fall into our common fault of overvaluing machinery.

Nothing is more common than for people to confound the inward peace and satisfaction which follows the subduing of the obvious faults of our animality with what I may call absolute inward peace and satisfaction,—the peace and satisfaction which are reached as we draw near to complete spiritual perfection, and not merely to moral perfection, or rather to relative moral perfection. No people in the world have done more and struggled more to attain this relative moral perfection than our English race has. For no people in the world has the command to *resist the devil*, to *overcome the wicked one*, in the nearest and most obvious sense of those words, had such a pressing force and reality. And we have had our reward, not only in the great worldly prosperity which our obedience to this command has brought us, but also, and far more, in great inward peace and satisfaction. But to me few things are more pathetic than to see people, on the strength of the inward peace and satisfaction which their rudimentary efforts towards perfection have brought them, employ, concerning their incomplete perfection and the religious organizations within which they have found it, language which properly applies only to complete perfection, and is a far-off echo of the human soul's prophecy of it. Religion itself, I need hardly say, supplies them in abundance with this grand language. And very freely do they use it; yet it is really the severest possible criticism of such an incomplete perfection as alone we have yet reached through our religious organizations.

The impulse of the English race towards moral development and self-conquest has nowhere so powerfully manifested itself as in Puritanism.

Nowhere has Puritanism found so adequate an expression as in the religious organization of the Independents. The modern Independents have a newspaper, the *Nonconformist*, written with great sincerity and ability. The motto, the standard, the profession of faith which this organ of theirs carries aloft, is: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion."[7] There is sweetness and light, and an ideal of complete harmonious human perfection! One need not go to culture and poetry to find language to judge it. Religion, with its instinct for perfection, supplies language to judge it,—language, too, which is in our mouths every day. "Finally, be of one mind, united in feeling," says St. Peter. There is an ideal which judges the Puritan ideal: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion!" And religious organizations like this are what people believe in, rest in, would give their lives for! Such, I say, is the wonderful virtue of even the beginnings of perfection, of having conquered even the plain faults of our animality, that the religious organization which has helped us to do it can seem to us something precious, salutary, and to be propagated, even when it wears such a brand of imperfection on its forehead as this. And men have got such a habit of giving to the language of religion a special application, of making it a mere jargon, that for the condemnation which religion itself passes on the shortcomings of their religious organizations they have no ear; they are sure to cheat themselves and to explain this condemnation away. They can only be reached by the criticism which culture, like poetry, speaking a language not to be sophisticated, and resolutely testing these organizations by the ideal of a human perfection complete on all sides, applies to them.

But men of culture and poetry, it will be said, are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to a harmonious perfection, in the subduing of the great obvious faults of our animality, which it is the glory of these religious organizations to have helped us to subdue. True, they do often so fail. They have often been without the virtues as well as the faults of the Puritan; it has been one of their dangers that they so felt the Puritan's faults that they too much neglected the practice of his virtues. I will not, however, exculpate them at the Puritan's expense. They have often failed in morality, and morality is indispensable. And they have been punished for their failure, as the Puritan has been rewarded for his performance. They have been punished wherein they erred; but their ideal of beauty, of sweetness and light, and a human nature complete on all its sides, remains the true ideal of perfection still; just as the Puritan's ideal of perfection remains narrow and inadequate, although for what he did well he has been richly rewarded. Notwithstanding the mighty results of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage, they and their standard of perfection are rightly judged when we figure to ourselves Shakespeare or Virgil—souls in whom sweetness and light, and all that in human nature is most humane, were eminent—accompanying them on their voyage, and think what intolerable company Shakespeare and Virgil would have found them! In the same way let us judge the religious organizations which we see all around us. Do not let us deny the good and the happiness which they have accomplished; but do not let us fail to see clearly that their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it,—so I say with regard to the religious organizations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the *Nonconformist*,—a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light, and perfection!

Another newspaper, representing, like the *Nonconformist*, one of the religious organizations of this country, was a short time ago giving an account of the crowd at Epsom on the Derby day, and of all the vice and hideousness which was to be seen in that crowd; and then the writer turned suddenly round upon Professor Huxley, and asked him how he proposed to cure all this vice and hideousness without religion. I confess I felt disposed to ask the asker this question: and how do you propose to cure it with such a religion as yours? How is the ideal of a life so unlovely, so unattractive, so incomplete, so narrow; so far removed from a true and satisfying ideal of human perfection, as is the life of your religious organization as you yourself reflect it, to conquer and transform all this vice and hideousness? Indeed, the strongest plea for the study of perfection as pursued by culture, the clearest proof of the actual inadequacy of the idea of perfection held by the religious organizations,—expressing, as I have said, the

[7] from Burke's speech on *Conciliation with America.*

most widespread effort which the human race has yet made after perfection,—is to be found in the state of our life and society with these in possession of it, and having been in possession of it I know not how many hundred years. We are all of us included in some religious organization or other; we all call ourselves, in the sublime and aspiring language of religion which I have before noticed, *children of God*. Children of God;—it is an immense pretension!—and how are we to justify it? By the works which we do, and the words which we speak. And the work which we collective children of God do, our grand centre of life, our *city* which we have builded for us to dwell in, is London! London, with its unutterable external hideousness, and with its internal canker of *publice egestas, privatim opulentia*,[8]—to use the words which Sallust puts into Cato's mouth about Rome,—unequalled in the world! The word, again, which we children of God speak, the voice which most hits our collective thought, the newspaper with the largest circulation in England, nay, with the largest circulation in the whole world, is the *Daily Telegraph*! I say that when our religious organizations—which I admit to express the most considerable effort after perfection that our race has yet made—land us in no better result than this, it is high time to examine carefully their idea of perfection, to see whether it does not leave out of account sides and forces of human nature which we might turn to great use; whether it would not be more operative if it were more complete. And I say that the English reliance on our religious organizations and on their ideas of human perfection just as they stand, is like our reliance on freedom, on muscular Christianity, on population, on coal, on wealth,—mere belief in machinery, and unfruitful; and that it is wholesomely counteracted by culture, bent on seeing things as they are, and on drawing the human race onwards to a more complete, a harmonious perfection. . . .

The pursuit of perfection, then, is the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness and light, works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater!—the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light. If I have not shrunk from saying that we must work for sweetness and light, so neither have I shrunk from saying that we must have a broad basis, must have sweetness and light for as many as possible. Again and again I have insisted how those are the happy moments of humanity, how those are the marking epochs of a people's life, how those are the flowering times for literature and art and all the creative power of genius, when there is a *national* glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive. Only it must be *real* thought and *real* beauty; *real* sweetness and *real* light. Plenty of people will try to give the masses, as they call them, an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the actual condition of the masses. The ordinary popular literature is an example of this way of working on the masses. Plenty of people will try to indoctrinate the masses with the set of ideas and judgments constituting the creed of their own profession or party. Our religious and political organizations give an example of this way of working on the masses. I condemn neither way: but culture works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world, current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely,—nourished, and not bound by them.

This is the *social idea*; and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have labored to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light. Such a man was Abelard[9] in the Middle Ages, in spite of all his imperfections; and thence the boundless

[8] poverty among the many, wealth among the few (Sallust, *Catalina*, lii, 22)

[9] Peter Abelard (1079-1142), French scholastic theologian

emotion and enthusiasm which Abelard excited. Such were Lessing and Herder[10] in Germany, at the end of the last century; and their services to Germany were in this way inestimably precious. Generations will pass, and literary monuments will accumulate, and works far more perfect than the works of Lessing and Herder will be produced in Germany; and yet the names of these two men will fill a German with a reverence and enthusiasm such as the names of the most gifted masters will hardly awaken. And why? Because they *humanized* knowledge; because they broadened the basis of life and intelligence; because they worked powerfully to diffuse sweetness and light, to make reason and the will of God prevail. With Saint Augustine they said: "Let us not leave thee alone to make in the secret of thy knowledge, as thou didst before the creation of the firmament, the division of light from darkness; let the children of thy spirit, placed in their firmament, make their light shine upon the earth, mark the division of night and day, and announce the revolution of the times; for the old order is passed, and the new arises; the night is spent, the day is come forth; and thou shalt crown the year with thy blessing, when thou shalt send forth laborers into thy harvest sown by other hands than theirs; when thou shalt send forth new laborers to new seed-times, whereof the harvest shall be not yet."

(1867)

Literature and Science

In recent years the American colleges have witnessed a revival of liberal education to stem the strong tide of narrow vocational training. Distinguished educators have argued that citizens cannot be properly prepared for their roles in a free society unless they are aware of the cultural traditions of the past. But there is still a widespread tendency, even among students in liberal arts colleges, to deride "culture" and ridicule with the tired adjective "impractical" the serious study of literature, especially of the classics. Although Arnold did not have Huxley's grasp of the importance of science in the modern world (see *Science and Culture*, p. 777), he did present in this lecture a clear-cut statement of the ideals of the Victorian classical training. Many twentieth-century champions of liberal education would differ from him less in their aims than in their methods.

Literature and Science was first delivered as a lecture at Cambridge University and published in the *Nineteenth Century* for August 1882. It was later given, with some revisions, on Arnold's American lecture tour in 1883-84.

Practical people talk with a smile of Plato and of his absolute ideas; and it is impossible to deny that Plato's ideas do often seem unpractical and impracticable, and especially when one views them in connexion with the life of a great work-a-day world like the United States. The necessary staple of the life of such a world Plato regards with disdain; handicraft and trade and the working professions he regards with disdain; but what becomes of the life of an industrial modern community if you take handicraft and trade and the working professions out of it? The base mechanic arts and handicrafts, says Plato, bring about a natural weakness in the principle of excellence in a man, so that he cannot govern the ignoble growths in him, but nurses them, and cannot understand fostering any other. Those who exercise such arts and trades, as they have their bodies, he says, marred by their vulgar businesses, so they have their souls, too, bowed and broken by them. And if one of these uncomely people has a mind to seek self-culture and philosophy, Plato compares him to a bald little tinker, who has scraped together money, and has got his release from service, and has had a bath, and bought a new coat, and is rigged out like a bridegroom about to marry the daughter of his master who has fallen into poor and helpless estate.

Nor do the working professions fare any better than trade at the hands of Plato. He draws for us an inimitable picture of the working lawyer, and of his life of bondage; he shows how this bondage from his youth up has stunted and warped him, and made him small and crooked of soul,

[10] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), German men of letters and critics.

encompassing him with difficulties which he is not man enough to rely on justice and truth as means to encounter, but has recourse, for help out of them, to falsehood and wrong. And so, says Plato, this poor creature is bent and broken, and grows up from boy to man without a particle of soundness in him, although exceedingly smart and clever in his own esteem.

One cannot refuse to admire the artist who draws these pictures. But we say to ourselves that his ideas show the influence of a primitive and obsolete order of things, when the warrior caste and the priestly caste were alone in honour, and the humble work of the world was done by slaves. We have now changed all that; the modern majority consists in work, as Emerson declares;[1] and in work, we may add, principally of such plain and dusty kind as the work of cultivators of the ground, handicraftsmen, men of trade and business, men of the working professions. Above all is this true in a great industrious community such as that of the United States.

Now education, many people go on to say, is still mainly governed by the ideas of men like Plato, who lived when the warrior caste and the priestly or philosophical class were alone in honour, and the really useful part of the community were slaves. It is an education fitted for persons of leisure in such a community. This education passed from Greece and Rome to the feudal communities of Europe, where also the warrior caste and the priestly caste were alone held in honour, and where the really useful and working part of the community, though not nominally slaves as in the pagan world, were practically not much better off than slaves, and not more seriously regarded. And how absurd it is, people end by saying, to inflict this education upon an industrious modern community, where very few indeed are persons of leisure, and the mass to be considered has not leisure, but is bound, for its own great good, and for the great good of the world at large, to plain labour and to industrial pursuits, and the education in question tends necessarily to make men dissatisfied with these pursuits and unfitted for them!

That is what is said. So far I must defend Plato, as to plead that his view of education and studies is in the general, as it seems to me, sound enough, and fitted for all sorts and conditions of men, whatever their pursuits may be. 'An intelligent man,' says Plato, 'will prize those studies which result in his soul getting soberness, righteousness, and wisdom, and will less value the others.' I cannot consider *that* a bad description of the aim of education, and of the motives which should govern us in the choice of studies, whether we are preparing ourselves for a hereditary seat in the English House of Lords or for the pork trade in Chicago.

Still I admit that Plato's world was not ours, that his scorn of trade and handicraft is fantastic, that he had no conception of a great industrial community such as that of the United States, and that such a community must and will shape its education to suit its own needs. If the usual education handed down to it from the past does not suit it, it will certainly before long drop this and try another. The usual education in the past has been mainly literary. The question is whether the studies which were long supposed to be the best for all of us are practically the best now; whether others are not better. The tyranny of the past, many think, weighs on us injuriously in the predominance given to letters in education. The question is raised whether, to meet the needs of our modern life, the predominance ought not now to pass from letters to science; and naturally the question is nowhere raised with more energy than here in the United States. The design of abasing what is called 'mere literary instruction and education,' and of exalting what is called 'sound, extensive, and practical scientific knowledge,' is, in this intensely modern world of the United States, even more perhaps than in Europe, a very popular design, and makes great and rapid progress.

I am going to ask whether the present movement for ousting letters from their old predominance in education, and for transferring the predominance in education to the natural sciences, whether this brisk and flourishing movement ought to prevail, and whether it is likely that in the end it really will prevail. An objection may be raised which I will anticipate. My own studies have been almost wholly in letters, and my visits to the field of the natural sciences have been very slight and inadequate, although those sciences have always strongly moved my curiosity. A man of letters, it will perhaps be said, is not competent to discuss the comparative merits of letters and natural science as means of education. To this objection

[1] actually Emerson's word (essay on *Literary Ethics*) was *majesty*, not *majority*

I reply, first of all, that his incompetence, if he attempts the discussion but is really incompetent for it, will be abundantly visible; nobody will be taken in; he will have plenty of sharp observers and critics to save mankind from that danger. But the line I am going to follow is, as you will soon discover, so extremely simple, that perhaps it may be followed without failure even by one who for a more ambitious line of discussion would be quite incompetent.

Some of you may possibly remember a phrase of mine which has been the object of a good deal of comment; an observation to the effect that in our culture, the aim being *to know ourselves and the world*, we have, as the means to this end, *to know the best which has been thought and said in the world*. A man of science, who is also an excellent writer and the very prince of debaters, Professor Huxley, in a discourse at the opening of Sir Josiah Mason's college at Birmingham, laying hold of this phrase, expanded it by quoting some more words of mine, which are these: 'The civilised world is to be regarded as now being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have for their proper outfit a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another. Special local and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this programme.'[2]

Now on my phrase, thus enlarged, Professor Huxley remarks that when I speak of the abovementioned knowledge as enabling us to know ourselves and the world, I assert *literature* to contain the materials which suffice for thus making us know ourselves and the world. But it is not by any means clear, says he, that after having learnt all which ancient and modern literatures have to tell us, we have laid a sufficiently broad and deep foundation for that criticism of life, that knowledge of ourselves and the world, which constitutes culture. On the contrary, Professor Huxley declares that he finds himself 'wholly unable to admit that either nations or individuals will really advance, if their outfit draws nothing from the stores of physical science. An army without weapons of precision, and with no particular base of operations, might more hopefully enter upon a campaign on the Rhine, than a man, devoid of a knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, upon a criticism of life.'

This shows how needful it is for those who are to discuss any matter together, to have a common understanding as to the sense of the terms they employ,—how needful, and how difficult. What Professor Huxley says, implies just the reproach which is so often brought against the study of *belles lettres*, as they are called: that the study is an elegant one, but slight and ineffectual; a smattering of Greek and Latin and other ornamental things, of little use for any one whose object is to get at truth, and to be a practical man. So, too, M. Renan[3] talks of the 'superficial humanism' of a school-course which treats us as if we were all going to be poets, writers, preachers, orators, and he opposes this humanism to positive science, or the critical search after truth. And there is always a tendency in those who are remonstrating against the predominance of letters in education, to understand by letters *belles lettres*, and by *belles lettres* a superficial humanism, the opposite of science or true knowledge.

But when we talk of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, for instance, which is the knowledge people have called the humanities, I for my part mean a knowledge which is something more than a superficial humanism, mainly decorative. 'I call all teaching *scientific*,' says Wolf, the critic of Homer, 'which is systematically laid out and followed up to its original sources. For example: a knowledge of classical antiquity is scientific when the remains of classical antiquity are correctly studied in the original languages.' There can be no doubt that Wolf is perfectly right; that all learning is scientific which is systematically laid out and followed up to its original sources, and that a genuine humanism is scientific.

When I speak of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, therefore, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, I mean more than a knowledge of so much vocabulary, so much grammar, so many portions of authors in the Greek and Latin languages, I mean knowing the Greeks and Romans, and their life and genius, and what they were and did in the world; what we get from them, and what is its value. That, at least, is the ideal; and when we talk of endeavouring to know Greek and Roman antiquity, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, we mean endeavouring so to

[2] from *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* See pp. 734, 780

[3] Ernest Renan (1823-92), French historian.

know them as to satisfy this ideal, however much we may still fall short of it.

The same also as to knowing our own and other modern nations, with the like aim of getting to understand ourselves and the world.' To know the best that has been thought and said by the modern nations, is to know, says Professor Huxley, 'only what modern *literatures* have to tell us; it is the criticism of life contained in modern literature.' And yet 'the distinctive character of our times,' he urges, 'lies in the vast and constantly increasing part which is played by natural knowledge.' And how, therefore, can a man, devoid of knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, enter hopefully upon a criticism of modern life?

Let us, I say, be agreed about the meaning of the terms we are using. I talk of knowing the best which has been thought and uttered in the world; Professor Huxley says this means knowing *literature*. Literature is a large word; it may mean everything written with letters or printed in a book. Euclid's *Elements*[4] and Newton's *Principia*[5] are thus literature. All knowledge that reaches us through books is literature. But by literature Professor Huxley means *belles lettres*. He means to make me say, that knowing the best which has been thought and said by the modern nations is knowing their *belles lettres* and no more. And this is no sufficient equipment, he argues, for a criticism of modern life. But as I do not mean, by knowing ancient Rome, knowing merely more or less of Latin *belles lettres*, and taking no account of Rome's military, and political, and legal, and administrative work in the world; and as, by knowing ancient Greece, I understand knowing her as the giver of Greek art, and the guide to a free and right use of reason and to scientific method, and the founder of our mathematics and physics and astronomy and biology,—I understand knowing her as all this, and not merely knowing certain Greek poems, and histories, and treatises, and speeches,—so as to the knowledge of modern nations also. By knowing modern nations, I mean not merely knowing their *belles lettres*, but knowing also what has been done by such men as Copernicus,[6] Galileo,[7] Newton, Darwin.[8] 'Our ancestors learned,' says Professor Huxley, 'that the earth is the centre of the visible universe, and that man is the cynosure of things terrestrial; and more especially was it inculcated that the course of nature had no fixed order, but that it could be, and constantly was, altered.' But for us now, continues Professor Huxley, 'the notions of the beginning and the end of the world entertained by our forefathers are no longer credible. It is very certain that the earth is not the chief body in the material universe, and that the world is not subordinated to man's use. It is even more certain that nature is the expression of a definite order, with which nothing interferes.' 'And yet,' he cries, 'the purely classical education advocated by the representatives of the humanists in our day gives no inkling of all this!'

In due place and time I will just touch upon that vexed question of classical education; but at present the question is as to what is meant by knowing the best which modern nations have thought and said. It is not knowing their *belles lettres* merely which is meant. To know Italian *belles lettres* is not to know Italy, and to know English *belles lettres* is not to know England. Into knowing Italy and England there comes a great deal more, Galileo and Newton amongst it. The reproach of being a superficial humanism, a tincture of *belles lettres*, may attach rightly enough to some other disciplines; but to the particular discipline recommended when I proposed knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world, it does not apply. In that best I certainly include what in modern times has been thought and said by the great observers and knowers of nature.

There is, therefore, really no question between Professor Huxley and me as to whether knowing the great results of the modern scientific study of nature is not required as a part of our culture, as well as knowing the products of literature and art. But to follow the processes by which those results are reached, ought, say the friends of physical science, to be made the staple education for the bulk of mankind. And here there does arise a question between those whom Professor Huxley calls with playful sarcasm 'the Levites of culture,'[9] and those whom the poor humanist is sometimes apt to regard as its Nebuchadnezzars.[10]

[4] work by the Greek geometrician (fl. 300 B C)

[5] See I, p. 677.

[6] fifteenth century Polish astronomer who propounded the theory that the earth moves around the sun.

[7] See I, p. 678 [8] See p. 752

[9] i.e. priests of the temple of culture See *Numbers* 3. 14-32.

[10] King of Babylon (605-562 B C) who invaded Jerusalem—hence destroyers of culture.

The great results of the scientific investigation of nature we are agreed upon knowing, but how much of our study are we bound to give to the processes by which those results are reached? The results have their visible bearing on human life. But all the processes, too, all the items of fact, by which those results are reached and established, are interesting. All knowledge is interesting to a wise man, and the knowledge of nature is interesting to all men. It is very interesting to know, that, from the albuminous white of the egg, the chick in the egg gets the materials for its flesh, bones, blood, and feathers; while, from the fatty yolk of the egg, it gets the heat and energy which enable it at length to break its shell and begin the world. It is less interesting, perhaps, but still it is interesting, to know that when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water. Moreover, it is quite true that the habit of dealing with facts, which is given by the study of nature, is, as the friends of physical science praise it for being, an excellent discipline. The appeal, in the study of nature, is constantly to observation and experiment; not only is it said that the thing is so, but we can be made to see that it is so. Not only does a man tell us that when a taper burns the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water, as a man may tell us, if he likes, that Charon is punting his ferry-boat on the river Styx, or that Victor Hugo[11] is a sublime poet, or Mr. Gladstone[12] the most admirable of statesmen; but we are made to see that the conversion into carbonic acid and water does actually happen. This reality of natural knowledge it is, which makes the friends of physical science contrast it, as a knowledge of things, with the humanist's knowledge, which is, say they, a knowledge of words. And hence Professor Huxley is moved to lay it down that, 'for the purpose of attaining real culture, an exclusively scientific education is at least as effectual as an exclusively literary education.' And a certain President of the Section for Mechanical Science in the British Association is, in Scripture phrase, 'very bold,' and declares that if a man, in his mental training, 'has substituted literature and history for natural science, he has chosen the less useful alternative.' But whether we go these lengths or not, we must all admit that in natural science the habit gained of dealing with facts is a most valuable discipline, and that every one should have some experience of it.

More than this, however, is demanded by the reformers. It is proposed to make the training in natural science the main part of education, for the great majority of mankind at any rate. And here, I confess, I part company with the friends of physical science, with whom up to this point I have been agreeing. In differing from them, however, I wish to proceed with the utmost caution and diffidence. The smallness of my own acquaintance with the disciplines of natural science is ever before my mind, and I am fearful of doing these disciplines an injustice. The ability and pugnacity of the partisans of natural science make them formidable persons to contradict. The tone of tentative inquiry, which befits a being of dim faculties and bounded knowledge, is the tone I would wish to take and not to depart from. At present it seems to me, that those who are for giving to natural knowledge, as they call it, the chief place in the education of the majority of mankind, leave one important thing out of their account: the constitution of human nature. But I put this forward on the strength of some facts not at all recondite, very far from it; facts capable of being stated in the simplest possible fashion, and to which, if I so state them, the man of science will, I am sure, be willing to allow their due weight.

Deny the facts altogether, I think, he hardly can. He can hardly deny, that when we set ourselves to enumerate the powers which go to the building up of human life, and say that they are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, and the power of social life and manners,—he can hardly deny that this scheme, though drawn in rough and plain lines enough, and not pretending to scientific exactness, does yet give a fairly true representation of the matter. Human nature is built up by these powers; we have the need for them all. When we have rightly met and adjusted the claims of them all, we shall then be in a fair way for getting soberness and righteousness, with wisdom. This is evident enough, and the friends of physical science would admit it.

But perhaps they may not have sufficiently observed another thing: namely, that the several powers just mentioned are not isolated, but there is, in the generality of mankind, a perpetual tendency to relate them one to another in divers ways.

[11] French poet and novelist (1802-85).

[12] William F. Gladstone, British prime minister (1809-98).

With one such way of relating them I am particularly concerned now. Following our instinct for intellect and knowledge, we acquire pieces of knowledge; and presently, in the generality of men, there arises the desire to relate these pieces of knowledge to our sense for conduct, to our sense for beauty,—and there is weariness and dissatisfaction if the desire is baulked. Now in this desire lies, I think, the strength of that hold which letters have upon us.

All knowledge is, as I said just now, interesting; and even items of knowledge which from the nature of the case cannot well be related, but must stand isolated in our thoughts, have their interest. Even lists of exceptions have their interest. If we are studying Greek accents, it is interesting to know that *pais* and *pas*, and some other monosyllables of the same form of declension, do not take the circumflex upon the last syllable of the genitive plural, but vary, in this respect, from the common rule. If we are studying physiology, it is interesting to know that the pulmonary artery carries dark blood and the pulmonary vein carries bright blood, departing in this respect from the common rule for the division of labour between the veins and the arteries. But every one knows how we seek naturally to combine the pieces of our knowledge together, to bring them under general rules, to relate them to principles; and how unsatisfactory and tiresome it would be to go on for ever learning lists of exceptions, or accumulating items of fact which must stand isolated.

Well, that same need of relating our knowledge, which operates here within the sphere of our knowledge itself, we shall find operating, also, outside that sphere. We experience, as we go on learning and knowing,—the vast majority of us experience,—the need of relating what we have learnt and known to the sense which we have in us for conduct, to the sense which we have in us for beauty.

A certain Greek prophetess of Mantineia in Arcadia, Diotima by name, once explained to the philosopher Socrates that love, and impulse, and bent of all kinds, is, in fact, nothing else but the desire in men that good should for ever be present to them. This desire for good, Diotima assured Socrates, is our fundamental desire, of which fundamental desire every impulse in us is only some one particular form. And therefore this fundamental desire it is, I suppose,—this desire in men that good should be for ever present to them,—which acts in us when we feel the impulse for relating our knowledge to our sense for conduct and to our sense for beauty. At any rate, with men in general the instinct exists. Such is human nature. And the instinct, it will be admitted, is innocent, and human nature is preserved by our following the lead of its innocent instincts. Therefore, in seeking to gratify this instinct in question, we are following the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

But, no doubt, some kinds of knowledge cannot be made to directly serve the instinct in question, cannot be directly related to the sense for beauty, to the sense for conduct. These are instrument-knowledges; they lead on to other knowledges, which can. A man who passes his life in instrument-knowledges is a specialist. They may be invaluable as instruments to something beyond, for those who have the gift thus to employ them; and they may be disciplines in themselves wherein it is useful for every one to have some schooling. But it is inconceivable that the generality of men should pass all their mental life with Greek accents or with formal logic. My friend Professor Sylvester, who is one of the first mathematicians in the world, holds transcendental doctrines as to the virtue of mathematics, but those doctrines are not for common men. In the very Senate House and heart of our English Cambridge I once ventured, though not without an apology for my profaneness, to hazard the opinion that for the majority of mankind a little of mathematics, even, goes a long way. Of course this is quite consistent with their being of immense importance as an instrument to something else; but it is the few who have the aptitude for thus using them, not the bulk of mankind.

The natural sciences do not, however, stand on the same footing with these instrument-knowledges. Experience shows us that the generality of men will find more interest in learning that, when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water, or in learning the explanation of the phenomenon of dew, or in learning how the circulation of the blood is carried on, than they find in learning that the genitive plural of *pais* and *pas* does not take the circumflex on the termination. And one piece of natural knowledge is added to another, and others are added to that, and at last we come to propositions so interesting as Mr. Darwin's famous proposition that 'our ancestor was a hairy quadruped furnished with a

tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits.'[13] Or we come to propositions of such reach and magnitude as those which Professor Huxley delivers, when he says that the notions of our forefathers about the beginning and the end of the world were all wrong, and that nature is the expression of a definite order with which nothing interferes.

Interesting, indeed, these results of science are, important they are, and we should all of us be acquainted with them. But what I now wish you to mark is, that we are still, when they are propounded to us and we receive them, we are still in the sphere of intellect and knowledge. And for the generality of men there will be found, I say, to arise, when they have duly taken in the proposition that their ancestor was 'a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits,' there will be found to arise an invincible desire to relate this proposition to the sense in us for conduct, and to the sense in us for beauty. But this the men of science will not do for us, and will hardly even profess to do. They will give us other pieces of knowledge, other facts, about other animals and their ancestors, or about plants, or about stones, or about stars; and they may finally bring us to those great 'general conceptions of the universe, which are forced upon us all,' says Professor Huxley, 'by the progress of physical science.' But still it will be *knowledge* only which they give us; knowledge not put for us into relation with our sense for conduct, our sense for beauty, and touched with emotion by being so put; not thus put for us, and therefore, to the majority of mankind, after a certain while, unsatisfying, wearying.

Not to the born naturalist, I admit. But what do we mean by a born naturalist? We mean a man in whom the zeal for observing nature is so uncommonly strong and eminent, that it marks him off from the bulk of mankind. Such a man will pass his life happily in collecting natural knowledge and reasoning upon it, and will ask for nothing, or hardly anything, more. I have heard it said that the sagacious and admirable naturalist whom we lost not very long ago, Mr. Darwin, once owned to a friend that for his part he did not experience the necessity for two things which most men find so necessary to them,—religion and poetry; science and the domestic affections, he thought, were enough. To a born naturalist, I can well understand that this should seem so. So absorbing is his occupation with nature, so strong his love for his occupation, that he goes on acquiring natural knowledge and reasoning upon it, and has little time or inclination for thinking about getting it related to the desire in man for conduct, the desire in man for beauty. He relates it to them for himself as he goes along, so far as he feels the need; and he draws from the domestic affections all the additional solace necessary. But then Darwins are extremely rare. Another great and admirable master of natural knowledge, Faraday, was a Sandemanian.[14] That is to say, he related his knowledge to his instinct for conduct and to his instinct for beauty, by the aid of that respectable Scottish sectary, Robert Sandeman. And so strong, in general, is the demand of religion and poetry to have their share in a man, to associate themselves with his knowing, and to relieve and rejoice it, that, probably, for one man amongst us with the disposition to do as Darwin did in this respect, there are at least fifty with the disposition to do as Faraday.

Education lays hold upon us, in fact, by satisfying this demand. Professor Huxley holds up to scorn mediæval education, with its neglect of the knowledge of nature, its poverty even of literary studies, its formal logic devoted to 'showing how and why that which the Church said was true must be true.' But the great mediæval Universities were not brought into being, we may be sure, by the zeal for giving a jejune and contemptible education. Kings have been their nursing fathers, and queens have been their nursing mothers, but not for this. The mediæval Universities came into being, because the supposed knowledge, delivered by Scripture and the Church, so deeply engaged men's hearts, by so simply, easily, and powerfully relating itself to their desire for conduct, their desire for beauty. All other knowledge was dominated by this supposed knowledge and was subordinated to it, because of the surpassing strength of the hold which it gained upon the affections of men, by allying itself profoundly with their sense for conduct, their sense for beauty.

But now, says Professor Huxley, conceptions of the universe fatal to the notions held by our forefathers have been forced upon us by physical science. Grant to him that they are thus fatal, that

[13] *The Descent of Man*, Part IV, Chapter 21.

[14] Michael Faraday, British physicist, (1791-1867) belonged to a communistic religious sect founded by Robert Sandeman (1718-71)

the new conceptions must and will soon become current everywhere, and that every one will finally perceive them to be fatal to the beliefs of our forefathers. The need of humane letters, as they are truly called, because they serve the paramount desire in men that good should be for ever present to them,—the need of humane letters, to establish a relation between the new conceptions, and our instinct for beauty, our instinct for conduct, is only the more visible. The Middle Age could do without humane letters, as it could do without the study of nature, because its supposed knowledge was made to engage its emotions so powerfully. Grant that the supposed knowledge disappears, its power of being made to engage the emotions will of course disappear along with it,—but the emotions themselves, and their claim to be engaged and satisfied, will remain. Now if we find by experience that humane letters have an undeniable power of engaging the emotions, the importance of humane letters in a man's training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of modern science in extirpating what it calls 'mediæval thinking.'

Have humane letters, then, have poetry and eloquence, the power here attributed to them of engaging the emotions, and do they exercise it? And if they have it and exercise it, *how* do they exercise it, so as to exert an influence upon man's sense for conduct, his sense for beauty? Finally, even if they both can and do exert an influence upon the senses in question, how are they to relate to them the results,—the modern results,—of natural science? All these questions may be asked. First, ~~have poetry and eloquence the power~~ of ~~calling out the emotions? The appeal is to experience. Experience shows that for the vast majority of men, for mankind in general, they have the power. Next, do they exercise it? They do.~~ But then, *how* do they exercise it so as to affect man's sense for conduct, his sense for beauty? And this is perhaps a case for applying the Preacher's words: 'Though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.'[15] Why should it be one thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say, 'Patience is a virtue,' and quite another thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with Homer,

τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν—[16]

'for an enduring heart have the destinies appointed to the children of men'? Why should it be one thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with the philosopher Spinoza, *Felicitas in eo consistit quod homo suum esse conservare potest*—'Man's happiness consists in his being able to preserve his own essence,' and quite another thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with the Gospel, 'What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, forfeit himself?' How does this difference of effect arise? I cannot tell, and I am not much concerned to know; the important thing is that it does arise, and that we can profit by it. But how, finally, are poetry and eloquence to exercise the power of relating the modern results of natural science to man's instinct for conduct, his instinct for beauty? And here again I answer that I do not know *how* they will exercise it, but that they can and will exercise it I am sure. I do not mean that modern philosophical poets and modern philosophical moralists are to come and relate for us, in express terms, the results of modern scientific research to our instinct for conduct, our instinct for beauty. But I mean that we shall find, as a matter of experience, if we know the best that has been thought and uttered in the world, we shall find that the art and poetry and eloquence of men who lived, perhaps, long ago, who had the most limited natural knowledge, who had the most erroneous conceptions about many important matters, we shall find that this art, and poetry, and eloquence, have in fact not only the power of refreshing and delighting us, they have also the power,—such is the strength and worth, in essentials, of their authors' criticism of life,—they have a fortifying, and elevating, and quickening, and suggestive power, capable of wonderfully helping us to relate the results of modern science to our need for conduct, our need for beauty. Homer's conceptions of the physical universe were, I imagine, grotesque; but really, under the shock of hearing from modern science that 'the world is not subordinated to man's use, and that man is not the cynosure of things terrestrial,' I could, for my own part, desire no better comfort than Homer's line which I quoted just now,

τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν—

'for an enduring heart have the destinies appointed to the children of men'!

And the more that men's minds are cleared, the

[15] *Ecclesiastes*, 8·17.

[16] *Iliad*, 24 49.

more that the results of science are frankly accepted, the more that poetry and eloquence come to be received and studied as what in truth they really are,—the criticism of life by gifted men, alive and active with extraordinary power at an unusual number of points;—so much the more will the value of humane letters, and of art also, which is an utterance having a like kind of power with theirs, be felt and acknowledged, and their place in education be secured.

Let us therefore, all of us, avoid indeed as much as possible any invidious comparison between the merits of humane letters, as means of education, and the merits of the natural sciences. But when some President of a Section for Mechanical Science insists on making the comparison, and tells us that 'he who in his training has substituted literature and history for natural science has chosen the less useful alternative,' let us make answer to him that the student of humane letters only, will, at least, know also the great general conceptions brought in by modern physical science; for science, as Professor Huxley says, forces them upon us all. But the student of the natural sciences only, will, by our very hypothesis, know nothing of humane letters; not to mention that in setting himself to be perpetually accumulating natural knowledge, he sets himself to do what only specialists have in general the gift for doing genially. And so he will probably be unsatisfied, or at any rate incomplete, and even more incomplete than the student of humane letters only.

I once mentioned in a school-report, how a young man in one of our English training colleges having to paraphrase the passage in *Macbeth* beginning,

'Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?'

turned this line into, 'Can you not wait upon the lunatic?' And I remarked what a curious state of things it would be, if every pupil of our national schools knew, let us say, that the moon is two thousand one hundred and sixty miles in diameter, and thought at the same time that a good paraphrase for

'Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?'

was, 'Can you not wait upon the lunatic?' If one is driven to choose, I think I would rather have a young person ignorant about the moon's diameter, but aware that 'Can you not wait upon the lunatic?' is bad, than a young person whose education had been such as to manage things the other way.

Or to go higher than the pupils of our national schools. I have in my mind's eye a member of our British Parliament who comes to travel here in America, who afterwards relates his travels, and who shows a really masterly knowledge of the geology of this great country and of its mining capabilities, but who ends by gravely suggesting that the United States should borrow a prince from our Royal Family, and should make him their king, and should create a House of Lords of great landed proprietors after the pattern of ours; and then America, he thinks, would have her future happily and perfectly secured. Surely, in this case, the President of the Section for Mechanical Science would himself hardly say that our member of Parliament, by concentrating himself upon geology and mineralogy, and so on, and not attending to literature and history, had 'chosen the more useful alternative.'

If then there is to be separation and option between humane letters on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other, the great majority of mankind, all who have not exceptional and overpowering aptitudes for the study of nature, would do well, I cannot but think, to choose to be educated in humane letters rather than in the natural sciences. Letters will call out their being at more points, will make them live more.

I said that before I ended I would just touch on the question of classical education, and I will keep my word. Even if literature is to retain a large place in our education, yet Latin and Greek, say the friends of progress, will certainly have to go. Greek is the grand offender in the eyes of these gentlemen. The attackers of the established course of study think that against Greek, at any rate, they have irresistible arguments. Literature may perhaps be needed in education, they say; but why on earth should it be Greek literature? Why not French or German? Nay, 'has not an Englishman models in his own literature of every kind of excellence?' As before, it is not on any weak pleadings of my own that I rely for convincing the gainsayers; it is on the constitution of human nature itself, and on the instinct of self-preservation in humanity. The instinct for beauty is set

in human nature, as surely as the instinct for knowledge is set there, or the instinct for conduct. If the instinct for beauty is served by Greek literature and art as it is served by no other literature and art, we may trust to the instinct of self-preservation in humanity for keeping Greek as part of our culture. We may trust to it for even making the study of Greek more prevalent than it is now. Greek will come, I hope, some day to be studied more rationally than at present; but it will be increasingly studied as men increasingly feel the need in them for beauty, and how powerfully Greek art and Greek literature can serve this need. Women will again study Greek, as Lady Jane Grey[17] did; I believe that in that chain of forts, with which the fair host of the Amazons are now engirdling our English universities, I find that here in America, in colleges like Smith College in Massachusetts, and Vassar College in the State of New York, and in the happy families of the mixed universities out West, they are studying it already.

Defuit una mihi symmetria prisca,—'The antique symmetry was the one thing wanting to me,' said Leonardo da Vinci;[18] and he was an Italian. I will not presume to speak for the Americans, but I am sure that, in the Englishman, the want of this admirable symmetry of the Greeks is a thousand times more great and crying than in any Italian. The results of the want show themselves most glaringly, perhaps, in our architecture, but they show themselves, also, in all our art. *Fit details strictly combined, in view of a large general result nobly conceived*, that is just the beautiful *symmetria prisca* of the Greeks, and it is just where we English fail, where all our art fails. Striking ideas we have, and well-executed details we have; but that high symmetry which, with satisfying and delightful effect, combines them, we seldom or never have. The glorious beauty of the Acropolis at Athens did not come from single fine things stuck about on that hill, a statue here, a gateway there;—no, it arose from all things being perfectly combined for a supreme total effect. What must not an Englishman feel about our deficiencies in this respect, as the sense for beauty, whereof this symmetry is an essential element, awakens and strengthens within him! what will not one day be his respect and desire for Greece and its *symmetria prisca*, when the scales drop from his eyes as he walks the London streets, and he sees such a lesson in meanness as the Strand, for instance, in its true deformity! But here we are coming to our friend Mr. Ruskin's province,[19] and I will not intrude upon it, for he is its very sufficient guardian.

And so we at last find, it seems, we find flowing in favour of the humanities the natural and necessary stream of things, which seemed against them when we started. The 'hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits,' this good fellow carried hidden in his nature, apparently, something destined to develop into a necessity for humane letters. Nay, more; we seem finally to be even led to the further conclusion that our hairy ancestor carried in his nature, also, a necessity for Greek.

And therefore, to say the truth, I cannot really think that humane letters are in much actual danger of being thrust out from their leading place in education, in spite of the array of authorities against them at this moment. So long as human nature is what it is, their attractions will remain irresistible. As with Greek, so with letters generally. they will some day come, we may hope, to be studied more rationally, but they will not lose their place. What will happen will rather be that there will be crowded into education other matters besides, far too many; there will be, perhaps, a period of unsettlement and confusion and false tendency; but letters will not in the end lose their leading place. If they lose it for a time, they will get it back again. We shall be brought back to them by our wants and aspirations. And a poor humanist may possess his soul in patience, neither strive nor cry, admit the energy and brilliancy of the partisans of physical science, and their present favour with the public, to be far greater than his own, and still have a happy faith that the nature of things works silently on behalf of the studies which he loves, and that, while we shall all have to acquaint ourselves with the great results reached by modern science, and to give ourselves as much training in its disciplines as we can conveniently carry, yet the majority of men will always require humane letters; and so much the more, as they have the more and the greater results of science to relate to the need in man for conduct, and to the need in him for beauty.

(1882, 1885)

[17] a gifted English noblewoman (1537-54).

[18] Italian painter, sculptor, and engineer (1452-1519).

[19] See p. 705.

Charles Darwin

(1809-1882)

On February 12, 1809 (the day of Abraham Lincoln's birth), Charles Darwin was born at Shrewsbury, the son of Dr. Robert Waring Darwin and grandson of Erasmus Darwin, the eighteenth-century scientist and poet. His maternal grandfather was Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the famous pottery firm.

His first efforts at a career were not promising. He started preparation for medicine at Edinburgh, but soon abandoned this project. He then entered Christ's College, Cambridge, reading to be a clergyman, but made a mediocre record. During his Cambridge years, however, he spent much time in sport and in the independent study of entomology. Even so early he gained the friendship of the scientists of his day, and was encouraged to work on geology.

The most important event in Darwin's life was the voyage which he made as naturalist on the *Beagle*, from December 27, 1831, to October 2, 1836. It is interesting that, after this extensive trip which took him around the world, Darwin never again left Great Britain. The voyage carried him to the Cape Verde Islands, to both the east and west coasts of South America, to the islands of the Pacific, to Australia, to various points in the Indian Ocean, around Africa to Brazil and the Azores, and thence home. During the years of this long voyage Darwin studied the geology, flora, and fauna of the strange lands he was visiting. He especially interested himself in the structure of the coral islands and in a comparison of animals living in islands with those whose habitat was the neighboring continents. He was impressed by the gradual changes of species as his expedition moved toward the south. He also began to make comparisons between living species and species recently extinct which he found in fossil remains.

On his return from the voyage, he issued his *Journal* (1839), which gave the principal results of the expedition. Darwin was already struck, as early as 1837, by the probability of the transmutation of species. During the years 1838-41 he was secretary to the Geological Society and saw much of Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist. This association during these formative years was of first importance in Darwin's development.

In 1839 he married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood. His happy marriage was invaluable for a scientist pursued most of his life by ill health, and needing, for the proper success of his scientific labors, the tenderest care. In 1842 he moved from London to Kent and lived there the rest of his life.

From 1837 he collected facts on the selection of breeds of domestic plants and animals. He realized that conscious selection as exercised by propagators of new types was carried on with complete success. Did such selection also take place in a state of nature? And, if so, how? In 1838 he read Malthus's treatise *On Population* and was impressed with the theory of the struggle for existence as a principle of selection. He first sketched out his theory in 1842, but let it lie for many years while he was engaged in the writing of scientific monographs. In 1857 he made a much fuller statement of his theory in a letter to Professor Asa Gray, the American botanist.

In June 1858, as Darwin was getting ready to make a more definite announcement of his theories, he received from A. R. Wallace, then on an expedition in the Moluccas, a letter containing an essay which he wished Darwin to have published. The essay stated exactly the same position as Darwin himself had reached. Consultation with other scientists who were familiar with Darwin's ideas suggested the proper solution of the delicate problem in priority thus presented. Wallace's essay was published along with a

letter of explanation concerning Darwin's independent arrival at the same conclusions. In order to substantiate Darwin's independence, the letter to Professor Asa Gray was also printed.

Darwin now saw that he must waste no time in placing his theory before the world. As a result of hard labor, he was able to issue the *Origin of Species* in November 1859. So keen was the interest in the book that the complete edition of 1250 copies was exhausted the first day.

Almost immediately a great controversy commenced. The belief in the immutability of species was almost universal among the scientists of the day. And Darwin had not only to convert his colleagues, but to overcome the objections and prejudices of the clergy and of the common man. For his new theories challenged many ideas made dear to them by religious association. In order to accept Darwin's beliefs—especially his implications that the human animal is derived from a lower species—the literal belief in the story of Genesis and many another dogma based upon this belief had to be abandoned. It was natural that the conquest of such formidable adversaries as conservative scientists, an entrenched clergy, and a pious laity should be slow and difficult, if it were to be accomplished at all.

In gaining adherents to his new ideas Darwin received the invaluable help of Thomas Henry Huxley (see p. 757), one of the most skillful speakers of the century. As it first appeared, Darwin's treatment of evolution paid little attention to the question of man's place in the development of species. Huxley was immediately impressed by this aspect of Darwin's contribution, and it was probably because of this emphasis of Huxley's that Darwin issued, in 1871, a volume entitled *The Descent of Man*. It may fairly be said that primarily through the help of Huxley the battle for acceptance among scientific thinkers of Darwin's main theory was completely won by 1880.

The influence of the scientific movement of which Darwin's *Origin of Species* is merely the most dramatic manifestation had already unsettled the religious beliefs of many writers of the mid-nineteenth century. The implications of geology seem to have almost tragically disturbed the religious certainty which Tennyson so vainly strives after in his *In Memoriam* (see p. 473). Likewise Clough (see p. 568) and Matthew Arnold (see p. 571) saw with a nostalgic regret the ebbing of the sea of faith (see *Dover Beach*, p. 587). For men of letters of their stamp, Darwin's pronouncements were only confirmations of a doubt that with them had already become almost a conviction. Except for a small group of conservative writers, one is nearly always safe in assuming that men and women who produced English literature after 1860 were either mildly or completely skeptical about anti-Darwinian dogma.

Matthew Arnold represents one characteristic response to the new intellectual atmosphere. With a wholehearted acceptance of the new science, he applied scientific methods to a reinterpretation of Christian theology and thus tried to bring the Christian faith into line with what he conceived to be the truth. Another group of writers, characterized by such persons as George Eliot and (with some differences) Swinburne (see p. 616), made a complete break with the Church and proclaimed the philosophy of Positivism, which came from France in the middle of the century. This philosophy was entirely devoid of any supernaturalism and for nearly a half century attracted a considerable following among the writers and other intellectuals of England.

To certain other writers who had abandoned the older persuasions, the loss of a religious sanction as a basis for conduct seemed very serious. Hence there was a revival in the last quarter of the century of two of the pagan systems of ethics—epicureanism and stoicism. If the conduct of life is not to be carried out primarily for the glory of God, how shall one determine the nature of the Good Life? Perhaps the epicurean philosophy has never been more attractively presented than by Walter Pater in his *Marius the Epicurean* and in his conclusion to *Studies in the Renaissance* (see p. 879). This philosophy was light-heartedly embraced by a considerable group of esthetes, including Oscar Wilde (see

p. 828). The stoic point of view also received expression during these years, most characteristically by Henley, and with modifications by Housman (see pp. 821 and 849).

The profound strain of pessimism found in many writers after Darwin's time is probably not due directly to his work. But it is frequently intermingled with a religious skepticism which does come from the impact of the scientific revolution in which Darwin played so large a part. His theories crystallized in dramatic fashion the doubts which had been darkening, like an impending cloud, the intellectual horizon of a whole generation.

Of course, not all writers lost their religion because of the new scientific atmosphere. Indeed, the uncertainties created by the new skepticism of the age brought about a considerable reaction toward extreme orthodoxy, whether seen in the Roman Catholicism of Newman (see p. 687), Manning, Francis Thompson (see p. 824), and, in later years, Gilbert Chesterton (see p. 973), or in the nun-like devotion to Anglican pietism of Christina Rossetti (see p. 601).

Darwin's last years were full of honors. He continued his patient and painstaking work in spite of almost incessant ill health. His death occurred April 19, 1882, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Darwin's general conclusions and answer to his conservative critics are admirably summed in the following passage, which shows his prose at its best.

From *The Descent of Man*

General Summary and Conclusion

A brief summary will be sufficient to recall to the reader's mind the more salient points in this work. Many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative, and some no doubt will prove erroneous; but I have in every case given the reasons which have led me to one view rather than to another. It seemed worth while to try how far the principle of evolution would throw light on some of the more complex problems in the natural history of man. False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science, for they often endure long; but false views, if supported by some evidence, do little harm, for every one takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness: and when this is done, one path towards error is closed and the road to truth is often at the same time opened.

The main conclusion here arrived at, and now held by many naturalists who are well competent to form a sound judgment, is that man is descended from some less highly organised form. The grounds upon which this conclusion rests will never be shaken, for the close similarity between man and the lower animals in embryonic development, as well as in innumerable points of structure and constitution, both of high and of the most trifling importance,—the rudiments which he retains, and the abnormal reversions of which he is occasionally liable,—are facts which cannot be disputed. They have long been known, but until recently they told us nothing with respect to the origin of man. Now when viewed by the light of our knowledge of the whole organic world, their meaning is unmistakable. The great principle of evolution stands up clear and firm, when these groups or facts are considered in connection with others, such as the mutual affinities of the members of the same group, their geographical distribution in past and present times, and their geological succession. It is incredible that all these facts should speak falsely. He who is not content to look, like a savage, at the phenomena of nature as disconnected, cannot any longer believe that man is the work of a separate act of creation. He will be forced to admit that the close resemblance of the embryo of man to that, for instance, of a dog—the construction of his skull, limbs and whole frame on the same plan with that of other mammals, independently of the uses to which the parts may be put—the occasional re-appearance of various structures, for instance of several muscles, which man does not normally possess, but which are common to the Quadrumana—and a crowd of analogous facts—all point in the plainest manner to the conclusion that man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor. . . .

The high standard of our intellectual powers and moral disposition is the greatest difficulty which presents itself, after we have been driven to this conclusion on the origin of man. But everyone who admits the principle of evolution, must see

that the mental powers of the higher animals, which are the same in kind with those of man, though so different in degree, are capable of advancement. Thus the interval between the mental powers of one of the higher apes and of a fish, or between those of an ant and scale-insect, is immense; yet their development does not offer any special difficulty; for with our domesticated animals, the mental faculties are certainly variable, and the variations are inherited. No one doubts that they are of the utmost importance to animals in a state of nature. Therefore the conditions are favorable for their development through natural selection. The same conclusion may be extended to man; the intellect must have been all-important to him, even at a very remote period, as enabling him to invent and use language, to make weapons, tools, traps, etc., whereby with the aid of his social habits, he long ago became the most dominant of all living creatures.

A great stride in the development of the intellect will have followed, as soon as the half-art and half-instinct of language came into use; for the continued use of language will have reacted on the brain and produced an inherited effect; and this again will have reacted on the improvement of language. As Mr. Chauncey Wright has well remarked, the largeness of the brain in man relatively to his body, compared with the lower animals, may be attributed in chief part to the early use of some simple form of language,—that wonderful engine which affixes signs to all sorts of objects and qualities, and excites trains of thought which would never arise from the mere impression of the senses, or if they did arise could not be followed out. The higher intellectual powers of man, such as those of ratiocination, abstraction, self-consciousness, etc., probably follow from the continued improvement and exercise of the other mental faculties.

The development of the moral qualities is a more interesting problem. The foundation lies in the social instincts, including under this term the family ties. These instincts are highly complex, and in the case of the lower animals give special tendencies towards certain definite actions; but the more important elements are love, and the distinct emotion of sympathy. Animals endowed with the social instincts take pleasure in one another's company, warn one another of danger, defend and aid one another in many ways. These instincts do not extend to all the individuals of the species, but only to those of the same community. As they are highly beneficial to the species, they have in all probability been acquired through natural selection.

A moral being is one who is capable of reflecting on his past actions and their motives—of approving of some and disapproving of others; and the fact that man is the one being who certainly deserves this designation, is the greatest of all distinctions between him and the lower animals. But in the fourth chapter I have endeavored to show that the moral sense follows, firstly, from the enduring and everpresent nature of the social instincts; secondly, from man's appreciation of the approbation and disapprobation of his fellows; and thirdly, from the high activity of his mental faculties, with past impressions extremely vivid; and in these latter respects he differs from the lower animals. Owing to this condition of mind, man cannot avoid looking both backwards and forwards, and comparing past impressions. Hence after some temporary desire or passion has mastered his social instincts, he reflects and compares the now weakened impression of such past impulses with the ever-present social instincts; and he then feels that sense of dissatisfaction which all unsatisfied instincts leave behind them, he therefore resolves to act differently for the future,—and this is conscience. Any instinct, permanently stronger or more enduring than another, gives rise to a feeling which we express by saying that it ought to be obeyed. A pointer dog, if able to reflect on his past conduct, would say to himself, I ought (as indeed we say of him) to have pointed at that hare and not have yielded to the passing temptation of hunting it. . . .

The belief in God has often been advanced as not only the greatest, but the most complete of all the distinctions between man and the lower animals. It is however impossible, as we have seen, to maintain that this belief is innate or instinctive in man. On the other hand a belief in all-pervading spiritual agencies seems to be universal; and apparently follows from a considerable advance in man's reason, and from a still greater advance in his faculties of imagination, curiosity and wonder. I am aware that the assumed instinctive belief in God has been used by many persons as an argument for His existence. But this is a rash argument, as we should thus be compelled to believe in the existence of many cruel and malignant spirits, only a little more powerful than man; for the belief in them is far more general than in a beneficent Deity. The idea of a universal and beneficent Creator does not seem to arise in the mind of man, until he has been elevated by long-continued culture.

He who believes in the advancement of man

from some low organized form, will naturally ask how does this bear on the belief in the immortality of the soul. The barbarous races of man, as Sir J. Lubbock has shown, possess no clear belief of this kind; but arguments derived from the primeval beliefs of savages are, as we have just seen, of little or no avail. Few persons feel any anxiety from the impossibility of determining at what precise period in the development of the individual, from the first trace of a minute germinal vesicle, man becomes an immortal being; and there is no greater cause for anxiety because the period cannot possibly be determined in the gradually ascending organic scale.

I am aware that the conclusions arrived at in this work will be denounced by some as highly irreligious; but he who denounces them is bound to show why it is more irreligious to explain the origin of man as a distinct species by descent from some lower form, through the laws of variation and natural selection, than to explain the birth of the individual through the laws of ordinary reproduction. The birth both of the species and of the individual are equally parts of that grand sequence of events, which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts at such a conclusion, whether or not we are able to believe that every slight variation of structure,—the union of each pair in marriage,—the dissemination of each seed,—and other such events, have all been ordained for some special purpose. . . .

Man scans with scrupulous care the character and pedigrees of his horses, cattle, and dogs before he matches them; but when he comes to his own marriage he rarely, or never, takes any such care. He is impelled by nearly the same motives as the lower animals, when they are left to their own free choice, though he is in so far superior to them that he highly values mental charms and virtues. On the other hand he is strongly attracted by mere wealth or rank. Yet he might by selection do something not only for the bodily constitution and frame of his offspring, but for their intellectual and moral qualities. Both sexes ought to refrain from marriage if they are in any marked degree inferior in body or mind; but such hopes are Utopian and will never be even partially realised until the laws of inheritance are thoroughly known. Every one does good service, who aids towards this end. When the principles of breeding and inheritance are better understood, we shall not hear ignorant members of our legislature rejecting with scorn a plan for ascertaining whether or not consanguineous marriages are injurious to man.

The advancement of the welfare of mankind is a most intricate problem: all ought to refrain from marriage who cannot avoid abject poverty for their children; for poverty is not only a great evil, but tends to its own increase by leading to recklessness in marriage. On the other hand, as Mr. Galton[1] has remarked, if the prudent avoid marriage, whilst the reckless marry, the inferior members tend to supplant the better members of society. Man, like every other animal, has no doubt advanced to his present high condition through a struggle for existence consequent on his rapid multiplication; and if he is to advance still higher, it is to be feared that he must remain subject to a severe struggle. Otherwise he would sink into indolence, and the more gifted men would not be more successful in the battle of life than the less gifted. Hence our natural rate of increase, though leading to many and obvious evils, must not be greatly diminished by any means. There should be open competition for all men; and the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring. Important as the struggle for existence has been and even still is, yet as far as the highest part of man's nature is concerned there are other agencies more important. For the moral qualities are advanced, either directly or indirectly, much more through the effects of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, etc., than through natural selection; though to this latter agency may be safely attributed the social instincts, which afforded the basis for the development of the moral sense.

The main conclusion arrived at in this work namely that man is descended from some lowly organized form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors. These men were absolutely naked and bedaubed with paint, their long hair was tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, and their expression was wild, startled, and distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and like wild animals lived on what they could catch; they had no government, and were merciless to every one not of their own

[1] Francis Galton (1822-1911), English writer on heredity

small tribe. He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.

Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future. But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system—with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.

(1871)

Thomas Henry Huxley

(1825-1895)

Thomas Henry Huxley, the great apostle of Evolution, was born May 4, 1825, at Ealing, a suburb of London. His father was a schoolmaster at this place but not long afterward moved to Coventry, where he obtained a position at a bank. After the age of ten, Thomas had no formal elementary schooling, but he was encouraged by his father in a very ambitious course of private reading. Before he was fifteen he had come under the influence of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, which aroused in him an interest in German literature. His knowledge of German, of which he made the beginnings at this early age, was to be of great value to him in his scientific career. During these years of general reading he also became acquainted with the philosophical speculation of his day and was permanently affected in his thinking by Sir William Hamilton's *The Philosophy of the Unconditioned*. For a youth of fifteen this was not facile reading, but he seems to have understood the implications of the philosopher and to have applied them in his own speculations for the rest of his life.

In 1841 Huxley was apprenticed to a physician and learned much of the routine of medical practice. He continued extensive private reading and won a prize in botany. The next year he entered Charing Cross Hospital on a scholarship. Here he was given three years of the best medical training available at that time, especially an excellent knowledge of anatomy. He passed his M.B. examination at the University of London in 1845. That he had done well is attested by his having been awarded the gold medal and second honors.

Being too young to enter the College of Surgeons, Huxley applied for a post in the navy. After some delay he was made assistant surgeon on the *Rattlesnake*, an assignment much to his taste since the ship was planning a long voyage in the South Seas for the purpose of charting ocean routes. Such an expedition had been of greatest importance to three of his scientific predecessors within the past ten years: Darwin, Hooker, and Wallace. Huxley likewise used this four-year voyage as a course of training in natural history. He made huge collections of all kinds and sent several scientific papers home to be published in his absence.

Quite as important to his own life was his meeting in Sydney with the lady who later became his wife. Though their marriage was postponed for seven years, her beneficent influence on him was constant from their first meeting to the end of his life. An unusually happy domestic background made possible and encouraged his great services to science.

During the ten years after his return in 1851 Huxley was extremely busy and very successful. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and Lecturer at the Royal Institution. In 1853 he received the Royal Medal for important contributions to science. During the decade he undertook various teaching positions, the principal one of which was the Lectureship in Natural History at the School of Mines. Very significant for his future were the lectures he delivered to workingmen. For these he was obliged to state his scientific principles with extreme simplicity and clarity, without oversimplifying the facts. All during these years he was developing three or four sciences at once and had some misgivings as to whether he might not be scattering his efforts too much.

He need not have worried, because all his wide range of knowledge was to be challenged by the publication in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Huxley had slowly come to much the same position that Darwin enunciated in his book, and he found the reading of this epoch-making work the most important event in his whole life. The next twenty years were to be devoted to championing the new theory of evolution. The conflict between it and the widely accepted Biblical account caused the debate which followed to be filled with bitterness. Huxley proved himself one of the best propagandists of the century. Though he gave full credit to Darwin for the ideas he was defending, he was himself much more interested than was Darwin in the application of evolutionary theory to man. As the result of much lecturing and much thinking, he wrote, in 1863, his first full-size book, *Evidences as to Man's Place in Nature*. Here he expressed in unequivocal fashion the doctrine of man's kinship with the lower orders of animals. The book laid the foundation for our present science of anthropology.

The 1860's were busy years for him. The amount of research and lecturing which he did seems almost incredible. During this decade he delivered three of the lectures by which he is best known to the literary world. They are: *Liberal Education and Where to Find It; On a Piece of Chalk;* and *On the Physical Basis of Life*.

By this time Huxley had become a public figure so that he was able to devote less and less time to original work. He gave lectures, helped establish the modern English school system, and gave courses for teachers in science with laboratory demonstration—a new departure.

During the last twenty years of his life, besides serving on many public boards and receiving all the honors within the gift of his country, he engaged in a series of controversies in which he upheld the scientific point of view against those who either opposed it or tried to diminish its importance. He lived to see his position granted, not only by all English scientists, but also by nearly all scholars and men of letters.

Huxley loved a fight, and he was no respecter of persons. His first victim was the greatest scientist of his youth, Sir Richard Owen. His most dramatic conflict was his famous reply to the Bishop of Oxford when the latter asked him, "Is it on your grandfather's or on your grandmother's side that the ape ancestry comes in?" Huxley completely vanquished the Bishop, as he did many smaller opponents. In his later years he was to carry on successful controversy with three of England's Prime Ministers. He was in the midst of one of these polemical essays when he died June 29, 1895.

The student of literature values Huxley for the clarity and charm with which he is able to present scientific ideas to the person of little technical training. These qualities are perhaps shown to greatest advantage in the first two essays we present. In both instances the concept is not really simple, but the author has proceeded so skillfully from the known facts of everyday life to the more complicated phenomena of science that his reader is carried almost without knowing it into the midst of profound speculation. In this respect Huxley served as an excellent influence on the scientific prose of the succeeding generations.

As is true of all pioneers, much of his research has been modified by those who came after him. But even so, he fundamentally conditioned the course of all the biologic sciences for the past half century. He is responsible for the predominant position the natural sciences now have in our educational system. Perhaps even more important, he has changed the whole philosophical attitude of the modern world.

On the Physical Basis of Life

This lecture was first given in Edinburgh in 1868 and subsequently reprinted in the *Fortnightly Review* and in *Lay Sermons* (1870).

In order to make the title of this discourse generally intelligible, I have translated the term "Protoplasm," which is the scientific name of the substance of which I am about to speak, by the words "the physical basis of life." I suppose that, to many, the idea that there is such a thing as a physical basis, or matter, of life may be novel—so widely spread is the conception of life as a something which works through matter, but is independent of it; and even those who are aware that matter and life are inseparably connected, may not be prepared for the conclusion plainly suggested by the phrase, "*the* physical basis or matter of life" that there is some one kind of matter which is common to all living beings, and that their endless diversities are bound together by a physical, as well as an ideal, unity. In fact, when first apprehended, such a doctrine as this appears almost shocking to common sense.

What, truly, can seem to be more obviously different from one another, in faculty, in form, and in substance, than the various kinds of living beings? What community of faculty can there be between the bright-colored lichen, which so nearly resembles a mere mineral incrustation of the bare rock on which it grows, and the painter, to whom it is instinct with beauty, or the botanist, whom it feeds with knowledge?

Again, think of the microscopic fungus—a mere infinitesimal ovoid particle, which finds space and duration enough to multiply into countless millions in the body of a living fly; and then of the wealth of foliage, the luxuriance of flower and fruit, which lies between this bald sketch of a plant and the giant pine of California, towering to the dimensions of a cathedral spire, or the Indian fig, which covers acres with its profound shadow, and endures while nations and empires come and go around its vast circumference. Or, turning to the other half of the world of life, picture to yourselves the great Finner whale, hugest of beasts that live, or have lived, disporting his eighty or ninety feet of bone, muscle and blubber, with easy roll, among waves in which the stoutest ship that ever left dockyard would flounder hopelessly; and contrast him with the invisible animalcules—mere gelatinous specks, multitudes of which could, in fact, dance upon the point of a needle with the same ease as the angels of the Schoolmen[1] could, in imagination. With these images before your minds, you may well ask, what community of form, or structure, is there between the animalcule and the whale; or between the fungus and the fig-tree? And, *a fortiori*,[2] between all four?

Finally, if we regard substance, or material composition, what hidden bond can connect the flower which a girl wears in her hair and the blood which courses through her youthful veins; or, what is there in common between the dense and resisting mass of the oak, or the strong fabric of the tortoise, and those broad disks of glassy jelly which may be seen pulsating through the waters of a calm sea, but which drain away to mere films in the hand which raises them out of their element?

Such objections as these must, I think, arise in the mind of every one who ponders, for the first time, upon the conception of a single physical basis of life underlying all the diversities of vital existence; but I propose to demonstrate to you that, notwithstanding these apparent difficulties, a threefold unity—namely, a unity of power or faculty, a unity of form, and a unity of substantial composition—does pervade the whole living world.

[1] It is traditionally said that the Schoolmen, or Scholastic Philosophers, of the Middle Ages argued as to how many angels could dance on the point of a needle.

[2] even more certainly.

No very abstruse argumentation is needed, in the first place, to prove that the powers, or faculties, of all kinds of living matter, diverse as they may be in degree, are substantially similar in kind.

Goethe has condensed a survey of all powers of mankind into the well-known epigram.

"Warum treibt sich das Volk so und schreit? Es will sich ernähren,
Kinder zeugen, und die nähren so gut es vermag.
. . .
Weiter bringt es kein Mensch, stell' er sich wie er auch will."[3]

In physiological language this means, that all the multifarious and complicated activities of man are comprehensible under three categories. Either they are immediately directed towards the maintenance and development of the body, or they effect transitory changes in the relative positions of parts of the body, or they tend towards the continuance of the species. Even those manifestations of intellect, of feeling, and of will, which we rightly name the higher faculties, are not excluded from this classification, inasmuch as to every one but the subject of them, they are known only as transitory changes in the relative positions of parts of the body. Speech, gesture, and every other form of human action are, in the long run, resolvable into muscular contraction, and muscular contraction is but a transitory change in the relative positions of the parts of a muscle. But the scheme which is large enough to embrace the activities of the highest form of life, covers all those of the lower creatures. The lowest plant, or animalcule, feeds, grows, and reproduces its kind. In addition, all animals manifest those transitory changes of form which we class under irritability and contractility; and it is more than probable that when the vegetable world is thoroughly explored, we shall find all plants in possession of the same powers, at one time or other of their existence.

I am not now alluding to such phenomena, at once rare and conspicuous, as those exhibited by the leaflets of the sensitive plants, or the stamens of the barberry, but to much more widely spread, and at the same time, more subtle and hidden, manifestations of vegetable contractility. You are doubtless aware that the common nettle owes its stinging property to the innumerable stiff and needle-like, though exquisitely delicate, hairs which cover its surface. Each stinging-needle tapers from a broad base to a slender summit, which, though rounded at the end, is of such microscopic fineness that it readily penetrates, and breaks off in, the skin. The whole hair consists of a very delicate outer case of wood, closely applied to the inner surface of which is a layer of semifluid matter, full of innumerable granules of extreme minuteness. This semifluid lining is protoplasm, which thus constitutes a kind of bag, full of a limpid liquid, and roughly corresponding in form with the interior of the hair which it fills. When viewed with a sufficiently high magnifying power, the protoplasmic layer of the nettle hair is seen to be in a condition of unceasing activity. Local contractions of the whole thickness of its substance pass slowly and gradually from point to point, and give rise to the appearance of progressive waves, just as the bending of successive stalks of corn by a breeze produces the apparent billows of a cornfield.

But, in addition to these movements, and independently of them, the granules are driven, in relatively rapid streams, through channels in the protoplasm which seem to have a considerable amount of persistence. Most commonly, the currents in adjacent parts of the protoplasm take similar directions; and thus there is a general stream up one side of the hair and down the other. But this does not prevent the existence of partial currents which take different routes; and sometimes trains of granules may be seen coursing swiftly in opposite directions within a twenty-thousandth of an inch of one another; while, occasionally, opposite streams come into direct collision, and, after a long or shorter struggle, one predominates. The cause of these currents seems to lie in contractions of the protoplasm which bounds the channels in which they flow, but which are so minute that the best microscopes show only their effects, and not themselves.

The spectacle afforded by the wonderful energies prisoned within the compass of the microscopic hair of a plant, which we commonly regard as a merely passive organism, is not easily forgotten by one who has watched its display, continued hour after hour, without pause or sign of weakening. The possible complexity of many other organic forms, seemingly as simple as the protoplasm of the nettle, dawns upon one; and the comparison of such a protoplasm to a body with an internal circulation, which has been put forward by an eminent physiologist, loses much of its startling character. Currents similar to those of the hairs of the nettle have

[3] Why do people make such strife and outcry? They would nourish themselves, beget children, and nourish them as well as they may. . . . Further can no man proceed, strive how he may.

been observed in a great multitude of very different plants, and weighty authorities have suggested that they probably occur, in more or less perfection, in all young vegetable cells. If such be the case, the wonderful noonday silence of a tropical forest is, after all, due only to the dulness of our hearing; and could our ears catch the murmur of these tiny Maelstroms, as they whirl in the innumerable myriads of living cells which constitute each tree, we should be stunned, as with the roar of a great city.

Among the lower plants, it is the rule rather than the exception, that contractility should be still more openly manifested at some periods of their existence. The protoplasm of *Algæ* and *Fungi* becomes, under many circumstances, partially, or completely, freed from its woody case, and exhibits movements of its whole mass, or is propelled by the contractility of one or more hair-like prolongations of its body, which are called vibratile cilia. And, so far as the conditions of the manifestation of the phenomena of contractility have yet been studied, they are the same for the plant as for the animal. Heat and electric shocks influence both, and in the same way, though it may be in different degrees. It is by no means my intention to suggest that there is no difference in faculty between the lowest plant and the highest, or between plants and animals. But the difference between the powers of the lowest plant, or animal, and those of the highest, is one of degree, not of kind, and depends, as Milne-Edwards[4] long ago so well pointed out, upon the extent to which the principle of the division of labor is carried out in the living economy. In the lowest organism all parts are competent to perform all functions, and one and the same portion of protoplasm may successfully take on the function of feeding, moving, or reproducing apparatus. In the highest, on the contrary, a great number of parts combine to perform each function, each part doing its allotted share of the work with great accuracy and efficiency, but being useless for any other purpose.

On the other hand, notwithstanding all the fundamental resemblances which exist between the powers of the protoplasm in plants and in animals, they present a striking difference (to which I shall advert more at length presently), in the fact that plants can manufacture fresh protoplasm out of mineral compounds, whereas animals are obliged to procure it ready made, and hence, in the long run, depend upon plants. Upon what condition this difference in the powers of the two great divisions of the world of life depends, nothing is at present known.

With such qualifications as arise out of the last-mentioned fact, it may be truly said that the acts of all living things are fundamentally one. Is any such unity predicable of their forms? Let us seek in easily verified facts for a reply to this question. If a drop of blood be drawn by pricking one's finger, and viewed with proper precautions, and under a sufficiently high microscopic power, there will be seen, among the innumerable multitude of little, circular, discoidal bodies, or corpuscles, which float in it and give it its color, a comparatively small number of colorless corpuscles, of somewhat larger size and very irregular shape. If the drop of blood be kept at the temperature of the body, these colorless corpuscles will be seen to exhibit a marvellous activity, changing their forms with great rapidity, drawing in and thrusting out prolongations of their substance, and creeping about as if they were independent organisms.

The substance which is thus active is a mass of protoplasm, and its activity differs in detail, rather than in principle, from that of the protoplasm of the nettle. Under sundry circumstances the corpuscle dies and becomes distended into a round mass, in the midst of which is seen a smaller spherical body, which existed, but was more or less hidden, in the living corpuscle, and is called its *nucleus*. Corpuscles of essentially similar structure are to be found in the skin, in the lining of the mouth, and scattered through the whole framework of the body. Nay, more; in the earliest condition of the human organism, in that state in which it has but just become distinguishable from the egg in which it arises, it is nothing but an aggregation of such corpuscles, and every organ of the body was, once, no more than such an aggregation.

Thus a nucleated mass of protoplasm turns out to be what may be termed the structural unit of the human body. As a matter of fact, the body, in its earliest state, is a mere multiple of such units; and in its perfect condition, it is a multiple of such units, variously modified.

But does the formula which expresses the essential structural character of the highest animal cover all the rest, as the statement of its powers and faculties covered that of all others? Very nearly. Beast and fowl, reptile and fish, mollusk, worm, and polyp, are all composed of structural units of the same character, namely, masses of protoplasm with a nucleus. There are sundry very low animals, each of which, structurally, is a mere colorless blood-

[4] Henri Milne-Edwards (1800-1885), French naturalist.

corpuscle, leading an independent life. But, at the very bottom of the animal scale, even this simplicity becomes simplified, and all the phenomena of life are manifested by a particle of protoplasm without a nucleus. Nor are such organisms insignificant by reason of their want of complexity. It is a fair question whether the protoplasm of those simplest forms of life which people an immense extent of the bottom of the sea, would not outweigh that of all the higher living beings which inhabit the land put together. And in ancient times, no less than at the present day, such living beings as these have been the greatest of rock builders.

What has been said of the animal world is no less true of plants. Imbedded in the protoplasm at the broad, or attached, end of the nettle hair, there lies a spheroidal nucleus. Careful examination further proves that the whole substance of the nettle is made up of a repetition of such masses of nucleated protoplasm, each contained in a wooden case, which is modified in form, sometimes into a woody fibre, sometimes into a duct or spiral vessel, sometimes into a pollen grain, or an ovule. Traced back to its earliest state, the nettle arises as the man does, in a particle of nucleated protoplasm. And in the lowest plants, as in the lowest animals, a single mass of such protoplasm may constitute the whole plant, or the protoplasm may exist without a nucleus.

Under these circumstances, it may well be asked, how is one mass of non-nucleated protoplasm to be distinguished from another? why call one "plant" and the other "animal"?

The only reply is that, so far as form is concerned, plants and animals are not separable, and that, in many cases, it is a mere matter of convention whether we call a given organism an animal or a plant. There is a living body called *Æthalium septicum*, which appears upon decaying vegetable substances, and, in one of its forms, is common upon the surfaces of tan-pits. In this condition it is, to all intents and purposes, a fungus, and formerly was always regarded as such; but the remarkable investigations of De Bary have shown that, in another condition, the *Æthalium* is an actively locomotive creature, and takes in solid matters, upon which, apparently, it feeds, thus exhibiting the most characteristic feature of animality. Is this a plant; or is it an animal? Is it both; or is it neither? Some decide in favor of the last supposition, and establish an intermediate kingdom, a sort of biological No Man's Land for all these questionable forms. But, as it is admittedly impossible to draw any distinct boundary line between this no man's land and the vegetable world on the one hand, or the animal, on the other, it appears to me that this proceeding merely doubles the difficulty which before was single.

Protoplasm, simple or nucleated is the formal basis of all life. It is the clay of the potter: which, bake it and paint it as he will, remains clay, separated by artifice, and not by nature, from the commonest brick or sun-dried clod.

Thus it becomes clear that all living powers are cognate, and that all living forms are fundamentally of one character. The researches of the chemist have revealed a no less striking uniformity of material composition in living matter.

In perfect strictness, it is true that chemical investigation can tell us little or nothing, directly, of the composition of living matter, inasmuch as such matter must needs die in the act of analysis—and upon this very obvious ground, objections, which I confess seem to me to be somewhat frivolous, have been raised to the drawing of any conclusions whatever respecting the composition of actually living matter, from that of the dead matter of life, which alone is accessible to us. But objectors of this class do not seem to reflect that it is also, in strictness, true that we know nothing about the composition of any body whatever, as it is. The statement that a crystal of calc-spar consists of carbonate of lime, is quite true, if we only mean that, by appropriate processes, it may be resolved into carbonic acid and quicklime. If you pass the same carbonic acid over the very quicklime thus obtained, you will obtain carbonate of lime again; but it will not be calc-spar, nor anything like it. Can it, therefore, be said that chemical analysis teaches nothing about the chemical composition of calc-spar? Such a statement would be absurd; but it is hardly more so than the talk one occasionally hears about the uselessness of applying the results of chemical analysis to the living bodies which have yielded them.

One fact, at any rate, is out of reach of such refinements, and that is, that all the forms of protoplasm which have yet been examined contain the four elements, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, in very complex union, and that they behave similarly towards several reagents. To this complex combination, the nature of which has never been determined with exactness, the name of Protein has been applied. And if we use this term with such caution as may properly arise out of our comparative ignorance of the things for which it stands, it may be truly said that all protoplasm

is proteinaceous; or, as the white, or albumen, of an egg is one of the commonest examples of a nearly pure protein matter, we may say that all living matter is more or less albuminoid.

Perhaps it would not yet be safe to say that all forms of protoplasm are affected by the direct action of electric shocks; and yet the number of cases in which the contraction of protoplasm is shown to be affected by this agency increases every day.

Nor can it be affirmed with perfect confidence, that all forms of protoplasm are liable to undergo that peculiar coagulation at a temperature of 40°-50° centigrade, which has been called "heat-stiffening," though Kuhne's beautiful researches have proved this occurrence to take place in so many and such diverse living beings, that it is hardly rash to expect that the law holds good for all.

Enough has, perhaps, been said to prove the existence of a general uniformity in the character of the protoplasm, or physical basis, of life, in whatever group of living beings it may be studied. But it will be understood that this general uniformity by no means excludes any amount of special modifications of the fundamental substance. The mineral, carbonate of lime, assumes an immense diversity of characters, though no one doubts that, under all these Protean changes, it is one and the same thing.

And now, what is the ultimate fate, and what the origin, of the matter of life?

Is it, as some of the older naturalists supposed, diffused throughout the universe in molecules, which are indestructible and unchangeable in themselves, but, in endless transmigration, unite in innumerable permutations, into the diversified forms of life we know? Or, is the matter of life composed of ordinary matter, differing from it only in the manner in which its atoms are aggregated? Is it built up of ordinary matter, and again resolved into ordinary matter when its work is done?

Modern science does not hesitate a moment between these alternatives. Physiology writes over the portals of life—

"Debemur morti nos nostraque,"[5]

with a profounder meaning than the Roman poet attached to that melancholy line. Under whatever disguise it takes refuge, whether fungus or oak, worm or man, the living protoplasm not only ultimately dies and is resolved into its mineral and lifeless constituents, but is always dying, and, strange as the paradox may sound, could not live unless it died.

In the wonderful story of the *Peau de Chagrin*,[6] the hero becomes possessed of a magical wild ass's skin, which yields him the means of gratifying all his wishes. But its surface represents the duration of the proprietor's life; and for every satisfied desire the skin shrinks in proportion to the intensity of fruition, until at length life, and the last handbreadth of the *peau de chagrin*, disappear with the gratification of a last wish.

Balzac's studies had led him over a wide range of thought and speculation, and his shadowing forth of physiological truth in this strange story may have been intentional. At any rate, the matter of life is a veritable *peau de chagrin*, and for every vital act it is somewhat the smaller. All work implies waste, and the work of life results, directly or indirectly, in the waste of protoplasm.

Every word uttered by a speaker costs him some physical loss; and, in the strictest sense, he burns that others may have light—so much eloquence, so much of his body resolved into carbonic acid, water, and urea. It is clear that this process of expenditure cannot go on for ever. But, happily, the protoplasmic *peau de chagrin* differs from Balzac's in its capacity of being repaired, and brought back to its full size, after every exertion.

For example, this present lecture, whatever its intellectual worth to you, has a certain physical value to me, which is, conceivably, expressible by the number of grains of protoplasm and other bodily substance wasted in maintaining my vital processes during its delivery. My *peau de chagrin* will be distinctly smaller at the end of the discourse than it was at the beginning. By and by, I shall probably have recourse to the substance commonly called mutton, for the purpose of stretching it back to its original size. Now this mutton was once the living protoplasm, more or less modified, of another animal—a sheep. As I shall eat it, it is the same matter altered, not only by death, but by exposure to sundry artificial operations in the process of cooking.

But these changes, whatever be their extent, have not rendered it incompetent to resume its old functions as matter of life. A singular inward laboratory, which I possess, will dissolve a certain portion of the modified protoplasm; the solution so formed will pass into my veins; and the subtle influences to which it will then be subjected will convert the dead protoplasm into living protoplasm, and transubstantiate sheep into man.

[5] To death we owe ourselves and everything that is ours.

[6] a story by Balzac.

Nor is this all. If digestion were a thing to be trifled with, I might sup upon lobster, and the matter of life of the crustacean would undergo the same wonderful metamorphosis into humanity. And were I to return to my own place by sea, and undergo shipwreck, the crustacean might, and probably would, return the compliment, and demonstrate our common nature by turning my protoplasm into living lobster. Or, if nothing better were to be had, I might supply my wants with mere bread, and I should find the protoplasm of the wheat-plant to be convertible into man, and with no more trouble than that of the sheep, and with far less, I fancy, than that of the lobster.

Hence it appears to be a matter of no great moment what animal, or what plant, I lay under contribution for protoplasm, and the fact speaks volumes for the general identity of that substance in all living beings. I share this catholicity of assimilation with other animals, all of which, so far as we know, could thrive equally well on the protoplasm of any of their fellows, or of any plant; but here the assimilative powers of the animal world cease. A solution of smelling-salts in water, with an infinitesimal proportion of some other saline matters, contains all the elementary bodies which enter into the composition of protoplasm; but, as I need hardly say, a hogshead of that fluid would not keep a hungry man from starving, nor would it save any animal whatever from a like fate. An animal cannot make protoplasm, but must take it ready-made from some other animal, or some plant—the animal's highest feat of constructive chemistry being to convert dead protoplasm into that living matter of life which is appropriate to itself.

Therefore, in seeking for the origin of protoplasm, we must eventually turn to the vegetable world. A fluid containing carbonic acid, water, and nitrogeneous salts, which offers such a Barmecide feast[7] to the animal, is a table richly spread to multitudes of plants; and with a due supply of only such materials, many a plant will not only maintain itself in vigor, but grow and multiply until it has increased a million-fold, or a million million-fold, the quantity of protoplasm which it originally possessed; in this way building up the matter of life, to an indefinite extent, from the common matter of the universe.

Thus, the animal can only raise the complex substance of dead protoplasm to the higher power, as one may say, of living protoplasm; while the plant can raise the less complex substances—the carbonic acid, water, and nitrogenous salts—to the same stage of living protoplasm, if not to the same level. But the plant also has its limitations. Some of the fungi, for example, appear to need higher compounds to start with; and no known plant can live upon the uncompounded elements of protoplasm. A plant supplied with pure carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur, and the like, would as infallibly die as the animal in his bath of smelling-salts, though it would be surrounded by all the constituents of protoplasm. Nor, indeed, need the process of simplification of vegetable food be carried so far as this, in order to arrive at the limit of the plant's thaumaturgy.[8] Let water, carbonic acid, and all the other needful constituents be supplied except nitrogenous salts, and an ordinary plant will still be unable to manufacture protoplasm.

Thus the matter of life, so far as we know it (and we have no right to speculate on any other), breaks up, in consequence of that continual death which is the condition of its manifesting vitality, into carbonic acid, water, and nitrogenous compounds, which certainly possess no properties but those of ordinary matter. And out of these same forms of ordinary matter, and from none which are simpler, the vegetable world builds up all the protoplasm which keeps the animal world a-going. Plants are the accumulators of the power which animals distribute and disperse.

But it will be observed that the existence of the matter of life depends on the pre-existence of certain compounds; namely, carbonic acid, water, and certain nitrogenous bodies. Withdraw any one of these three from the world, and all vital phenomena come to an end. They are as necessary to the protoplasm of the plant, as the protoplasm of the plant is to that of the animal. Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen are all lifeless bodies. Of these, carbon and oxygen unite in certain proportions and under certain conditions, to give rise to carbonic acid; hydrogen and oxygen produce water; nitrogen and other elements give rise to nitrogenous salts. These new compounds, like the elementary bodies of which they are composed, are lifeless. But when they are brought together, under certain conditions, they give rise to the still more complex body, protoplasm, and this protoplasm exhibits the phenomena of life.

I see no break in this series of steps in molecular complication, and I am unable to understand why the language which is applicable to any one term

[7] According to a story told in the *Arabian Nights*, a feast in which only imaginary viands are served.

[8] magical properties

of the series may not be used to any of the others. We think fit to call different kinds of matter carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen, and to speak of the various powers and activities of these substances as the properties of the matter of which they are composed.

When hydrogen and oxygen are mixed in a certain proportion, and an electric spark is passed through them, they disappear, and a quantity of water, equal in weight to the sum of their weights, appears in their place. There is not the slightest parity between the passive and active powers of the water and those of the oxygen and hydrogen which have given rise to it. At 32° Fahrenheit, and far below that temperature, oxygen and hydrogen are elastic gaseous bodies, whose particles tend to rush away from one another with great force. Water, at the same temperature, is a strong though brittle solid whose particles tend to cohere into definite geometrical shapes, and sometimes build up frosty imitations of the most complex forms of vegetable foliage.

Nevertheless we call these, and many other strange phenomena, the properties of the water, and we do not hesitate to believe that, in some way or another, they result from the properties of the component elements of the water. We do not assume that a something called "aquosity" entered into and took possession of the oxidated hydrogen as soon as it was formed, and then guided the aqueous particles to their places in the facets of the crystal, or amongst the leaflets of the hoar-frost. On the contrary, we live in the hope and in the faith that, by the advance of molecular physics, we shall by and by be able to see our way as clearly from the constituents of water to the properties of water, as we are now able to deduce the operations of a watch from the form of its parts and the manner in which they are put together.

Is the case in any way changed when carbonic acid, water, and nitrogeneous salts disappear, and in their place, under the influence of pre-existing living protoplasm, an equivalent weight of the matter of life makes its appearance?

It is true that there is no sort of parity between the properties of the components and the properties of the resultant, but neither was there in the case of the water. It is also true that what I have spoken of as the influence of pre-existing living matter is something quite unintelligible; but does anybody quite comprehend the *modus operandi*[9] of an electric spark, which traverses a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen?

[9] method of working.

What justification is there, then, for the assumption of the existence in the living matter of a something which has no representative, or correlative, in the not living matter which gave rise to it? What better philosophical status has "vitality" than "aquosity"? And why should "vitality" hope for a better fate than the other "itys" which have disappeared since Martinus Scriblerus[10] accounted for the operation of the meat-jack by its inherent "meat-roasting quality," and scorned the "materialism" of those who explained the turning of the spit by a certain mechanism worked by the draught of the chimney?

If scientific language is to possess a definite and constant signification whenever it is employed, it seems to me that we are logically bound to apply to the protoplasm, or physical basis of life, the same conceptions as those which are held to be legitimate elsewhere. If the phenomena exhibited by water are its properties, so are those presented by protoplasm, living or dead, its properties.

If the properties of water may be properly said to result from the nature and disposition of its component molecules, I can find no intelligible ground for refusing to say that the properties of protoplasm result from the nature and disposition of its molecules.

But I bid you beware that, in accepting these conclusions, you are placing your feet on the first rung of a ladder which, in most people's estimation, is the reverse of Jacob's, and leads to the antipodes of heaven. It may seem a small thing to admit that the dull vital actions of a fungus, or a foraminifer, are the properties of their protoplasm, and are the direct results of the nature of the matter of which they are composed. But if, as I have endeavored to prove to you, their protoplasm is essentially identical with, and most readily converted into, that of any animal, I can discover no logical halting-place between the admission that such is the case, and the further concession that all vital action may, with equal propriety, be said to be the result of the molecular forces of the protoplasm which displays it. And if so, it must be true, in the same sense and to the same extent, that the thoughts to which I am now giving utterance, and your thoughts regarding them, are the expression of molecular changes in that matter of life which is the source of our other vital phenomena.

Past experience leads me to be tolerably certain that, when the propositions I have just placed before you are accessible to public comment and

[10] in a satire written principally by John Arbuthnot, published in 1741.

criticism, they will be condemned by many zealous persons, and perhaps by some few of the wise and thoughtful. I should not wonder if "gross and brute materialism" were the mildest phrase applied to them in certain quarters. And, most undoubtedly, the terms of the propositions are distinctly materialistic. Nevertheless two things are certain: the one, that I hold the statements to be substantially true; the other, that I, individually, am no materialist, but, on the contrary, believe materialism to involve grave philosophical error. . . .

What is the difference between the conception of life as the product of a certain disposition of material molecules, and the old notion of an Archæus[11] governing and directing blind matter within each living body, except this—that here, as elsewhere, matter and law have devoured spirit and spontaneity? And as surely as every future grows out of past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is coextensive with knowledge, with feeling, and with action. The consciousness of this great truth weighs like a nightmare, I believe, upon many of the best minds of these days. They watch what they conceive to be the progress of materialism, in such fear and powerless anger as a savage feels, when, during an eclipse, the great shadow creeps over the face of the sun. The advancing tide of matter threatens to drown their souls; the tightening grasp of law impedes their freedom; they are alarmed lest man's moral nature be debased by the increase of his wisdom.

If the "New Philosophy" be worthy of the reprobation with which it is visited, I confess their fears seem to me to be well founded. While, on the contrary, could David Hume[12] be consulted, I think he would smile at their perplexities, and chide them for doing even as the heathen, and falling down in terror before the hideous idols their own hands have raised.

For, after all, what do we know of this terrible "matter," except as a name for the unknown and hypothetical cause of states of our own consciousness? And what do we know of that "spirit" over whose threatened extinction by matter a great lamentation is arising, like that which was heard at the death of Pan, except that it is also a name for an unknown and hypothetical cause, or condition, of states of consciousness? In other words, matter and spirit are but names for the imaginary substrata of groups of natural phenomena.

[11] The vital principle which directs and maintains the growth of living beings.

[12] Scottish philosopher (1711-1776).

And what is the dire necessity and "iron" law under which men groan? Truly, most gratuitously invented bugbears. I suppose if there be an "iron" law, it is that of gravitation; and if there be a physical necessity, it is that a stone, unsupported, must fall to the ground. But what is all we really know, and can know, about the latter phenomenon? Simply, that in all human experience stones have fallen to the ground under these conditions; that we have not the smallest reason for believing that any stone so circumstanced will not fall to the ground; and that we have, on the contrary, every reason to believe that it will so fall. It is very convenient to indicate that all the conditions of belief have been fulfilled in this case, by calling the statement that unsupported stones will fall to the ground, "a law of nature." But when, as commonly happens, we change *will* into *must*, we introduce an idea of necessity which most assuredly does not lie in the observed facts, and has no warranty that I can discover elsewhere. For my part, I utterly repudiate and anathematize the intruder. Fact I know; and Law I know; but what is this Necessity, save an empty shadow of my own mind's throwing?

But, if it is certain that we can have no knowledge of the nature of either matter or spirit, and that the notion of necessity is something illegitimately thrust into the perfectly legitimate conception of law, the materialistic position that there is nothing in the world but matter, force, and necessity, is as utterly devoid of justification as the most baseless of theological dogmas. The fundamental doctrines of materialism, like those of spiritualism, and most other "isms," lie outside "the limits of philosophical inquiry," and David Hume's great service to humanity is his irrefragable demonstration of what these limits are. Hume called himself a "sceptic," and therefore others cannot be blamed if they apply the same title to him; but that does not alter the fact that the name, with its existing implications, does him gross injustice.

If a man asks me what the politics of the inhabitants of the moon are, and I reply that I do not know, that neither I nor any one else, have any means of knowing; and that, under these circumstances, I decline to trouble myself about the subject at all, I do not think he has any right to call me a sceptic. On the contrary, in replying thus, I conceive that I am simply honest and truthful, and show a proper regard for the economy of time. So Hume's strong and subtle intellect takes up a great many problems about which we are naturally curious, and shows us that they are essentially ques-

tions of lunar politics, in their essence incapable of being answered, and therefore not worth the attention of men who have work to do in the world. And he thus ends one of his essays:

"If we take in hand any volume of Divinity, or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames; for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

Permit me to enforce this most wise advice. Why trouble ourselves about matters of which, however important they may be, we do know nothing, and can know nothing? We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before he entered it. To do this effectually it is necessary to be fully possessed of only two beliefs: the first, that the order of nature is ascertainable by our faculties to an extent which is practically unlimited; the second, that our volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events.

Each of these beliefs can be verified experimentally, as often as we like to try. Each, therefore, stands upon the strongest foundation upon which any belief can rest, and forms one of our highest truths. If we find that the ascertainment of the order of nature is facilitated by using one terminology, or one set of symbols, rather than another, it is our clear duty to use the former; and no harm can accrue, so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols. In itself it is of little moment whether we express the phenomena of matter in terms of spirit, or the phenomena of spirit in terms of matter: matter may be regarded as a form of thought, thought may be regarded as a property of matter—each statement has a certain relative truth. But with a view to the progress of science, the materialistic terminology is in every way to be preferred. For it connects thought with the other phenomena of the universe, and suggests inquiry into the nature of those physical conditions, or concomitants of thought, which are more or less accessible to us, and a knowledge of which may, in future, help us to exercise the same kind of control over the world of thought as we already possess in respect of the material world; whereas the alternative, or spiritualistic, terminology is utterly barren, and leads to nothing but obscurity and confusion of ideas.

Thus there can be little doubt that, the further science advances, the more extensively and consistently will all the phenomena of nature be represented by materialistic formulæ and symbols. But the man of science, who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry, slides from these formulæ and symbols into what is commonly understood by materialism, seems to me to place himself on a level with the mathematician who should mistake the *x*'s and *y*'s with which he works his problems, for real entities—and with this further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyze the energies and destroy the beauty of a life.

(1868)

On a Piece of Chalk

This popular "lay sermon" was originally delivered to the workingmen of Norwich in 1868 and published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for September, 1868.

If a well were sunk at our feet in the midst of the city of Norwich,[1] the diggers would very soon find themselves at work in that white substance almost too soft to be called rock, with which we are all familiar as "chalk."

Not only here, but over the whole county of Norfolk, the well-sinker might carry his shaft down many hundred feet without coming to the end of the chalk; and, on the seacoast, where the waves have pared away the face of the land which breasts them, the scarped faces of the high cliffs are often wholly formed of the same material. Northward, the chalk may be followed as far as Yorkshire; on the south coast it appears abruptly in the picturesque western bays of Dorset, and breaks into the Needles of the Isle of Wight; while on the shores of Kent it supplies that long line of white cliffs to which England owes her name of Albion.

Were the thin soil which covers it all washed away, a curved band of white chalk, here broader, and there narrower, might be followed diagonally

[1] a city in the eastern part of England, pronounced "Norridge."

across England from Lulworth in Dorset, to Flamborough Head in Yorkshire—a distance of over 280 miles as the crow flies.

From this band to the North Sea, on the East, and the Channel, on the South, the chalk is largely hidden by other deposits; but, except in the Weald of Kent and Sussex, it enters into the very foundation of all the southeastern counties.

Attaining, as it does in some places, a thickness of more than a thousand feet, the English chalk must be admitted to be a mass of considerable magnitude. Nevertheless, it covers but an insignificant portion of the whole area occupied by the chalk formation of the globe, much of which has the same general characters as ours, and is found in detached patches, some less, and others more extensive, than the English. Chalk occurs in northwest Ireland; it stretches over a large part of France,—the chalk which underlies Paris being, in fact, a continuation of that of the London basin; it runs through Denmark and Central Europe, and extends southward to North Africa; while eastward. it appears in the Crimea and in Syria, and may be traced as far as the shores of the Sea of Aral, in Central Asia.

If all the points at which true chalk occurs were circumscribed, they would lie within an irregular oval about three thousand miles in long diameter—the area of which would be as great as that of Europe, and would many times exceed that of the largest existing inland sea—the Mediterranean.

Thus the chalk is no unimportant element in the masonry of the earth's crust, and it impresses a peculiar stamp, varying with the conditions to which it is exposed, on the scenery of the districts in which it occurs. The undulating downs and rounded coombs, covered with sweet-grassed turf, of our inland chalk country, have a peacefully domestic and mutton-suggesting prettiness, but can hardly be called either grand or beautiful. But on our southern coasts, the wall-sided cliffs, many hundred feet high, with vast needles and pinnacles standing out in the sea, sharp and solitary enough to serve as perches for the wary cormorant, confer a wonderful beauty and grandeur upon the chalk headlands. And, in the East, chalk has its share in the formation of some of the most venerable of mountain ranges, such as the Lebanon.

What is this wide-spread component of the surface of the earth? and whence did it come?

You may think this no very hopeful inquiry. You may not unnaturally suppose that the attempt to solve such problems as these can lead to no result, save that of entangling the inquirer in vague speculations, incapable of refutation and of verification. If such were really the case, I should have selected some other subject than a "piece of chalk" for my discourse. But, in truth, after much deliberation, I have been unable to think of any topic which would so well enable me to lead you to see how solid is the foundation upon which some of the most startling conclusions of physical science rest.

A great chapter of the history of the world is written in the chalk. Few passages in the history of man can be supported by such an overwhelming mass of direct and indirect evidence as that which testifies to the truth of the fragment of the history of the globe, which I hope to enable you to read, with your own eyes, to-night. Let me add, that few chapters of human history have a more profound significance for ourselves. I weigh my words well when I assert, that the man who should know the true history of the bit of chalk which every carpenter carries about in his breeches-pocket, though ignorant of all other history, is likely, if he will think his knowledge out to its ultimate results, to have a truer, and therefore a better, conception of this wonderful universe, and of man's relation to it, than the most learned student who is deep-read in the records of humanity and ignorant of those of Nature.

The language of the chalk is not hard to learn, not nearly so hard as Latin, if you only want to get at the broad features of the story it has to tell; and I propose that we now set to work to spell that story out together.

We all know that if we "burn" chalk the result is quicklime. Chalk in fact, is a compound of carbonic acid gas, and lime, and when you make it very hot the carbonic acid flies away and the lime is left. By this method of procedure we see the lime, but we do not see the carbonic acid. If, on the other hand, you were to powder a little chalk and drop it into a good deal of strong vinegar, there would be a great bubbling and fizzing, and, finally, a clear liquid, in which no sign of chalk would appear. Here you see the carbonic acid in the bubbles; the lime, dissolved in the vinegar, vanishes from sight. There are a great many other ways of showing that chalk is essentially nothing but carbonic acid and quicklime. Chemists enunciate the result of all the experiments which prove this, by stating that chalk is almost wholly composed of "carbonate of lime."

It is desirable for us to start from the knowledge of this fact, though it may not seem to help us very far towards what we seek. For carbonate of lime is a widely-spread substance, and is met with under very various conditions. All sorts of limestones are composed of more or less pure carbonate of lime. The crust which is often deposited by waters which have drained through limestone rocks, in the form of what are called stalagmites and stalactites, is carbonate of lime. Or, to take a more familiar example, the fur on the inside of a tea-kettle is carbonate of lime; and, for anything chemistry tells us to the contrary, the chalk might be a kind of gigantic fur upon the bottom of the earth-kettle, which is kept pretty hot below.

Let us try another method of making the chalk tell us its own history. To the unassisted eye chalk looks simply like a very loose and open kind of stone. But it is possible to grind a slice of chalk down so thin that you can see through it—until it is thin enough, in fact, to be examined with any magnifying power that may be thought desirable. A thin slice of the fur of a kettle might be made in the same way. If it were examined microscopically it would show itself to be a more or less distinctly laminated mineral substance, and nothing more.

But the slice of chalk presents a totally different appearance when placed under the microscope. The general mass of it is made up of very minute granules; but, imbedded in this matrix, are innumerable bodies, some smaller and some larger, but, on a rough average, not more than a hundredth of an inch in diameter, having a well-defined shape and structure. A cubic inch of some specimens of chalk may contain hundreds of thousands of these bodies, compacted together with incalculable millions of the granules.

The examination of a transparent slice gives a good notion of the manner in which the components of the chalk are arranged, and of their relative proportions. But, by rubbing up some chalk with a brush in water and then pouring off the milky fluid, so as to obtain sediments of different degrees of fineness, the granules and the minute rounded bodies may be pretty well separated from one another, and submitted to microscopic examination, either as opaque or as transparent objects. By combining the views obtained in these various methods, each of the rounded bodies may be proved to be a beautifully-constructed calcareous fabric, made up of a number of chambers, communicating freely with one another. The chambered bodies are of various forms. One of the commonest is something like a badly-grown raspberry, being formed of a number of nearly globular chambers of different sizes congregated together. It is called *Globigerina*, and some specimens of chalk consist of little else than *Globigerinæ* and granules. Let us fix our attention upon the *Globigerina*. It is the spoor of the game we are tracking. If we can learn what it is and what are the conditions of its existence, we shall see our way to the origin and past history of the chalk.

A suggestion which may naturally enough present itself is, that these curious bodies are the result of some process of aggregation which has taken place in the carbonate of lime; that, just as in winter, the rime on our window simulates the most delicate and elegantly arborescent foliage—proving that the mere mineral water may, under certain conditions, assume the outward form of organic bodies—so this mineral substance, carbonate of lime, hidden away in the bowels of the earth, has taken the shape of these chambered bodies. I am not raising a merely fanciful and unreal objection. Very learned men, in former days, have even entertained the notion that all the formed things found in rocks are of this nature; and if no such conception is at present held to be admissible, it is because long and varied experience has now shown that mineral matter never does assume the form and structure we find in fossils. If any one were to try to persuade you that an oyster-shell (which is also chiefly composed of carbonate of lime) had crystallized out of sea-water, I suppose you would laugh at the absurdity. Your laughter would be justified by the fact that all experience tends to show that oyster-shells are formed by the agency of oysters, and in no other way. And if there were no better reasons, we should be justified, on like grounds, in believing that *Globigerina* is not the product of anything but vital activity.

Happily, however, better evidence in proof of the organic nature of the *Globigerinæ* than that of analogy is forthcoming. It so happens that calcareous skeletons, exactly similar to the *Globigerinæ* of the chalk, are being formed, at the present moment, by minute living creatures, which flourish in multitudes, literally more numerous than the sands of the sea-shore, over a large extent of that part of the earth's surface which is covered by the ocean.

The history of the discovery of these living *Globigerinæ*, and of the part which they play in

rock building, is singular enough. It is a discovery which, like others of no less scientific importance, has arisen, incidentally, out of work devoted to very different and exceedingly practical interests. When men first took to the sea, they speedily learned to look out for shoals and rocks; and the more the burthen of their ships increased, the more imperatively necessary it became for sailors to ascertain with precision the depths of the waters they traversed. Out of this necessity grew the use of the lead and sounding line; and, ultimately, marine-surveying, which is the recording of the form of coasts and of the depth of the sea, as ascertained by the sounding-lead, upon charts.

At the same time, it became desirable to ascertain and to indicate the nature of the sea-bottom, since this circumstance greatly affects its goodness as holding ground for anchors. Some ingenious tar, whose name deserves a better fate than the oblivion into which it has fallen, attained this object by "arming" the bottom of the lead with a lump of grease, to which more or less of the sand or mud, or broken shells, as the case might be, adhered, and was brought to the surface. But, however well adapted such an apparatus might be for rough nautical purposes, scientific accuracy could not be expected from the armed lead, and to remedy its defects (especially when applied to sounding in great depths) Lieut. Brooke, of the American Navy, some years ago invented a most ingenious machine, by which a considerable portion of the superficial layer of the sea-bottom can be scooped out and brought up from any depth to which the lead descends.

In 1853, Lieut. Brooke obtained mud from the bottom of the North Atlantic, between Newfoundland and the Azores, at a depth of more than ten thousand feet, or two miles, by the help of this sounding apparatus. The specimens were sent for examination to Ehrenberg of Berlin, and to Bailey of West Point, and those able microscopists found that this deep-sea mud was almost entirely composed of the skeletons of living organisms—the greater proportion of these being just like the *Globigerinæ* already known to occur in the chalk.

Thus far, the work had been carried on simply in the interests of science, but Lieut. Brooke's method of sounding acquired a high commercial value, when the enterprise of laying down the telegraph-cable between this country and the United States was undertaken. For it became a matter of immense importance to know, not only the depth of the sea over the whole line along which the cable was to be laid, but the exact nature of the bottom, so as to guard against chances of cutting or fraying the strands of that costly rope. The Admiralty consequently ordered Captain Dayman, an old friend and shipmate of mine, to ascertain the depth over the whole line of the cable, and to bring back specimens of the bottom. In former days, such a command as this might have sounded very much like one of the impossible things which the young Prince in the Fairy Tales is ordered to do before he can obtain the hand of the Princess. However, in the months of June and July, 1857, my friend performed the task assigned to him with great expedition and precision, without, so far as I know, having met with any reward of that kind. The specimens of Atlantic mud which he procured were sent to me to be examined and reported upon.[2]

The result of all these operations is, that we know the contours and the nature of the surface-soil covered by the North Atlantic for a distance of 1700 miles from east to west, as well as we know that of any part of the dry land. It is a prodigious plain—one of the widest and most even plains in the world. If the sea were drained off, you might drive a wagon all the way from Valentia, on the west coast of Ireland, to Trinity Bay, in Newfoundland. And, except upon one sharp incline about 200 miles from Valentia, I am not quite sure that it would even be necessary to put the skid on, so gentle are the ascents and descents upon that long route. From Valentia the road would lie down-hill for about 200 miles to the point at which the bottom is now covered by 1700 fathoms of sea-water. Then would come the central plain, more than a thousand miles wide, the inequalities of the surface of which would be hardly perceptible, though the depth of water upon it now varies from 10,000 to 15,000 feet; and there are places in which Mont Blanc might be sunk without showing its peak above water. Beyond this, the ascent on the American side commences, and gradually leads, for about 300 miles, to the Newfoundland shore.

Almost the whole of the bottom of this central plain (which extends for many hundred miles in a north and south direction) is covered by a fine

[2] See Appendix to Captain Dayman's *Deep-sea Soundings in the North Atlantic Ocean between Ireland and Newfoundland, made in* H M S. Cyclops. Published by order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 1858. They have since formed the subject of an elaborate Memoir by Messrs. Parker and Jones, published in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1865.—(Huxley)

mud, which, when brought to the surface, dries into a greyish white friable substance. You can write with this on a blackboard, if you are so inclined; and, to the eye, it is quite like very soft, greyish chalk. Examined chemically, it proves to be composed almost wholly of carbonate of lime; and if you make a section of it, in the same way as that of the piece of chalk was made, and view it with the microscope, it presents innumerable *Globigerinæ* embedded in a granular matrix. Thus this deep-sea mud is substantially chalk. I say substantially, because there are a good many minor differences; but as these have no bearing on the question immediately before us,—which is the nature of the *Globigerinæ* of the chalk,—it is unnecessary to speak of them.

Globigerinæ of every size, from the smallest to the largest, are associated together in the Atlantic mud, and the chambers of many are filled by a soft animal matter. This soft substance is, in fact, the remains of the creature to which the *Globigerina* shell, or rather skeleton, owes its existence —and which is an animal of the simplest imaginable description. It is, in fact, a mere particle of living jelly, without defined parts of any kind—without a mouth, nerves, muscles, or distinct organs, and only manifesting its vitality to ordinary observation by thrusting out and retracting from all parts of its surface, long filamentous processes, which serve for arms and legs. Yet this amorphous particle, devoid of everything which, in the higher animals, we call organs, is capable of feeding, growing and multiplying; of separating from the ocean the small proportion of carbonate of lime which is dissolved in sea-water; and of building up that substance into a skeleton for itself, according to a pattern which can be imitated by no other known agency.

The notion that animals can live and flourish in the sea, at the vast depths from which apparently living *Globigerinæ* have been brought up, does not agree very well with our usual conceptions respecting the conditions of animal life; and it is not so absolutely impossible as it might at first sight appear to be, that the *Globigerinæ* of the Atlantic sea-bottom do not live and die where they are found.

As I have mentioned, the soundings from the great Atlantic plain are almost entirely made up of *Globigerinæ*, with the granules which have been mentioned, and some few other calcareous shells; but a small percentage of the chalky mud—perhaps at most some five per cent of it—is of a different nature, and consists of shells and skeletons composed of silex, or pure flint. These silicious bodies belong partly to the lowly vegetable organisms which are called *Diatomaceæ*, and partly to the minute, and extremely simple, animals, termed *Radiolaria*. It is quite certain that these creatures do not live at the bottom of the ocean, but at its surface—where they may be obtained in prodigious numbers by the use of a properly constructed net. Hence it follows that these silicious organisms, though they are not heavier than the lightest dust, must have fallen, in some cases, through fifteen thousand feet of water, before they reached their final resting-place on the ocean floor. And, considering how large a surface these bodies expose in proportion to their weight, it is probable that they occupy a great length of time in making their burial journey from the surface of the Atlantic to the bottom.

But if the *Radiolaria* and Diatoms are thus rained upon the bottom of the sea, from the superficial layer of its waters in which they pass their lives, it is obviously possible that the *Globigerinæ* may be similarly derived; and if they were so, it would be much more easy to understand how they obtain their supply of food than it is at present. Nevertheless, the positive and negative evidence all points the other way. The skeletons of the full-grown, deep-sea *Globigerinæ* are so remarkably solid and heavy in proportion to their surface as to seem little fitted for floating; and, as a matter of fact, they are not to be found along with the Diatoms and *Radiolaria* in the uppermost stratum of the open ocean. It has been observed, again, that the abundance of *Globigerinæ*, in proportion to other organisms, of like kind, increases with the depth of the sea; and that deep-water *Globigerinæ* are larger than those which live in shallower parts of the sea; and such facts negative the supposition that these organisms have been swept by currents from the shallows into the deeps of the Atlantic. It therefore seems to be hardly doubtful that these wonderful creatures live and die at the depths in which they are found.

However, the important points for us are, that the living *Globigerinæ* are exclusively marine animals, the skeletons of which abound at the bottom of deep seas; and that there is not a shadow of reason for believing that the habits of the *Globigerinæ* of the chalk differed from those of the existing species. But if this be true, there is no escaping the conclusion that the chalk itself is the dried mud of an ancient deep sea.

In working over the soundings collected by Captain Dayman, I was surprised to find that many of what I have called the "granules" of that mud were not, as one might have been tempted to think at first, the mere powder and waste of *Globigerinæ*, but that they had a definite form and size. I termed these bodies *"coccoliths,"* and doubted their organic nature. Dr. Wallich verified my observation, and added the interesting discovery, that, not unfrequently, bodies similar to these "coccoliths" were aggregated together into spheroids, which he termed *"coccospheres."* So far as we knew, these bodies, the nature of which is extremely puzzling and problematical, were peculiar to the Atlantic soundings. But, a few years ago, Mr. Sorby, in making a careful examination of the chalk by means of thin sections and otherwise, observed, as Ehrenberg had done before him, that much of its granular basis possesses a definite form. Comparing these formed particles with those in the Atlantic soundings, he found the two to be identical; and thus proved that the chalk, like the soundings, contains these mysterious coccoliths and coccospheres. Here was a further and a most interesting confirmation, from internal evidence, of the essential identity of the chalk with modern deep-sea mud. *Globigerinæ*, coccoliths, and coccospheres are found as the chief constituents of both, and testify to the general similarity of the conditions under which both have been formed.

The evidence furnished by the hewing, facing, and superposition of the stones of the Pyramids, that these structures were built by men, has no greater weight than the evidence that the chalk was built by *Globigerinæ*; and the belief that those ancient pyramid-builders were terrestrial and air-breathing creatures like ourselves, is not better based than the conviction that the chalk-makers lived in the sea. But as our belief in the building of the Pyramids by men is not only grounded on the internal evidences afforded by these structures, but gathers strength from multitudinous collateral proofs, and is clinched by the total absence of any reason for a contrary belief; so the evidence drawn from the *Globigerinæ* that the chalk is an ancient sea-bottom, is fortified by innumerable independent lines of evidence; and our belief in the truth of the conclusion to which all positive testimony tends, receives the like negative justification from the facts that no other hypothesis has a shadow of foundation.

It may be worth while briefly to consider a few of these collateral proofs that the chalk was deposited at the bottom of the sea. The great mass of the chalk is composed, as we have seen, of the skeletons of *Globigerinæ*, and other simple organisms, imbedded in granular matter. Here and there, however, this hardened mud of the ancient sea reveals the remains of higher animals which have lived and died, and left their hard parts in the mud, just as the oysters die and leave their shells behind them, in the mud of the present seas. There are, at the present day, certain groups of animals which are never found in fresh waters, being unable to live anywhere but in the sea. Such are the corals; those corallines which are called *Polyzoa*; those creatures which fabricate the lamp-shells, and are called *Brachiopoda*; and the pearly *Nautilus*, and all animals allied to it; and all the forms of sea-urchins and star-fishes. Not only are all these creatures confined to salt water at the present day; but, so far as our records of the past go, the conditions of their existence have been the same: hence, their occurrence in any deposit is as strong evidence as can be obtained, that that deposit was formed in the sea. Now the remains of animals of all kinds which have been enumerated, occur in the chalk, in greater or less abundance; while not one of those forms of shell-fish which are characteristic of fresh water has yet been observed in it.

When we consider that the remains of more than three thousand distinct species of aquatic animals have been discovered among the fossils of the chalk, that the great majority of them are of such forms as are now met with only in the sea, and that there is no reason to believe that any one of them inhabited fresh water—the collateral evidence that the chalk represents an ancient sea-bottom acquires as great force as the proof derived from the nature of the chalk itself. I think you will now allow that I did not overstate my case when I asserted that we have as strong grounds for believing that all the vast area of dry land, at present occupied by the chalk, was once at the bottom of the sea, as we have for any matter of history whatever; while there is no justification for any other belief.

No less certain it is that the time during which the countries we now call south-east England, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, Egypt, Arabia, Syria, were more or less completely covered by a deep sea, was of considerable duration. We have already seen that the chalk is, in places, more than a thousand feet thick. I think you will agree with me, that it must have taken some time for the skeletons of animalcules of a hundredth of an inch

in diameter to heap up such a mass as that. I have said that throughout the thickness of the chalk the remains of other animals are scattered. These remains are often in the most exquisite state of preservation. The valves of the shell-fishes are commonly adherent; the long spines of some of the sea-urchins, which would be detached by the smallest jar, often remain in their places. In a word, it is certain that these animals have lived and died when the place which they now occupy was the surface of as much of the chalk as had then been deposited; and that each has been covered up by the layer of *Globigerina* mud, upon which the creatures imbedded a little higher up have, in like manner, lived and died. But some of these remains prove the existence of reptiles of vast size in the chalk sea. These lived their time, and had their ancestors and descendants, which assuredly implies time, reptiles being of slow growth.

There is more curious evidence, again, that the process of covering up, or, in other words, the deposit of *Globigerina* skeletons, did not go on very fast. It is demonstrable that an animal of the cretaceous sea might die, that its skeleton might lie uncovered upon the sea-bottom long enough to lose all its outward coverings and appendages by putrefaction; and that, after this had happened, another animal might attach itself to the dead and naked skeleton, might grow to maturity, and might itself die before the calcareous mud had buried the whole.

Cases of this kind are admirably described by Sir Charles Lyell. He speaks of the frequency with which geologists find in the chalk a fossilized sea-urchin, to which is attached the lower valve of a *Crania*. This is a kind of shell-fish, with a shell composed of two pieces, of which, as in the oyster, one is fixed and the other free.

"The upper valve is almost invariably wanting, though occasionally found in a perfect state of preservation in the white chalk at some distance. In this case, we see clearly that the sea-urchin first lived from youth to age, then died and lost its spines, which were carried away. Then the young *Crania* adhered to the bared shell, grew and perished in its turn; after which the upper valve was separated from the lower, before the Echinus became enveloped in chalky mud."

A specimen in the Museum of Practical Geology, in London, still further prolongs the period which must have elapsed between the death of the sea-urchin, and its burial by the *Globigerinæ*. For the outward face of the valve of a *Crania*, which is attached to a sea-urchin (*Micraster*,) is itself overrun by an incrusting coralline, which spreads thence over more or less of the surface of the sea-urchin. It follows that, after the upper valve of the *Crania* fell off, the surface of the attached valve must have remained exposed long enough to allow of the growth of the whole coralline, since corallines do not live imbedded in mud.

The progress of knowledge may, one day, enable us to deduce from such facts as these the maximum rate at which the chalk can have accumulated, and thus to arrive at the minimum duration of the chalk period. Suppose that the valve of the *Crania* upon which a coralline has fixed itself in the way just described, is so attached to the sea-urchin that no part of it is more than an inch above the face upon which the sea-urchin rests. Then, as the coralline could not have fixed itself, if the *Crania* had been covered up with chalk mud, and could not have lived had itself been so covered, it follows, that an inch of chalk mud could not have accumulated within the time between the death and decay of the soft parts of the sea-urchin and the growth of the coralline to the full size which it has attained. If the decay of the soft parts of the sea-urchin; the attachment, growth to maturity, and decay of the *Crania*; and the subsequent attachment and growth of the coralline, took a year (which is a low estimate enough), the accumulation of the inch of chalk must have taken more than a year: and the deposit of a thousand feet of chalk must, consequently, have taken more than twelve thousand years.

The foundation of all this calculation is, of course, a knowledge of the length of time the *Crania* and the coralline needed to attain their full size; and, on this head, precise knowledge is at present wanting. But there are circumstances which tend to show, that nothing like an inch of chalk has accumulated during the life of a *Crania*; and, on any probable estimate of the length of that life, the chalk period must have had a much longer duration than that thus roughly assigned to it.

Thus, not only is it certain that the chalk is the mud of an ancient sea-bottom; but it is no less certain, that the chalk sea existed during an extremely long period, though we may not be prepared to give a precise estimate of the length of that period in years. The relative duration is clear, though the absolute duration may not be definable. The attempt to affix any precise date to the period at which the chalk sea began, or ended, its existence,

is baffled by difficulties of the same kind. But the relative age of the cretaceous epoch may be determined with as great ease and certainty as the long duration of that epoch.

You will have heard of the interesting discoveries recently made, in various parts of Western Europe, of flint implements, obviously worked into shape by human hands, under circumstances which show conclusively that man is a very ancient denizen of these regions. It has been proved that the whole populations of Europe, whose existence has been revealed to us in this way, consisted of savages, such as the Esquimaux are now; that, in the country which is now France, they hunted the reindeer, and were familiar with the ways of the mammoth and the bison. The physical geography of France was in those days different from what it is now—the river Somme, for instance, having cut its bed a hundred feet deeper between that time and this; and, it is probable, that the climate was more like that of Canada or Siberia, than that of Western Europe.

The existence of these people is forgotten even in the traditions of the oldest historical nations. The name and fame of them had utterly vanished until a few years back; and the amount of physical change which has been effected since their day renders it more than probable that, venerable as are some of the historical nations, the workers of the chipped flints of Hoxne or of Amiens are to them, as they are to us, in point of antiquity. But, if we assign to these hoar relics of long-vanished generations of men the greatest age that can possibly be claimed for them, they are not older than the drift, or boulder clay, which, in comparison with the chalk, is but a very juvenile deposit. You need go no further than your own sea-board for evidence of this fact. At one of the most charming spots on the coast of Norfolk, Cromer, you will see the boulder clay forming a vast mass, which lies upon the chalk, and must consequently have come into existence after it. Huge boulders of chalk are, in fact, included in the clay, and have evidently been brought to the position they now occupy by the same agency as that which has planted blocks of syenite from Norway side by side with them.

The chalk, then, is certainly older than the boulder clay. If you ask how much, I will again take you no further than the same spot upon your own coasts for evidence. I have spoken of the boulder clay and drift as resting upon the chalk. That is not strictly true. Interposed between the chalk and the drift is a comparatively insignificant layer, containing vegetable matter. But that layer tells a wonderful history. It is full of stumps of trees standing as they grew. Fir-trees are there with their cones, and hazel-bushes with their nuts; there stand the stools of oak and yew trees, beeches and alders. Hence this stratum is appropriately called the "forest-bed."

It is obvious that the chalk must have been upheaved and converted into dry land, before the timber trees could grow upon it. As the boles of some of these trees are from two to three feet in diameter, it is no less clear that the dry land this formed remained in the same condition for long ages. And not only do the remains of stately oaks and well-grown firs testify to the duration of this condition of things, but additional evidence to the same effect is afforded by the abundant remains of elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, and other great wild beasts, which it has yielded to the zealous search of such men as the Rev. Mr. Gunn. When you look at such a collection as he has formed, and bethink you that these elephantine bones did veritably carry their owners about, and these great grinders crunch, in the dark woods of which the forest-bed is now the only trace, it is impossible not to feel that they are as good evidence of the lapse of time as the annual rings of the tree stumps.

Thus there is a writing upon the walls of cliffs at Cromer, and whoso runs may read it. It tells us, with an authority which cannot be impeached, that the ancient sea-bed of the chalk sea was raised up, and remained dry land, until it was covered with forest, stocked with the great game the spoils of which have rejoiced your geologists. How long it remained in that condition cannot be said; but "the whirligig of time brought its revenges" in those days as in these. That dry land, with the bones and teeth of generations of long-lived elephants, hidden away among the gnarled roots and dry leaves of its ancient trees, sank gradually to the bottom of the icy sea, which covered it with huge masses of drift and boulder clay. Sea-beasts, such as the walrus, now restricted to the extreme north, paddled about where birds had twittered among the topmost twigs of the fir-trees. How long this state of things endured we know not, but at length it came to an end. The upheaved glacial mud hardened into the soil of modern Norfolk. Forests grew once more, the wolf and the beaver replaced the reindeer and the elephant; and at length what we call the history of England dawned.

Thus you have, within the limits of your own

county, proof that the chalk can justly claim a very much greater antiquity than even the oldest physical traces of mankind. But we may go further and demonstrate, by evidence of the same authority as that which testifies to the existence of the father of men, that the chalk is vastly older than Adam himself.

The Book of Genesis informs us that Adam, immediately upon his creation, and before the appearance of Eve, was placed in the Garden of Eden. The problem of the geographical position of Eden has greatly vexed the spirits of the learned in such matters, but there is one point respecting which, so far as I know, no commentator has ever raised a doubt. This is, that of the four rivers which are said to run out of it, Euphrates and Hiddekel are identical with the rivers now known by the names of Euphrates and Tigris But the whole country in which these mighty rivers take their origin, and through which they run, is composed of rocks which are either of the same age as the chalk, or of later date. So that the chalk must not only have been formed, but, after its formation, the time required for the deposit of these later rocks, and for their upheaval into dry land, must have elapsed, before the smallest brook which feeds the swift stream of "the great river, the river of Babylon," began to flow.

Thus, evidence which cannot be rebutted, and which need not be strengthened, though if time permitted I might indefinitely increase its quantity, compels you to believe that the earth, from the time of the chalk to the present day, has been the theatre of a series of changes as vast in their amount, as they were slow in their progress. The area on which we stand has been first sea and then land, for at least four alternations; and has remained in each of these conditions for a period of great length.

Nor have these wonderful metamorphoses of sea into land, and of land into sea, been confined to one corner of England. During the chalk period, or "cretaceous epoch," not one of the present great physical features of the globe was in existence. Our great mountain ranges, Pyrenees, Alps, Himalayas, Andes, have all been upheaved since the chalk was deposited, and the cretaceous sea flowed over the sites of Sinai and Ararat.[3] All this is certain, because rocks of cretaceous, or still later, date have shared in the elevatory movements which gave rise to these mountain chains; and may be found perched up, in some cases, many thousand feet high upon their flanks. And evidence of equal cogency demonstrates that, though, in Norfolk, the forest-bed rests directly upon the chalk, yet it does so, not because the period at which the forest grew immediately followed that at which the chalk was formed, but because an immense lapse of time, represented elsewhere by thousands of feet of rock, is not indicated at Cromer.

I must ask you to believe that there is no less conclusive proof that a still more prolonged succession of similar changes occurred, before the chalk was deposited. Nor have we any reason to think that the first term in the series of these changes is known. The oldest sea-beds preserved to us are sands, and mud, and pebbles, the wear and tear of rocks which were formed in still older oceans.

But, great as is the magnitude of these physical changes of the world, they have been accompanied by a no less striking series of modifications in its living inhabitants. All the great classes of animals, beasts of the field, fowls of the air, creeping things, and things which dwell in the waters, flourished upon the globe long ages before the chalk was deposited. Very few, however, if any, of these ancient forms of animal life were identical with those which now live. Certainly not one of the higher animals was of the same species as any of those now in existence. The beasts of the field, in the days before the chalk, were not our beasts of the field, nor the fowls of the air such as those which the eye of men has seen flying, unless his antiquity dates infinitely further back than we at present surmise. If we could be carried back into those times, we should be as one suddenly set down in Australia before it was colonized. We should see mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, snails, and the like, clearly recognisable as such, and yet not one of them would be just the same as those with which we are familiar, and many would be extremely different.

From that time to the present, the population of the world has undergone slow and gradual, but incessant, changes. There has been no grand catastrophe—no destroyer has swept away the forms of life of one period, and replaced them by a totally new creation: but one species has vanished and another has taken its place; creatures of one type of structure have diminished, those of another have increased, as time has passed on. And thus, while

[3] Mountains famous in the Old Testament, the former as the place where the Ten Commandments were delivered and the latter as the resting place of Noah's ark.

the differences between the living creatures of the time before the chalk and those of the present day appear startling, if placed side by side, we are led from one to the other by the most gradual progress, if we follow the course of Nature through the whole series of those relics of her operations which she has left behind. And it is by the population of the chalk sea that the ancient and the modern inhabitants of the world are most completely connected. The groups which are dying out flourish, side by side, with the groups which are now the dominant forms of life.

Thus the chalk contains remains of those strange flying and swimming reptiles, the pterodactyl, the ichthyosaurus, and the plesiosaurus, which are found in no later deposits, but abounded in preceding ages. The chambered shells called ammonites and belemnites, which are so characteristic of the period preceding the cretaceous, in like manner die with it.

But, amongst these fading remainders of a previous state of things, are some very modern forms of life, looking like Yankee pedlars among a tribe of Red Indians. Crocodiles of modern type appear; bony fishes, many of them very similar to existing species, almost supplant the forms of fish which predominate in more ancient seas; and many kinds of living shell-fish first become known to us in the chalk. The vegetation acquires a modern aspect. A few living animals are not even distinguishable as species, from those which existed at that remote epoch. The *Globigerina* of the present day, for example, is not different specifically from that of the chalk; and the same may be said of many other *Foraminifera*. I think it probable that critical and unprejudiced examination will show that more than one species of much higher animals have had a similar longevity; but the only example which I can at present give confidently is the snake's-head lamp-shell (*Terebratulina caput serpentis*), which lives in our English seas and abounded (as *Terebratulina striata* of authors), in the chalk.

The longest line of human ancestry must hide its diminished head before the pedigree of this insignificant shell-fish. We Englishmen are proud to have an ancestor who was present at the Battle of Hastings. The ancestors of *Terebratulina caput serpentis* may have been present at a battle of *Ichthyosauria* in that part of the sea which, when the chalk was forming, flowed over the site of Hastings. While all around has changed, this *Terebratulina* has peacefully propagated its species from generation to generation, and stands to this day, as a living testimony to the continuity of the present with the past history of the globe.

Up to this moment I have stated, so far as I know, nothing but well-authenticated facts, and the immediate conclusions which they force upon the mind. But the mind is so constituted that it does not willingly rest in facts and immediate causes, but seeks always after a knowledge of the remoter links in the chain of causation.

Taking the many changes of any given spot of the earth's surface, from sea to land and from land to sea, as an established fact, we cannot refrain from asking ourselves how these changes have occurred. And when we have explained them—as they must be explained—by the alternate slow movements of elevation and depression which have affected the crust of the earth, we go still further back, and ask, Why these movements?

I am not certain that any one can give you a satisfactory answer to that question. Assuredly I cannot. All that can be said, for certain, is, that such movements are part of the ordinary course of nature, inasmuch as they are going on at the present time. Direct proof may be given, that some parts of the land of the northern hemisphere are at this moment insensibly rising and others insensibly sinking; and there is indirect, but perfectly satisfactory, proof, that an enormous area now covered by the Pacific has been deepened thousands of feet, since the present inhabitants of that sea came into existence. Thus there is not a shadow of a reason for believing that the physical changes of the globe, in past times, have been effected by other than natural causes. Is there any more reason for believing that the concomitant modifications in the forms of the living inhabitants of the globe have been brought about in other ways?

Before attempting to answer this question, let us try to form a distinct mental picture of what has happened in some special case. The crocodiles are animals which, as a group, have a very vast antiquity. They abounded ages before the chalk was deposited; they throng the rivers in warm climates, at the present day. There is a difference in the form of the joints of the back-bone, and in some minor particulars, between the crocodiles of the present epoch and those which lived before the chalk; but, in the cretaceous epoch, as I have already mentioned, the crocodiles had assumed the modern type of structure. Notwithstanding this, the crocodiles of the chalk are not identically the same as those which lived in the times called "older tertiary,"

which succeeded the cretaceous epoch; and the crocodiles of the older tertiaries are not identical with those of the newer tertiaries, nor are these identical with existing forms. I leave open the question whether particular species may have lived on from epoch to epoch. But each epoch has had its peculiar crocodiles; though all, since the chalk, have belonged to the modern type, and differ simply in their proportions, and in such structural particulars as are discernible only to trained eyes.

How is the existence of this long succession of different species of crocodiles to be accounted for? Only two suppositions seem to be open to us—Either each species of crocodile has been specially created, or it has arisen out of some pre-existing form by the operation of natural causes. Choose your hypothesis; I have chosen mine. I can find no warranty for believing in the distinct creation of a score of successive species of crocodiles in the course of countless ages of time. Science gives no countenance to such a wild fancy; nor can even the perverse ingenuity of a commentator pretend to discover this sense, in the simple words in which the writer of Genesis records the proceedings of the fifth and sixth days of the Creation.

On the other hand, I see no good reason for doubting the necessary alternative, that all these varied species have been evolved from pre-existing crocodilian forms, by the operation of causes as completely a part of the common order of nature as those which have effected the changes of the inorganic world. Few will venture to affirm that the reasoning which applies to crocodiles loses its force among other animals, or among plants. If one series of species has come into existence by the operation of natural causes, it seems folly to deny that all may have arisen in the same way.

A small beginning has led us to a great ending. If I were to put the bit of chalk with which we started into the hot but obscure flame of burning hydrogen, it would presently shine like the sun. It seems to me that this physical metamorphosis is no false image of what has been the result of our subjecting it to a jet of fervent, though nowise brilliant, thought to-night. It has become luminous, and its clear rays, penetrating the abyss of the remote past, have brought within our ken some stages of the evolution of the earth. And in the shifting "without haste, but without rest" of the land and sea, as in the endless variation of the forms assumed by living beings, we have observed nothing but the natural product of the forces originally possessed by the substance of the universe.

(1868)

Science and Culture

Huxley's arguments against Matthew Arnold were answered in his adversary's lecture, *Literature and Science* (see p 742). The more the two Victorian educators are compared, the less significant their differences become. In the 1880's, when the classics were still firmly entrenched and the new science was just coming into its own, they argued about the comparative emphasis on literature and science in the curriculum. If Arnold were alive today, he would certainly deplore the decline of the classics but could hardly deny the importance of laboratory science. And he and Huxley would almost certainly stand together in defending common ideals of liberal education against the overemphasis on vocational training which both deplored

Science and Culture was a speech at the opening of Sir Josiah Mason's Science College at Birmingham, October 1, 1880.

Six years ago, as some of my present hearers may remember, I had the privilege of addressing a large assemblage of the inhabitants of this city, who had gathered together to do honor to the memory of their famous townsman, Joseph Priestley;[1] and, if any satisfaction attaches to posthumous glory, we may hope that the *manes* of the burnt-out philosopher were then finally appeased.

No man, however, who is endowed with a fair share of common sense, and not more than a fair share of vanity, will identify either contemporary or posthumous fame with the highest good; and Priestley's life leaves no doubt that he, at any rate, set a much higher value upon the advancement of knowledge, and the promotion of that freedom of thought which is at once the cause and the consequence of intellectual progress.

Hence I am disposed to think that, if Priestley could be amongst us today, the occasion of our

[1] scientist and theologian (1733-1804), whose praise of the French Revolution caused a riot in which his house was burned by the mob.

meeting would afford him even greater pleasure than the proceedings which celebrated the centenary of his chief discovery.[2] The kindly heart would be moved, the high sense of social duty would be satisfied, by the spectacle of well-earned wealth neither squandered in tawdry luxury and vainglorious show, nor scattered with the careless charity which blesses neither him that gives nor him that takes,[3] but expended in the execution of a well-considered plan for the aid of present and future generations of those who are willing to help themselves.

We shall all be of one mind thus far. But it is needful to share Priestley's keen interest in physical science; and to have learned, as he had learned, the value of scientific training in fields of inquiry apparently far remote from physical science; in order to appreciate, as he would have appreciated, the value of the noble gift which Sir Josiah Mason has bestowed upon the inhabitants of the Midland district.

For us children of the nineteenth century, however, the establishment of a college under the conditions of Sir Josiah Mason's Trust, has a significance apart from any which it could have possessed a hundred years ago. It appears to be an indication that we are reaching the crisis of the battle, or rather of the long series of battles, which have been fought over education in a campaign which began long before Priestley's time, and will probably not be finished just yet.

In the last century, the combatants were the champions of ancient literature on the one side, and those of modern literature on the other; but, some thirty years ago, the contest became complicated by the appearance of a third army, ranged round the banner of physical science.

I am not aware that anyone has authority to speak in the name of this new host. For it must be admitted to be somewhat of a guerilla force, composed largely of irregulars, each of whom fights pretty much for his own hand. But the impressions of a full private, who has seen a good deal of service in the ranks, respecting the present position of affairs and the conditions of a permanent peace, may not be devoid of interest; and I do not know that I could make a better use of the present opportunity than by laying them before you.

From the time that the first suggestion to introduce physical science into ordinary education was timidly whispered, until now, the advocates of scientific education have met with opposition of two kinds. On the one hand, they have been poohpoohed by the men of business who pride themselves on being the representatives of practicality; while, on the other hand, they have been excommunicated by the classical scholars, in their capacity of Levites[4] in charge of the ark of culture and monopolists of liberal education.

The practical men believed that the idol whom they worship—rule of thumb[5]—has been the source of the past prosperity, and will suffice for the future welfare of the arts and manufactures. They were of opinion that science is speculative rubbish; that theory and practice have nothing to do with one another; and that the scientific habit of mind is an impediment, rather than an aid, in the conduct of ordinary affairs.

I have used the past tense in speaking of the practical men—for although they were very formidable thirty years ago, I am not sure that the pure species has not been extirpated. In fact, so far as mere argument goes, they have been subjected to such a *feu d'enfer*[6] that it is a miracle if any have escaped. But I have remarked that your typical practical man has an unexpected resemblance to one of Milton's angels. His spiritual wounds, such as are inflicted by logical weapons, may be as deep as a well and as wide as a church door,[7] but beyond shedding a few drops of ichor,[8] celestial or otherwise, he is no whit the worse. So, if any of these opponents be left, I will not waste time in vain repetition of the demonstrative evidence of the practical value of science; but knowing that a parable will sometimes penetrate where syllogisms fail to effect an entrance, I will offer a story for their consideration.

Once upon a time, a boy,[9] with nothing to depend upon but his own vigorous nature, was thrown into the thick of the struggle for existence in the midst of a great manufacturing population. He seems to have had a hard fight, inasmuch as, by the time he was thirty years of age, his total disposable funds amounted to twenty pounds. Nevertheless, middle life found him giving proof of his comprehension of the practical problems he had been roughly called upon to solve, by a career of remarkable prosperity.

Finally, having reached old age with its well-earned surroundings of "honor, troops of friends,"[10]

[2] oxygen (1774). [3] *Merchant of Venice* IV, i, 184-187

[4] The Levites were in charge of the ark of the Lord.
[5] the experience of daily practise.
[6] fire from Hell. [7] *Romeo and Juliet*, III, i, 99.
[8] the immortal fluid in the veins of the gods.
[9] Sir Josiah Mason (1795-1881) [10] *Macbeth*, V, iii, 25.

the hero of my story bethought himself of those who were making a like start in life, and how he could stretch out a helping hand to them.

After long and anxious reflection this successful practical man of business could devise nothing better than to provide them with the means of obtaining "sound, extensive, and practical scientific knowledge"[11] And he devoted a large part of his wealth and five years of incessant work to this end.

I need not point the moral of a tale which, as the solid and spacious fabric of the Scientific College assures us, is no fable, nor can anything which I could say intensify the force of this practical answer to practical objections.

We may take it for granted then, that, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, the diffusion of thorough scientific education is an absolutely essential condition of industrial progress; and that the college which has been opened today will confer an inestimable boon upon those whose livelihood is to be gained by the practice of the arts and manufactures of the district.

The only question worth discussion is, whether the conditions, under which the work of the college is to be carried out, are such as to give it the best possible chance of achieving permanent success.

Sir Josiah Mason, without doubt most wisely, has left very large freedom of action to the trustees, to whom he proposes ultimately to commit the administration of the college, so that they may be able to adjust its arrangements in accordance with the changing conditions of the future. But, with respect to three points, he has laid most explicit injunctions upon both administrators and teachers.

Party politics are forbidden to enter into the minds of either, so far as the work of the college is concerned; theology is as sternly banished from its precincts; and finally, it is especially declared that the college shall make no provision for "mere literary instruction and education."

It does not concern me at present to dwell upon the first two injunctions any longer than may be needful to express my full conviction of their wisdom. But the third prohibition brings us face to face with those other opponents of scientific education, who are by no means in the moribund condition of the practical man, but alive, alert, and formidable.

It is not impossible that we shall hear this express exclusion of "literary instruction and education" from a college which, nevertheless, professes to give a high and efficient education, sharply criticized. Certainly the time was that the Levites of culture would have sounded their trumpets against its walls as against an educational Jericho.[12]

How often have we not been told that the study of physical science is incompetent to confer culture; that it touches none of the higher problems of life; and, what is worse, that the continual devotion to scientific studies tends to generate a narrow and bigoted belief in the applicability of scientific methods to the search after truth of all kinds? How frequently one has reason to observe that no reply to a troublesome argument tells so well as calling its author a "mere scientific specialist." And, as I am afraid it is not permissible to speak of this form of opposition to scientific education in the past tense, may we not expect to be told that this, not only omission, but prohibition, of "mere literary instruction and education" is a patent example of scientific narrow-mindedness?

I am not acquainted with Sir Josiah Mason's reasons for the action which he has taken; but if, as I apprehend is the case, he refers to the ordinary classical course of our schools and universities by the name of "mere literary instruction and education," I venture to offer sundry reasons of my own in support of that action.

For I hold very strongly by two convictions. The first is that neither the discipline nor the subject-matter of classical education is of such direct value to the student of physical science as to justify the expenditure of valuable time upon either; and the second is, that for the purpose of attaining real culture, an exclusively scientific education is at least as effectual as an exclusively literary education.

I need hardly point out to you that these opinions, especially the latter, are diametrically opposed to those of the great majority of educated Englishmen, influenced as they are by school and university traditions. In their belief, culture is obtainable only by a liberal education; and a liberal education is synonymous, not merely with education and instruction in literature, but in one particular form of literature, namely, that of Greek and Roman antiquity. They hold that the man who has learned Latin and Greek, however little, is educated; while he who is versed in other branches of knowledge, however deeply, is a more or less respectable specialist, not admissible into the cultured caste. The stamp of the educated man, the university degree, is not for him.

[11] quoted from Mason

[12] The walls of Jericho fell when the priests of the Levites blew their trumpets before the town

I am too well acquainted with the generous catholicity of spirit, the true sympathy with scientific thought, which pervades the writings of our chief apostle of culture[13] to identify him with these opinions; and yet one may cull from one and another of those epistles to the Philistines,[14] which so much delight all who do not answer to that name, sentences which lend them some support.

Mr. Arnold tells us that the meaning of culture is "to know the best that has been thought and said in the world." It is the criticism of life contained in literature. That criticism regards "Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have, for their common outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another. Special, local, and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this program. And what is that but saying that we too, all of us, as individuals, the more thoroughly we carry it out, shall make the more progress?"[15]

We have here to deal with two distinct propositions. The first, that a criticism of life is the essence of culture; the second, that literature contains the materials which suffice for the construction of such criticism.

I think that we must all assent to the first proposition. For culture certainly means something quite different from learning or technical skill. It implies the possession of an ideal, and the habit of critically estimating the value of things by comparison with a theoretic standard. Perfect culture should supply a complete theory of life, based upon a clear knowledge alike of its possibilities and of its limitations.

But we may agree to all this, and yet strongly dissent from the assumption that literature alone is competent to supply this knowledge. After having learned all that Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity have thought and said, and all that modern literatures have to tell us, it is not self-evident that we have laid a sufficiently broad and deep foundation for that criticism of life which constitutes culture.

Indeed, to anyone acquainted with the scope of physical science, it is not at all evident. Considering progress only in the "intellectual and spiritual sphere," I find myself wholly unable to admit that either nations or individuals will really advance, if their common outfit draws nothing from the stores of physical science. I should say that an army, without weapons of precision and with no particular base of operations, might more hopefully enter upon a campaign on the Rhine, than a man, devoid of a knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, upon a criticism of life.

When a biologist meets with an anomaly, he instinctively turns to the study of development to clear it up. The rationale of contradictory opinions may with equal confidence be sought in history.

It is, happily, no new thing that Englishmen should employ their wealth in building and endowing institutions for educational purposes. But, five or six hundred years ago, deeds of foundation expressed or implied conditions as nearly as possible contrary to those which have been thought expedient by Sir Josiah Mason. That is to say, physical science was practically ignored, while a certain literary training was enjoined as a means to the acquirement of knowledge which was essentially theological.

The reason of this singular contradiction between the actions of men alike animated by a strong and disinterested desire to promote the welfare of their fellows, is easily discovered.

At that time, in fact, if anyone desired knowledge beyond such as could be obtained by his own observation, or by common conversation, his first necessity was to learn the Latin language, inasmuch as all the higher knowledge of the western world was contained in works written in that language. Hence, Latin grammar, with logic and rhetoric, studied through Latin, were the fundamentals of education. With respect to the substance of the knowledge imparted through this channel, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, as interpreted and supplemented by the Romish Church, were held to contain a complete and infallibly true body of information.

Theological dicta were, to the thinkers of those days, that which the axioms and definitions of Euclid[16] are to the geometers of these. The business of the philosophers of the Middle Ages was to deduce from the data furnished by the theologians, conclusions in accordance with ecclesiastical decrees. They were allowed the high privilege

[13] Matthew Arnold.

[14] a favorite word of Arnold's, to signify the enemies of culture

[15] a quotation from Arnold's *Function of Criticism at the Present Time*. See p. 734

[16] Greek geometrician (3d century B.C.)

of showing, by logical process, how and why that which the Church said was true, must be true. And if their demonstrations fell short of or exceeded this limit, the Church was maternally ready to check their aberrations; if need were by the help of the secular arm.

Between the two, our ancestors were furnished with a compact and complete criticism of life. They were told how the world began and how it would end; they learned that all material existence was but a base and insignificant blot upon the fair face of the spiritual world, and that nature was, to all intents and purposes, the playground of the devil; they learned that the earth is the center of the visible universe, and that man is the cynosure of things terrestrial; and more especially was it inculcated that the course of nature had no fixed order, but that it could be, and constantly was, altered by the agency of innumerable spiritual beings, good and bad, according as they were moved by the deeds and prayers of men. The sum and substance of the whole doctrine was to produce the conviction that the only thing really worth knowing in this world was how to secure that place in a better which, under certain conditions, the Church promised.

Our ancestors had a living belief in this theory of life, and acted upon it in their dealings with education, as in all other matters. Culture meant saintliness—after the fashion of the saints of those days; the education that led to it was, of necessity, theological; and the way to theology lay through Latin.

That the study of nature—further than was requisite for the satisfaction of everyday wants—should have any bearing on human life was far from the thoughts of men thus trained. Indeed, as nature had been cursed for man's sake,[17] it was an obvious conclusion that those who meddled with nature were likely to come into pretty close contact with Satan. And, if any born scientific investigator followed his instincts, he might safely reckon upon earning the reputation, and probably upon suffering the fate, of a sorcerer.

Had the western world been left to itself in Chinese isolation, there is no saying how long this state of things might have endured. But, happily, it was not left to itself. Even earlier than the thirteenth century, the development of Moorish civilization in Spain and the great movement of the Crusades had introduced the leaven which, from that day to this, has never ceased to work. At first, through the intermediation of Arabic translations, afterwards by the study of the originals, the western nations of Europe became acquainted with the writings of the ancient philosophers and poets, and, in time, with the whole of the vast literature of antiquity.

Whatever there was of high intellectual aspiration or dominant capacity in Italy, France, Germany, and England, spent itself for centuries in taking possession of the rich inheritance left by the dead civilizations of Greece and Rome. Marvelously aided by the invention of printing, classical learning spread and flourished. Those who possessed it prided themselves on having attained the highest culture then within the reach of mankind.

And justly. For, saving Dante[18] on his solitary pinnacle, there was no figure in modern literature at the time of the Renascence to compare with the men of antiquity; there was no art to compete with their sculpture; there was no physical science but that which Greece had created. Above all, there was no other example of perfect intellectual freedom—of the unhesitating acceptance of reason as the sole guide to truth and the supreme arbiter of conduct.

The new learning necessarily soon exerted a profound influence upon education. The language of the monks and schoolmen seemed little better than gibberish to scholars fresh from Virgil[19] and Cicero,[20] and the study of Latin was placed upon a new foundation. Moreover, Latin itself ceased to afford the sole key to knowledge. The student who sought the highest thought of antiquity, found only a second-hand reflection of it in Roman literature, and turned his face to the full light of the Greeks. And after a battle, not altogether dissimilar to that which is at present being fought over the teaching of physical science, the study of Greek was recognized as an essential element of all higher education.

Thus the Humanists, as they were called, won the day; and the great reform which they effected was of incalculable service to mankind. But the Nemesis of all reformers is finality; and the reformers of education, like those of religion, fell into the profound, however common, error of mistaking the beginning for the end of the work of reformation.

The representatives of the Humanists, in the nineteenth century, take their stand upon classical education as the sole avenue to culture, as firmly

[17] *Genesis* 3 17–19

[18] See I, p. 1040. [19] See I, p. 1072.

[20] Roman orator and master of prose style (106-43 B.C.).

as if we were still in the age of Renascence. Yet, surely, the present intellectual relations of the modern and the ancient worlds are profoundly different from those which obtained three centuries ago. Leaving aside the existence of a great and characteristically modern literature, of modern painting, and, especially, of modern music, there is one feature of the present state of the civilized world which separates it more widely from the Renascence than the Renascence was separated from the Middle Ages.

This distinctive character of our own times lies in the vast and constantly increasing part which is played by natural knowledge. Not only is our daily life shaped by it, not only does the prosperity of millions of men depend upon it, but our whole theory of life has long been influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the general conceptions of the universe which have been forced upon us by physical science.

In fact, the most elementary acquaintance with the results of scientific investigation shows us that they offer a broad and striking contradiction to the opinion so implicitly credited and taught in the Middle Ages.

The notions of the beginning and the end of the world entertained by our forefathers are no longer credible. It is very certain that the earth is not the chief body in the material universe, and that the world is not subordinated to man's use. It is even more certain that nature is the expression of a definite order with which nothing interferes, and that the chief business of mankind is to learn that order and govern themselves accordingly. Moreover this scientific "criticism of life" presents itself to us with different credentials from any other. It appeals not to authority, nor to what anybody may have thought or said, but to nature. It admits that all our interpretations of natural fact are more or less imperfect and symbolic, and bids the learner seek for truth not among words but among things. It warns us that the assertion which outstrips evidence is not only a blunder but a crime.

The purely classical education advocated by the representatives of the Humanists in our day, gives no inkling of all this. A man may be a better scholar than Erasmus,[21] and know no more of the chief causes of the present intellectual fermentation than Erasmus did. Scholarly and pious persons, worthy of all respect, favor us with allocutions upon the sadness of the antagonism of science to their medieval way of thinking, which betray an ignorance of the first principles of scientific investigation, an incapacity for understanding what a man of science means by veracity, and an unconsciousness of the weight of established scientific truths, which is almost comical.

There is no great force in the *tu quoque*[22] argument, or else the advocates of scientific education might fairly enough retort upon the modern Humanists that they may be learned specialists, but that they possess no such sound foundation for a criticism of life as deserves the name of culture. And, indeed, if we were disposed to be cruel, we might urge that the Humanists have brought this reproach upon themselves, not because they are too full of the spirit of the ancient Greek, but because they lack it.

The period of the Renascence is commonly called that of the "Revival of Letters," as if the influences then brought to bear upon the mind of Western Europe had been wholly exhausted in the field of literature. I think it is very commonly forgotten that the revival of science, effected by the same agency, although less conspicuous, was not less momentous.

In fact, the few and scattered students of nature of that day picked up the clue to her secrets exactly as it fell from the hands of the Greeks a thousand years before. The foundations of mathematics were so well laid by them, that our children learn their geometry from a book[23] written for the schools of Alexandria two thousand years ago. Modern astronomy is the natural continuation and development of the work of Hipparchus[24] and of Ptolemy;[25] modern physics of that of Democritus[26] and of Archimedes;[27] it was long before modern biological science outgrew the knowledge bequeathed to us by Aristotle,[28] by Theophrastus,[29] and by Galen.[30]

We cannot know all the best thoughts and sayings of the Greeks unless we know what they thought about natural phenomena. We cannot fully apprehend their criticism of life unless we understand the extent to which that criticism was

[21] Dutch scholar (1466-1536); a power in the revival of Greek

[22] you also.

[23] Euclid's book on Geometry

[24] Greek astronomer (2d century B.C.).

[25] Astronomer of Alexandria, after whom the Ptolemaic System is named. He believed the earth to be the center of the universe.

[26] the "laughing" Greek philosopher.

[27] Greek mathematician (4th century B.C.), discoverer of the lever-principle

[28] "father of natural science."

[29] Greek scientist (d. 287 B.C.).

[30] Greek physician (d. 200 A.D.).

affected by scientific conceptions. We falsely pretend to be the inheritors of their culture, unless we are penetrated, as the best minds among them were, with an unhesitating faith that the free employment of reason, in accordance with scientific method, is the sole method of reaching truth.

Thus I venture to think that the pretensions of our modern Humanists to the possession of the monopoly of culture and to the exclusive inheritance of the spirit of antiquity must be abated, if not abandoned. But I should be very sorry that anything I have said should be taken to imply a desire on my part to depreciate the value of classical education, as it might be and as it sometimes is. The native capacities of mankind vary no less than their opportunities; and while culture is one, the road by which one man may best reach it is widely different from that which is most advantageous to another. Again, while scientific education is yet inchoate and tentative, classical education is thoroughly well organized upon the practical experience of generations of teachers. So that, given ample time for learning and estimation for ordinary life, or for a literary career, I do not think that a young Englishman in search of culture can do better than follow the course usually marked out for him, supplementing its deficiencies by his own efforts.

But for those who mean to make science their serious occupation; or who intend to follow the profession of medicine; or who have to enter early upon the business of life; for all these, in my opinion, classical education is a mistake; and it is for this reason that I am glad to see "mere literary education and instruction" shut out from the curriculum of Sir Josiah Mason's College, seeing that its inclusion would probably lead to the introduction of the ordinary smattering of Latin and Greek.

Nevertheless, I am the last person to question the importance of genuine literary education, or to suppose that intellectual culture can be complete without it. An exclusively scientific training will bring about a mental twist as surely as an exclusively literary training. The value of the cargo does not compensate for a ship's being out of trim; and I should be very sorry to think that the Scientific College would turn out none but lopsided men.

There is no need, however, that such a catastrophe should happen. Instruction in English, French, and German is provided, and thus the three greatest literatures of the modern world are made accessible to the student.

French and German, and especially the latter language, are absolutely indispensable to those who desire full knowledge in any department of science. But even supposing that the knowledge of these languages acquired is not more than sufficient for purely scientific purposes, every Englishman has, in his native tongue, an almost perfect instrument of literary expression; and, in his own literature, models of every kind of literary excellence. If an Englishman cannot get literary culture out of his Bible, his Shakespeare, his Milton, neither, in my belief, will the profoundest study of Homer and Sophocles, Virgil and Horace, give it to him.

Thus, since the constitution of the college makes sufficient provision for literary as well as for scientific education, and since artistic instruction is also contemplated, it seems to me that a fairly complete culture is offered to all who are willing to take advantage of it.

But I am not sure that at this point the "practical" man, scotched[31] but not slain, may ask what all this talk about culture has to do with an institution, the object of which is defined to be "to promote the prosperity of the manufactures and the industry of the country." He may suggest that what is wanted for this end is not culture, nor even a purely scientific discipline, but simply a knowledge of applied science.

I often wish that this phrase, "applied science," had never been invented. For it suggests that there is a sort of scientific knowledge of direct practical use, which can be studied apart from another sort of scientific knowledge, which is of no practical utility, and which is termed "pure science." But there is no more complete fallacy than this. What people call applied science is nothing but the application of pure science to particular classes of problems. It consists of deductions from those general principles, established by reasoning and observation, which constitute pure science. No one can safely make these deductions until he has a firm grasp of the principles; and he can obtain that grasp only by personal experience of the operations of observation and of reasoning on which they are founded.

Almost all the processes employed in the arts and manufactures fall within the range either of physics or of chemistry. In order to improve them, one must thoroughly understand them; and no one has a chance of really understanding them, unless he has obtained that mastery of principles

[31] wounded.

and that habit of dealing with facts, which is given by long-continued and well-directed purely scientific training in the physical and the chemical laboratory. So that there really is no question as to the necessity of purely scientific discipline, even if the work of the college were limited by the narrowest interpretation of its stated aims.

And, as to the desirableness of a wider culture than that yielded by science alone, it is to be recollected that the improvement of manufacturing processes is only one of the conditions which contribute to the prosperity of industry. Industry is a means and not an end; and mankind work only to get something which they want. What that something is depends partly on their innate, and partly on their acquired, desires.

If the wealth resulting from prosperous industry is to be spent upon the gratification of unworthy desires, if the increasing perfection of manufacturing processes is to be accompanied by an increasing debasement of those who carry them on, I do not see the good of industry and prosperity.

Now it is perfectly true that men's views of what is desirable depend upon their characters; and that the innate prochivities to which we give that name are not touched by any amount of instruction. But it does not follow that even mere intellectual education may not, to an indefinite extent, modify the practical manifestation of the characters of men in their actions, by supplying them with motives unknown to the ignorant. A pleasure-loving character will have pleasure of some sort; but, if you give him the choice, he may prefer pleasures which do not degrade him to those which do. And this choice is offered to every man, who possesses in literary or artistic culture a never-failing source of pleasures, which are neither withered by age, nor staled by custom, nor embittered in the recollection by the pangs of self-reproach.

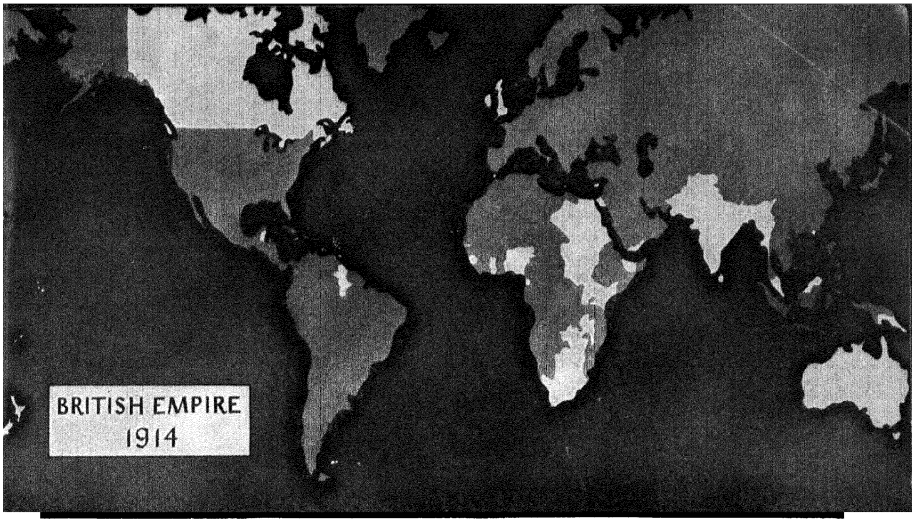
If the institution opened today fulfills the intention of its founder, the picked intelligences among all classes of the population of this district will pass through it. No child born in Birmingham, henceforward, if he have the capacity to profit by the opportunities offered to him, first in the primary and other schools, and afterwards in the Scientific College, need fail to obtain, not merely the instruction, but the culture most appropriate to the conditions of his life.

Within these walls, the future employer and the future artisan may sojourn together for a while, and carry, through all their lives, the stamp of the influences then brought to bear upon them. Hence, it is not beside the mark to remind you, that the prosperity of industry depends not merely upon the improvement of manufacturing processes, not merely upon the ennobling of the individual character, but upon a third condition, namely, a clear understanding of the conditions of social life, on the part of both the capitalist and the operative, and their agreement upon common principles of social action. They must learn that social phenomena are as much the expression of natural laws as any others; that no social arrangements can be permanent unless they harmonize with the requirements of social statics and dynamics; and that, in the nature of things, there is an arbiter whose decisions execute themselves.

But this knowledge is only to be obtained by the application of the methods of investigation adopted in physical researches to the investigation of the phenomena of society. Hence, I confess, I should like to see one addition made to the excellent scheme of education propounded for the college, in the shape of provision for the teaching of sociology. For though we are all agreed that party politics are to have no place in the instruction of the college; yet in this country, practically governed as it is now by universal suffrage, every man who does his duty must exercise political functions. And, if the evils which are inseparable from the good of political liberty are to be checked, if the perpetual oscillation of nations between anarchy and despotism is to be replaced by the steady march of self-restraining freedom; it will be because men will gradually bring themselves to deal with political, as they now deal with scientific questions; to be as ashamed of undue haste and partisan prejudice in the one case as in the other; and to believe that the machinery of society is at least as delicate as that of a spinning-jenny, and as little likely to be improved by the meddling of those who have not taken the trouble to master the principles of its action.

In conclusion, I am sure that I make myself the mouthpiece of all present in offering to the venerable founder of the institution, which now commences its beneficent career, our congratulations on the completion of his work; and in expressing the conviction, that the remotest posterity will point to it as a crucial instance of the wisdom which natural piety leads all men to ascribe to their ancestors.

(1880)



THE LATER VICTORIAN AGE

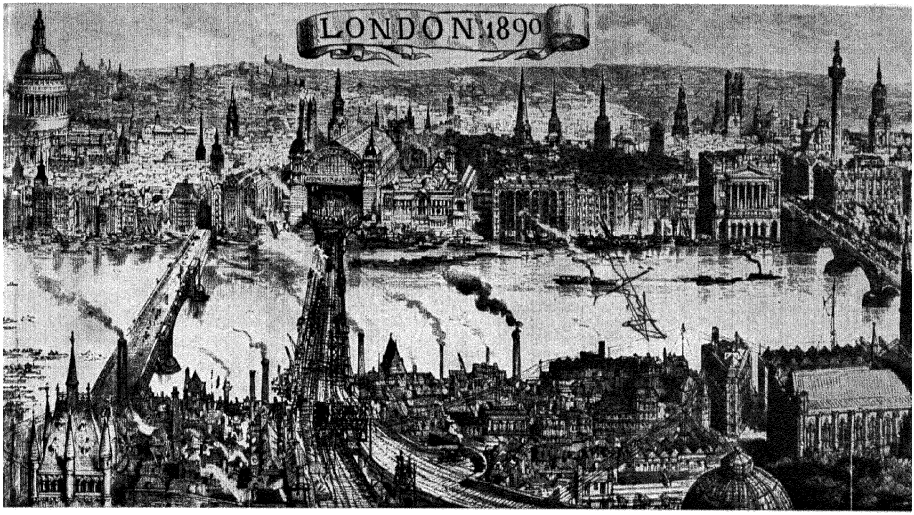
(1880-1900)

Toward a New Century

THE LONG AFTERNOON of Victorianism set in around 1880, as the earlier major writers of the age fell silent or died. After nearly a generation of rising prosperity, perplexities arose to trouble Englishmen. Between 1850 and 1874 real wages in Britain—*i.e.,* the amount of goods and services a laborer's pay would buy—had risen by almost fifty percent. In the next decade, however, British industrialism began to falter, and wages fell back by almost ten percent, until the black year of 1886. Then they moved upward again and in the nineties passed the previous high-water mark of 1874—but not before a tremor of uneasiness had shaken commercial England. Rents came down; thousands of bankruptcies occurred; in 1886 some 21,000 Englishmen emigrated to other continents, and in 1887-88 some 30,000 more. By this time the great Liberal tradition of free trade and domestic reform had run into difficulties. Prosperity some twenty-five years earlier had made it possible for the Liberals, somewhat hesitantly, to introduce reforms while they boasted of the excellence of all things British. Now they were unequal to the demands put upon them.

Britain had started first in the race toward industrialism that changed the Western world. For more than fifty years she had maintained a virtual monopoly of manufactured exports to the rest of the globe. But by 1870 other nations began to offer very serious competition. In our own country the northern states had speeded up the building of a mighty industrial machine during the period of the Civil War. On the European continent Bismarck, architect of a reunited Germany, in 1870 shattered the threat of French dominance with his policy of "blood and iron." In Japan the isolation of centuries had been destroyed by Commodore Perry's squadron of American warships in 1853. Within fifteen years Japan had adopted the factory system and the armaments of the West. Most of these newer industrial powers protected their own markets by erecting a series of tariff walls, and they energetically set out to capture their share of world trade. When the Merchandise Marks Act was passed in 1887—in order to prevent foreign goods from passing as English made—Britons were shocked to find how many products were now being manufactured by their competitors.

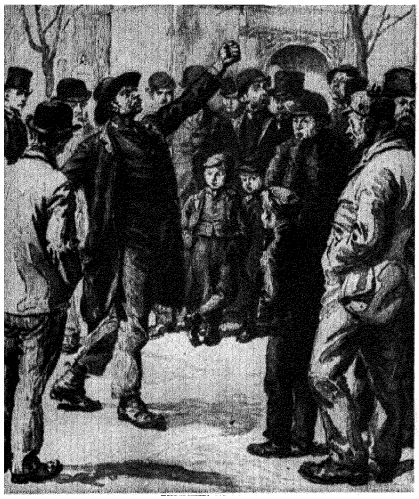
The brunt of the fitful depression of the 'seventies and 'eighties in Great Britain was borne by the industrial workers. Significantly, the phrase "the unemployed" first gained currency in 1886. The great British dockers' strike of 1889 gave a new impetus to trade unionism; three years later the



Parliamentary Labour Party was formed, so that labor might elect its own representatives to Parliament.

Against the ills of industrialism, other forces were at work. Between 1835 and 1894 the local communities of Britain experienced a silent revolution in their municipal governments. Policing, sanitation, public health, most primary education, and the distribution of water, light, and other utilities were now brought under the management of local governing councils supervised and partly supported by the national government. In previous centuries all such services had been the concern of the individual citizen. Most Americans today find it difficult to appreciate the differences caused by this change to collective responsibility. As the historian of the movement, Sidney Webb, once noted: "It is these things—not the discovery of radium or of the origin of species or the latest advances in spectrum analysis—that stand between the great urban aggregations of the twentieth century and the brutality and misery of barbarism. The typical figure of England of the Middle Ages was the lord of the manor; the dominant types of the England of a century ago were the improving landlord and the capitalist mill owner; the most characteristic personages of the England of the twentieth century are the elected councillor, the elementary schoolmaster, the school-doctor, and the borough engineer." It was during the later decades of Queen Victoria's reign that this great alteration was completed.

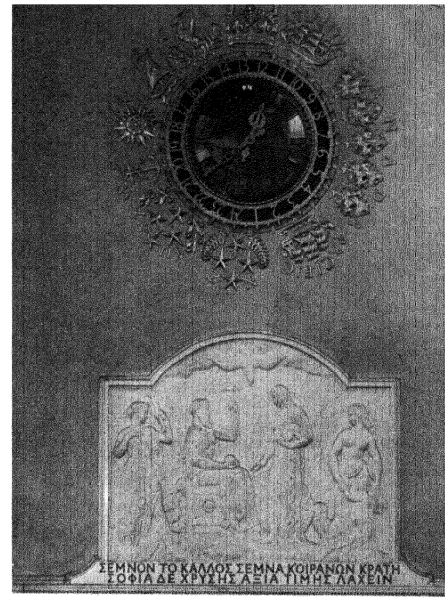
Such practical applications of collectivism did not mean, however, general acceptance of collectivist theories. Sir William Harcourt, the finance



A socialist speaker in Hyde Park, London. The probable object of his attack is symbolized by the illustration on the facing page. Hyde Park is considered the first place in the modern world where complete freedom of speech and assembly was permitted regardless of the prevailing political situation.

minister who vastly increased the inheritance taxes on wealth in 1894, might say, "We are all socialists now," but practical Englishmen turned away from the more dogmatic schemes of thought which were popular in Europe. For many years various liberal Englishmen had supported a vague sort of radicalism—indicated by the vogue of Mazzini and Garibaldi, two picturesque Italian nationalists. Although the essentials of Marxian socialism had been announced to the world as early as 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, they were unknown to the British public when the first volume of Marx's *Capital* appeared in 1867. This work, which in the twentieth century was to have, among communists of all varieties, the authority that the Bible once had for the orthodox in religion, was not translated into English until 1886. Marx taught that there would inevitably be a class struggle between the working class (the proletariat) and the capitalists. It would terminate in a proletarian victory and the establishment of a collectivist society. Though orthodox Marxism has gained relatively few adherents in the West, the Marxian materialistic interpretation of historical events has been a powerful intellectual influence even upon thinkers who have no sympathy with communist dogmas.

By 1880 socialist ideas began to gain some prestige in England: three labor candidates won victories in the general elections. The following year the Democratic Federation (later called the Social Democratic Federation) came into being, and it soon included William Morris (see p. 605) among its members. In 1884 the Fabian Society was formed, its announced purpose being to prepare for a gradually achieved socialist state. Among its famous leaders have been George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, and, later,

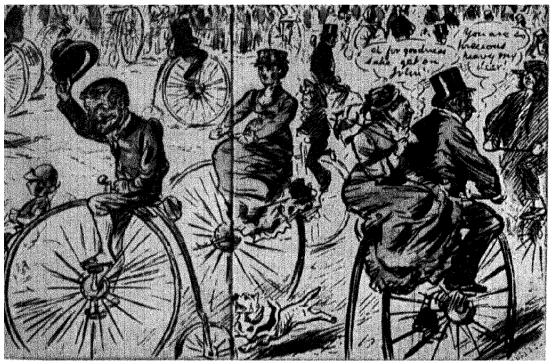


The clock in the Bank of England shows the time in every part of the far-flung empire. Since its founding in 1694, "the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street," as the bank has been called, has been the manager of the national debt and the government's bank. During the nineteenth century it was the most powerful financial institution in the world.

H. G. Wells. Even such an esthete as Oscar Wilde (see p. 828) was moved to write in a vein of complete sincerity an essay on *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891). But all such writing, even at the end of the century, addressed only a minority of the public and was wholly unrepresentative of most literary composition.

Perhaps the reason is this: the middle classes—still the spokesmen of late Victorian England—were better off than ever. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to prove that there had been a great increase in the number of incomes between £150 and £500 a year. Secure in their creature comforts, many authors turned their eyes upon the wild scramble among European nations, in the last decades of the century, for colonies and possessions abroad. They watched and applauded the expansion of the British Empire. In 1880 the British owned little in Africa besides the Cape Colony; by 1914 their possessions in that continent amounted to more than three million square miles. Malaya—on the other side of the globe—became part of the Empire, and British investment capital flowed into Canada, Australia, and India.

In the last decade of the century the English were deeply alarmed by the challenge of Germany, now under the guidance of William II, grandson of the first emperor of the reunited Reich. Bismarck, the planner of this new empire, had not cared for colonies abroad, and had not challenged British seapower. William II did both, and he soon quenched an enthusiasm for things German that had been fostered in the British aristocracy by the success of German arms against the French in 1870 and by the family connections of Queen Victoria, who was William II's grandmother.



"A World on Wheels, 1879," from Punch. *The first bicycles, equipped with wooden wheels and known as "bone shakers," appeared in 1869. Within a decade cyclists had two weekly newspapers and two societies devoted to their interests. Cyclists were responsible for the reopening of the highways after the railroads had caused them to be virtually deserted for decades.*

By his assumption of moral leadership against Britain in the Boer War of South Africa (1899-1902), William again deeply offended the susceptibilities of Englishmen. Europe had begun to divide into two great armed camps; but, at the end of the century and with England still hesitating, the fatal consequences of this tendency were not yet evident.

A Conflicting Age of Versatile Writers

In most of the earlier chapters, we have arranged writers by the types or forms into which they cast their major efforts—*i.e.*, prose, verse, novel, drama, or essay. But in the complex years now under consideration, such an approach is unsatisfactory. No poet arose in the later Victorian age whose popularity seriously challenged that of Tennyson; no novelist came to share the place held by Dickens and Thackeray. Most of the leading English writers of this period produced notable work in several fields: Meredith and Kipling wrote prose fiction and poetry; Hardy, Wilde, and Stevenson plays as well; nearly all of them were critical essayists. The most satisfactory vantage point for viewing these men lies not in the form they chose but rather in their dominant attitudes toward life. It will probably be easier for the student also to consider them in such terms: to think of these decades as a period of assimilation, of regrouping of forces—an era of exploring tendencies whose outcome can not, even now, be accurately estimated. The most useful approach, perhaps, is to indicate the welter and conflict of attitudes to life toward the end of the nineteenth century in England.

Free Trade in Ideas and Artistic Doctrines

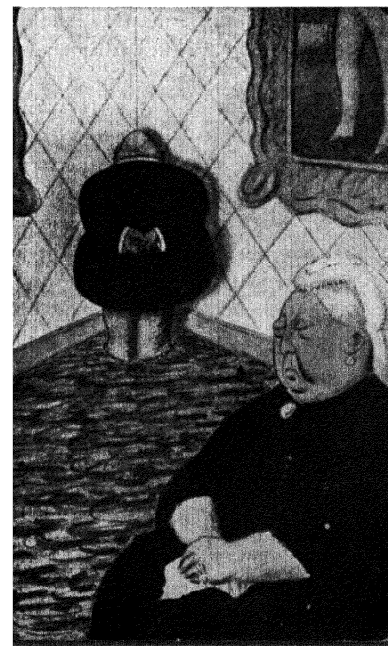
The rise in untaxed import and export of physical goods, which triumphed as economic doctrine in 1846, was matched by the free flow of

ideas into England during the latter half of Victoria's reign. It is impossible to do more than note the names of major foreign writers whose influence pervades this period. In the domain of pure philosophy, two Germans, G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860, see p. 1173), were as influential among the latter Victorians as was Kant in the Romantic age (see p. 125). They were followed by another German, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the incoherent apostle of a stormy message, defiantly proclaiming Christianity to be the "morality of slaves."

A deep admiration for Balzac (1799-1850), a master of the French realistic novel, was general among the reading public of late Victorian England; the reputation of other French realists such as Stendhal (Henri Beyle, 1783-1842) and Flaubert (see p. 1177) increased steadily as the century proceeded to its close.

In *L'Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise* (1863), Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) presented the English with a fascinating account of their own literature analyzed in almost scientific terms—race, time and environment.

By his powerful support of the school of Zola (1840-1902) and Maupassant (1850-1893) in other essays, Taine fostered the popularity of extreme realism and "naturalism" among advanced readers in England. This much



"The rare, the rather awful visits of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, to Windsor Castle," a cartoon by Max Beerbohm. The code of conduct of the future Edward VII was anything but Victorian. As Prince of Wales (until his sixtieth year) he was the center of a gay company, fond of sport, high living, and beautiful women.

disputed term "naturalism" is usually taken, in literature, to mean a total realism. Naturalism does not shrink from the more unpleasant physical details of human life; it borrows from science an agnosticism about the ultimate purposes of the world. When English audiences encountered naturalism in this period, it drew horrified protest—as it had in France—from the conservatives.

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rimester, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues of art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—forward—naked—
let them stare. . . .

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism—
Forward, forward, aye, and backward, downward too into the abysm!

So, in 1886, the aged Tennyson cried in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,* his spiritual testament to a generation that had begun to dismiss him. Such intemperate abuse could not disguise the fact that the prudery of the Victorians, as exemplified by their expurgated editions of the classics and prim euphemisms in speech, was passing. Authors would henceforth take all conduct to be their province; their sincerity would be their passport. By the 1920's the right of the English artist to handle any material as he saw fit was largely won.

Two of the greatest of France's nineteenth-century poets, Baudelaire (see p. 1171) and Verlaine (see p. 1175) attracted and influenced some of the later Victorian writers. Baudelaire (1821-1867), whose celebration of his own perverse addictions to nightmare fantasies, corpses, white nights, miscegenation, debauchery, and religious mysticism was expressed in impeccable verse, had become the darling of such English poets as Swinburne, who sang "the joys of the flesh" and who tried to vie with Baudelaire in inventing a "new shudder." On the other hand, Verlaine (1844-1896), master of an almost Blake-like simplicity of expression, became in England the best known of the Symbolists. "Symbolism" in France was a literary movement rebounding toward a new extreme romanticism; the work of Symbolist poets is highly subjective, the record of transient emotional impressions. They preferred suggestion to idea, shadowy image and crepuscular music to clarity of statement. The Symbolism and "Decadence" of Verlaine and Baudelaire—largely identified by the British as morbidity and exoticism —emerged in the so-called *fin de siècle* (end of the century) mood in England,



A book decoration by Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898). In his brief life Beardsley provided the consummate expression of the Decadent Movement. His drawings may be compared to the poems of Baudelaire in their perfection of form and "fin de siècle" content. The "Yellow Nineties" are often referred to as the "Beardsley period."

although the technical lessons of these movements were not really absorbed until the twentieth century. In the writings of Oscar Wilde (see p. 917) and Ernest Dowson (see p. 826), in *The Yellow Book*—the magazine which typified these tendencies—and in the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley, we find that English version of the escape from the vulgarities and boredoms of everyday life which was suggested in the remark of a French decadent: "*Live?* Our valets can do that for us."

From other countries than France came the work of new, stimulating writers, made available in prompt translations. Russia contributed a group of pre-eminent novelists and short-story masters: Turgeniev, Dostoievski, Tolstoy, Chekov. Scandinavia brought forth two major dramatists, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and August Strindberg (1849-1912), whose powerful, realistic works helped to shatter the complacencies of the nineteenth-century world. And America repaid part of her long-standing cultural debt to England with the *Leaves of Grass* of Walt Whitman (1819-1892). Hailed by the impressionable Swinburne and by John Addington Symonds and Robert Louis Stevenson—and presented to the English in an edition tactfully edited by W. M. Rossetti in 1867—Whitman won an earlier popularity in that country than at home. At no time in its long history has English literature been a book sealed against the influence of the rest of the world; but never was it less so than in the cosmopolitan later Victorian age.

Romantic Realists

No strong voice in this period questioned the primacy of science in shaping the outlook and daily life of man. And realism—the child of science—increasingly set the tone of English letters. Yet this fact did not imply

universal gloom. Many writers, to borrow the words of Samuel Johnson, tried to be philosophers, yet found that cheerfulness would creep in. Despite the cold chills provided by naturalistic doctrines, such men found reason to hope—and the sources of their hopes were various.

Earliest and greatest of what we might call the romantic realists among the later Victorians is George Meredith (1828-1909, see p. 801). In terms of chronology, many of Meredith's productions come before 1880; yet his public was slow in arriving. He attained his greatest fame toward the end of the century, when honors were heaped upon him and his books were republished. All his life he showed a ranging scholarship and an intricate style. Some of the obscurities and stylistic exuberance of his poetry and prose have reminded readers of Browning.

Meredith accepted the lessons of science and evolution (see p. 427), but they did not sour him. The nature he most often portrays is clothed with images of radiance; man is a child of this nature, but not her slave; intelligence, allied with the Comic Spirit (see pp. 870-71), can cleanse and uphold his existence.

> *More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar*
> *Utterly this fair garden we might win.*

Many of Meredith's themes in verse and prose are frankly romantic. He saw women as being—at their best—the incarnation of wit and sanity, whose mission is to leaven the lumpishness of mere men. His analysis of human beings is keen and intricate in his autobiographical sonnet sequence, *Modern Love* (see p. 802) or in his many later novels. Always he was a psychologist, interested in the subtleties of conscious thought; his best novels present the many-sided elaboration of one central idea: the folly of attempting to deprive youth of experience, as in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859); the traps that the Comic Spirit will set in order to humble the self-centered male in love, as in *The Egoist* (1879); the complexities of the feminine heart, as in *Diana of the Crossways* (1885).

Not by introspection but by turning outward to view the glories of the swelling empire, a later writer, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936, see p. 843) found his satisfactions. Known for a generation as the unofficial laureate of British imperialism, Kipling suffered a decline in esteem just before the First World War. Yet in the closing years of "the Widow at Windsor"—his name for Queen Victoria—his verses were cabled around the English-speaking world as important news. To him the building of the British



"Rudyard Kipling composing 'The Absent-Minded Beggar,'" another Beerholm cartoon, from his series entitled Scenes from the Lives of the Poets. *Kipling, unofficial laureate of British imperialism, made his earliest reputation with stories of his native India.*

Empire was not a matter of self-interest but a holy duty—"the white man's burden"; it was the obligation of the Empire, as he conceived the matter, to bring in line "the lesser breeds without the Law." Vesting colonial exploitation in an exalted mysticism, Kipling as a poet produced volumes of ballads, anecdotes in verse, strident lyrics, and a famous hymn, *Recessional* (see p. 848). With only one moderately successful novel to his credit—*The Light That Failed* (1890)—he turned out scores of short stories that were often technically superb. These and his smaller body of well-wrought poetry will probably bulk large in the revaluation of Kipling that is going on today.

On the basis of personal assertiveness, Kipling's editor, William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), defied the pessimism of his age in his well-remembered *Invictus* (see p. 822). Henley was a victim of lifelong ill health, which, possibly by compensation, drove him into optimism. A similar semi-invalidism marked the career of Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), who also defied "the fell clutch of circumstance." Stevenson has a much greater amount of enduring writing than has Henley, all of it the product of severe self-discipline. As a youth he had apprenticed himself to a dozen earlier masters before he was satisfied with his style. Once achieved, it proved an admirable instrument for heart-warming short stories, novels, and poems. He was considered Scotland's greatest contribution to English literature since Walter Scott, some of whose basic attitudes toward life he shared. His *Treasure Island* (1883), *The Strange Case of Dr. Jeykll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), *Kidnapped* (1886), and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) were read around the world; such essays as *A Gossip on Romance* (see p. 901) and *Pulvis et Umbra* (see p. 906) bear comparison with those of his early idol, William Hazlitt.

Just before the end of the century, another "romantic realist," Joseph Conrad (1857-1924, see p. 909), began a noted career of novel and short-story writing. Many of his novels deal with the sea—*The Nigger of the*

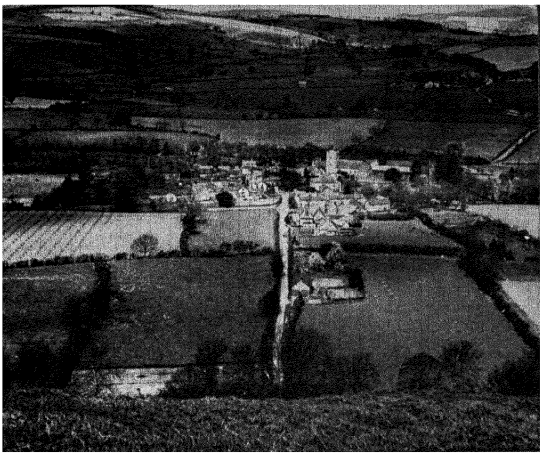
Narcissus (1898) and *Lord Jim* (1900), for example. Aboard the little world of a ship he brings the tragic but triumphant elements of human character into sharp focus. There is high artistry in his descriptions of the sea, and he has rarely been rivalled in communicating a sense of the dignity that is in the bosoms of unimportant people during great moral crises. Even in defeat such characters bring to the reader not depression but a sense of the wonder of life and its exultant possibilities.

Do such men as the foregoing—Meredith, Kipling, Henley, Stevenson, and Conrad—in their several ways represent the fundamental drift of their age? Only on the basis of his own temperament will the reader be able to assert or deny such a statement. If the reader is inclined to deny the tenets of romantic realism—if, for instance, he believes with Bertrand Russell that "only on the firm foundations of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built"—then he will turn to the pessimists of the period.

Currents of Pessimism

Pessimism took many forms. In the writings of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), who began and ended his long career with poetry, pessimism sprang from a conviction that the universe is a stage for purposeless irony and the defeat of man. Man lives, Hardy believed, amid forces too vast to care for him; he is born, he suffers, he dies, uncomprehended and uncomprehending. Hardy's most ambitious effort, partly verse, partly prose, was the *Dynasts* (1903-1906), an epic drama of the Napoleonic Wars—a work of vast dimensions, unadorned, massive, and inspired. His shorter poems present the same philosophic bent; sometimes the irony is mild, as in *Rome* (see p. 838), and sometimes savage, as in *A Christmas Ghost-Story* (see p. 839).

Hardy was also the author of nearly twenty volumes of prose fiction, in which he reflects the pessimistic implications of Darwinism: of Nature indifferent to humanity and man helpless under the heel of Chance. Some of his lighter stories—*Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Wessex Tales* (1888)—show Hardy as the close and sympathetic observer of English rural life. But his more habitual tone is one of gloom, as in *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). The last, in particular, a powerful tale of "maiden virtue rudely strumpeted," aroused much protest. As if in reply, in his final major novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1896), Hardy reveals pitilessly how man is the victim of his own passions within and a malignant universe without. This book brought what Hardy called a "shrill crescendo . . . of invective" on his head—"the experience completely curing [him] of further interest in novel writing."



The Shropshire village of Clunbury, of which Housman wrote:

Clunton and Clunbury,
Clungunford and Clun,
Are the quietest places
Under the sun.

Most of Housman's poems deal with life in these tiny villages. A sense of fatalism, the product of the severest art, haunts these poems. It is easy to see why they were acclaimed by a generation given to disillusionment—and why they are still highly regarded today.

The small but perfect collection of lyrics by A. E. Housman, *The Shropshire Lad* (see p. 849), evokes Virgil's celebrated phrase *"lachrymae rerum"* (the tears of things). A professor of Latin at Cambridge, Housman (1859-1936) preserved the easy, impeccable form in which the Romans lamented the shortness of life and the death of lovers or of love itself.

Another classicist, George Gissing (1857-1903), "was made," said H. G. Wells, "to be haunted by Fate. He never turned or fought. He always hid or fled." *The New Grub Street* (1891) is a novel based on his poverty-stricken life in London slums. Less depressing is his most popular book *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), which reflected his own dreams in the guise of a poor scholar's journal.

The one noted poem of another wretched Londoner was that of James Thomson (1834-1882). An insomniac's record of the metropolis as he saw it, *The City of Dreadful Night* (see p. 815) is told in accents that suggest the repetitive wail of a damned soul. Here indeed are the lower depths.

Rejections of Pessimism

But undiluted gloom has never satisfied so active a people as the English. It is not surprising that not many authors were as steadfast in their pessimism as Hardy or Gissing or Thomson. The rejections of this attitude by other writers were manifold.

One such rejection took the form of an escape into art. A self-conscious, absorbing concern with the problems of style, the writing of prose, the proper form and subject matter of the novel, etc., arose in these decades. Part of this concern was a gift from France, in this century as in others the catalyst of all the arts. Part of it seems to have come from the spirit of the times.

We can see this new intensity in the work of Walter Pater (1839-1894). His novel *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), a reconstruction of the Rome of the Antonines, was the fruit of Pater's exhaustive classical studies. His remarkable style, polished to glow like ancient bronze, is revealed in the famous *Conclusion* (see p. 879) of his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Pater's style is calculated to afford the maximum pleasure at every turn of phrase through the perfection of word and cadence; its debt to Flaubert is shown in his essay on *Style* (see p. 888). And his audience has always been the one which that earlier classicist Landor sought: "I shall dine late, but the dining room will be well lighted, the guests few and select."

Equally impassioned in his devotion to art was the novelist Henry James (1843-1916), who set himself the task of disciplining the English novel into a greater sense of form. By right of adoption James belongs with his English compeers. Born in America and educated, in part, abroad, he spent some time in France, learning the lessons of the French realist masters; then from 1876 he lived in London and Rye. In 1916 he became a British subject. James wrote a notable set of prefaces to his own books, intending his remarks to be a guide to other writers. In his novels—largely about upper-class Britishers and expatriate Americans—he grew to be miserly in the use of physical action; he wrote almost static stories of analyzed motives and interior drama. Like Meredith, he was a realist whose theme was the conscious intelligence. He accepted the life around him; he was too fascinated by the task of analysis either to be bored or to protest.

Dissatisfaction with the pessimism and world weariness of the period drove some of its writers to Catholicism. Since the days of Newman's conversion (1845) this faith had become once again a strong force in British letters, after a virtual suppression for three centuries. Appalled by the concept of a meaningless universe, such men faced the alternative that was presented to the French novelist J. K. Huysmans (1848-1907), whose progression from the naturalism of Zola to Decadence and then to religion attracted much attention in England. Huysmans had been forced to choose, as a contemporary put it, either "the muzzle of a pistol or the foot of the Cross," *i.e.*, suicide or Catholicism. Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven* (see p. 824) is one product of this Catholic revival; the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889, see p. 818) is another. Hidden from the eye of the public until 1918 and 1930, the poems of Hopkins reveal an accomplished artist who was—in his theories of form—peculiarly modern, and who has greatly influenced twentieth-century poetry.



"A Mad Tea Party," one of Sir John Tenniel's illustrations for Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. *Tenniel was a caricaturist and cartoonist for* Punch. *His cartoon "Dropping the Pilot" is world famous, and his drawings for Carroll's works are probably the most widely known of all illustrations for children's books.*

Still another reaction must be noted: that of the humorists and genial satirists who enlivened the latter half of the century. Edward Lear (1812-1888, see p. 855) did his important work for an earlier generation of children; it was *The Book of Nonsense* (1846). Lear also raised the limerick from a jingle to something like enduring popular art. A gift for parody made "C.S.C."—Charles Stuart Calverley (1831-1884, see p. 856)—famous in his generation. But the most celebrated writer of inspired nonsense was Lewis Carroll (1832-1898, see p. 857), universally known for the most famous children's story of his century, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). W. S. Gilbert (1836-1911), both in the operettas that he produced with Sir Arthur Sullivan and in his earlier *Bab Ballads* (see p. 861), ridiculed the foibles of his age and country. England, even in the heyday of Victorianism and after, was not too serious to laugh at itself.

It remained for Oscar Wilde (1856-1900) to restore the brilliance of the earlier tradition of light comedy to the stage. The sparkling wit, abounding good humor, and gaiety which characterized Wilde's best plays had been absent since the time of Sheridan.

One final note of rejection—of both the pessimism and the optimism of his age—was sounded by Samuel Butler (1835-1902). The fame of his earlier *Erehwon* (1872, see p. 873) has been outshone by his posthumous *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), which earned for him the epithet of "the Diogenes of the Victorians." Old-fashioned in form, for much of it was written in the 1870's, with leisurely chats with the reader, and stuffed with nuggets of



The versatile W. S. Gilbert illustrated his Bab Ballads *with such drawings as these. This one accompanies lines 47-48 of "The Lost Mr. Blake," on page 865 of our text.*

ideas that Butler quarried from his notebooks, it remains a first-rate introduction to the battles of ideas waged among the intellectuals during Butler's long life. Its air of actuality stems from its autobiographical basis. The story of a young man's revolt from his parents, it is best read in one's own youth; it is more provocative than profound.

A Backward Glance

What one thinks of the past is determined by one's present. We see the final twenty years of Victoria's reign from this side of two world wars. Like figures in Hardy's *Dynasts,* these authors, artists, and the people they live among are marching toward an abyss. Some premonition of their doom hangs over most of them, a haunting awareness of a tragic imbalance in their lives. It is summed up in a remark that the American historian Henry Adams wrote to his brother about England in 1900:

"It's a queer sensation, this secret belief that one stands on the brink of the world's greatest catastrophe. For it means the fall of Western Europe, as it fell in the fourth century. It recurs to me every November, and culminates every December. I have to get over it as I can, and hide, for fear of being sent to an asylum. Curiously enough, I think the people, way down, have here a sense of it something like mine; but society is absolutely sane,—like Rome in the year 300 . . ."

Yet on the positive side, the era was the climax of England's great period of free trade, which included free trade in ideas, art, music, and literature, as well as the physical goods men sometimes think they live by. Inhabitants of a rich and self-assured nation, most Englishmen still felt that they needed no tariff walls to keep out the rest of the world. Currencies were stable; international travel was far easier than it is today; passports were a rarity; England was still considered "the Mother of Exiles"; a belief in the reasonableness of man suffused much of the scholarship, politics, and literature of the nation; and probably most of its citizens believed devotedly in progress. Dissenters from such comfortable views are undoubtedly over-represented in such a collection as this, for literature usually anticipates the future. Writers belong to the *genus irritabile vatum,* the irritable race of prophets. The future was to be a grim one.

In versatility these writers probably exceeded those of the generation immediately before them. If they did not produce equally high examples of excellence, we can now understand better than they could the threats that hung over them. In sum, they lived only a little on the fair-weather side of the deluge that was about to break.

POETRY

George Meredith

(1828-1909)

Although the maintenance of strict chronological order would have required considering the career of George Meredith before that of Swinburne, to have done so would have violated logic. For Meredith was the most completely modern of the Victorians, and even the designation of "Victorian" seems in his case peculiarly inappropriate. Yet his first novel was published before George Eliot's, when Dickens and Thackeray were at the height of their powers; and his first volume of poetry appeared long before those of Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, William Morris, Swinburne, Henley, Francis Thompson, or James Thomson. Despite the contradiction of dates, Meredith was so far in advance of the intellectual currents of his day that he seems essentially a man of our century.

He was born in Portsmouth on February 12, 1828, over the shop where his father conducted his trade of tailoring. Meredith was proud of his Celtic descent—his father's family was Welsh and his mother's Irish—but he was curiously reluctant about revealing the details of his origin, probably because of his unhappy childhood. When he was only five years old his mother died; within a few years his father married again and soon after went to South Africa, leaving the boy behind at school to live on the small inheritance bequeathed him by his mother. He seems to have been rather proudly aloof as a lad, and it is conceivable that his great personal beauty could hardly have operated to make him popular with his fellow students. When he was fourteen he was sent to an excellent school at Neuwied, on the Rhine, where he acquired habits of scholarship and something of his cosmopolitan outlook on life. On his return to England, two years later, he was articled to a London solicitor of literary tastes who introduced him to a group of young writers editing the *Monthly Observer*, where, in 1849, Meredith published his first poem, *Chillianwallah*.

Among his new friends was Edward Peacock, son of the novelist, Thomas Love Peacock, who had been intimate with Shelley. Meredith fell violently in love with Edward's sister, Mary Ellen Nichols, a beautiful, gifted woman, the widow of a naval officer. Although she was nine years his senior and he had no certainty of earning a livelihood, they were married in his twenty-first year. Their union was doomed to catastrophe. Both mordantly clever and high-strung, they seemed to be markedly proficient in the art of making each other suffer. After years of futile attempts to find accord, they separated. Some time later the unhappy woman in despair committed suicide. The tragic story of their relationship Meredith subsequently recounted in his startlingly original sonnet-sequence, *Modern Love*.

In the meantime Meredith's talents had not been idle. In 1851 he published his first

volume of *Poems* at his own expense. Beyond the first version of *Love in the Valley* little of importance was contained in the collection; but the wonderful cadences of that poem drew the admiration of the new Poet Laureate, Tennyson. The general indifference with which the publication met, however, caused Meredith to turn to the novel, a field in which he was to make outstanding contributions.

His first novel was *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1855), a brilliant, gay, oriental fantasy modeled on the *Arabian Nights*. In 1858, having taken residence in London with his little son, after his separation from Mrs. Meredith, he set to work on his first masterpiece, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859).

It would not be too much to say that Meredith never wrote a novel that does not reward its reader with many riches. His greatest work is undoubtedly *The Egoist* (1879), a relentless revelation of the selfishness and vanity of the male in love; in it every man will find the unflattering truth about himself. Among Meredith's other novels the best are: *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), *Beauchamp's Career* (1875), *The Tragic Comedians* (1880), and *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). One must go to Shakespeare to find another author whose women have the flesh-and-blood veracity of Meredith's; and it has not been until the twentieth century that novelists have understood as well as Meredith how much society has deprived women of their natural rights, dignity, and worth. In one other respect Meredith was in the vanguard of writers: in his absorption in the psychology of human action, and his keen awareness of the power of the most subtle and transitory of emotions to govern the destiny of men and women.

In addition to his novels he wrote one major prose work that is still widely read. His brilliant lecture *On the Idea of Comedy* (1877) is a subtle analysis of the "comic spirit" which jests at human folly throughout his fiction (see p. 868).

After the volume of 1851, Meredith issued many more collections of poetry: *Modern Love* (1862), *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883), *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life* (1887), *A Reading of Earth* (1888), *Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History* (1898), and *A Reading of Life* (1901). After his death his *Last Poems* (1909) were published. The same characteristics and difficulties of his prose are to be found in Meredith's verse—the compression, the strange transitions, the "flashes of lightning"—to borrow Oscar Wilde's phrase—the radiant intelligence, and the good health.

For despite the early appearance of tragedy in his life, his was not a blighted existence. In 1863 he met, and the next year married, Marie Vulliamy, an accomplished musician, with whom he had perfect happiness until her death in 1885.

Wholesomeness, balance, and sanity—basic in the man's own character—shine in all that Meredith wrote. This inner harmony removes him by ages, one feels, from all the major figures of his century. In him (unlike Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold) there was no fierce conflict of soul. Confidently he accepted science and man's earthy inheritance. He rejoiced in the concept that man had evolved from lower forms of life, and in the struggle by which the fittest survive. For if he saw man as the acme of the evolutionary process, he looked upon intelligence as the flower of man's nature, the culminating triumph of Earth's labors.

From *Modern Love*

Renaissance writers of the sonnet sometimes used the sixteen-line rather than the more usual fourteen-line form. The fifty poems that tell the tragic story of *Modern Love* may thus be considered as one of the great English sonnet-sequences, though narrow definers object to the narrative content. Meredith's own bitter experience in marriage furnished the deep human insight for this account of the moribund love of husband and wife. Like all of his work, these poems show Meredith to have been closer to the twentieth century, in his freedom from conventional notions of the relationship of men and women, than any other major Victorian.

1

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed,
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between;
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

2

It ended, and the morrow brought the task.
Her eyes were guilty gates, that let him in
By shutting all too zealous for their sin:
Each sucked a secret, and each wore a mask.
But, oh, the bitter taste her beauty had!
He sickened as at breath of poison-flowers:
A languid humor stole among the hours,
And if their smiles encountered, he went mad,
And raged deep inward, till the light was brown
Before his vision, and the world forgot,
Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot.
A star with lurid beams, she seemed to crown
The pit of infamy: and then again
He fainted on his vengefulness, and strove
To ape the magnanimity of love,
And smote himself, a shuddering heap of pain.

16

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour
When, in the firelight steadily aglow,
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us; and hushed we sat
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing;
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk. 'Oh, yes!
Love dies!' I said: I never thought it less.
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift:—
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound.

43

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 where 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 ribbed 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 senses; or failing that, degrade!
'T is 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.

47

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.

48

Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,
Destroyed by subtleties these women are!
More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar
Utterly this fair garden we might win.
Behold! I looked for peace, and thought it near.
Our inmost hearts had opened, each to each.
We drank the pure daylight of honest speech.
Alas! that was the fatal draught, I fear.
For when of my lost Lady came the word,
This woman, O this agony of flesh!
Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh,
That I might seek that other like a bird.
I do adore the nobleness! despise
The act! She has gone forth, I know not where.
Will the hard world my sentience of her share?
I feel the truth; so let the world surmise.

49

He found her[1] by the ocean's moaning verge,
Nor any wicked change in her discerned;
And she believed his old love had returned,
Which was her exultation, and her scourge.
She took his hand, and walked with him, and seemed
The wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry.
She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,
And tell her loudly she no longer dreamed.
She dared not say, "This is my breast; look in."
But there's a strength to help the desperate weak.
That night he learned how silence best can speak
The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.
About the middle of the night her call
Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.
"Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!" she said.
Lethe had passed those lips,[2] and he knew all.

50

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:
The union of this ever-diverse pair!
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:
But they fed not on the advancing hours:
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!—
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

(1862)

[1] The husband found the wife.
[2] She had killed herself.

Love in the Valley

Under yonder beech-tree single on the greensward,
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,
Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:
Then would she hold me and never let me go?

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
Swift as the swallow along the river's light
Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,
Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
More love should I have, and much less care.
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows,
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.

Deals she an unkindness, 'tis but her rapid measure,
Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown eve-jar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,
Arm in arm, all against the raying West,
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,
Brave in her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.
Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
Whispered the world was; morning light is she.
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless;
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers
Low over dim fields fresh with gloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
Threading it with color, like yewberries the yew.
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.
Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window
Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;
Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she loiters,
Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,
Coming the rose: and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odors and for color,
Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,
Streaming like a willow gray in arrowy rain:
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel
She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:
She is forth to cheer a neighbor lacking mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder
Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.
I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones.
O my wild ones! they tell me more than these.
You, my wild one, you tell of honeyed field-rose,
Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and even as they,
They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,
You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.

Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.
Parted is the window; she sleeps; the starry jasmine
Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.
~~Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest?~~
Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,
Luring her to love; she sleeps, the starry jasmine
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades;
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-gray leaf;
Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds are yellow;
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle;
Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine:
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,
Thinking of the harvest: I look and think of mine.

This I may know: her dressing and undressing
Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport
Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging over thunder
Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into port
White sails furl; or on the ocean borders
White sails lean along the waves leaping green.
Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight
Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse
Open with the morn, and in a breezy link
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,
Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer
Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes
Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:
Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white dairy
Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys from school,
Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine;
O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!
Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher
Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tip-toe,
Said, "I will kiss you": she laughed and leaned her cheek.

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.
Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!
O the treasure-tresses one another over
Nodding! O the girdle slack about the waist!
Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet
Quick amid the wheatears: wound about the waist,
Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripeness!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,
Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow:
Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,
Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.
Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree

Gazes in this whiteness: nightlong could I.
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.
Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die!

Gossips count her faults; they scour a narrow chamber
Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.
"When she was tiny," one aged woman quavers,
Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.
Faults she had once as she learned to run and tumbled:
Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.
Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy
Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

Hither she comes; she comes to me; she lingers,
Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise
High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger;
Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.
Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,
Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames.—
Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,
Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in our names.

Soon will she lie like a white-frost sunrise.
Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale as rye,
Long since your sheaves have yielded to the thresher,
Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses fly.
Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.
Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged Spring!
Sing from the South-West, bring her back the truants,
Nightingale and swallow, song and dipping wing.

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain, you,
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the sky-fields,
Youngest green transfused in silver shining through:
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.

(1851-78)

The Lark Ascending

It is highly instructive to compare this brilliant piece with Wordsworth's and Shelley's poems on the lark. Wordsworth sees only the symbol in the bird's habits; Shelley catches the exaltation of the bird's song, and is moved to wish for such power of joy in his own poetic utterance; Meredith, owing something to Shelley, hears in the bird's clear song the voice of the good Earth singing. It is in reproducing the scintillating music of the bird itself that this poem excels.

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls;
A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardor, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstasy to music turned,
Impelled by what his happy bill
Disperses; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live

Renewed in endless notes of glee,
So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow,
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight,
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord
Like myriad dews of sunny sward
That trembling into fullness shine,
And sparkle dropping argentine;
Such wooing as the ear receives
From zephyr caught in choric leaves
Of aspens when their chattering net
Is flushed to white with shivers wet;
And such the water-spirit's chime
On mountain heights in morning's prime,
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,
Too animate to need a stress;
But wider over many heads
The starry voice ascending spreads,
Awakening, as it waxes thin,
The best in us to him akin;
And every face to watch him raised
Puts on the light of children praised,
So rich our human pleasure ripes
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,
Though nought be promised from the seas,
But only a soft-ruffling breeze
Sweep glittering on a still content,
Serenity in ravishment.
For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instills,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes:
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine,
He is, the hills, the human line,
The meadows green, the fallows brown,
The dreams of labor in the town;
He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
The wedding song of sun and rains
He is, the dance of children, thanks
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
And eye of violets while they breathe;
All these the circling song will wreathe,
And you shall hear the herb and tree,
The better heart of men shall see,
Shall feel celestially, as long
As you crave nothing save the song.

Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality,
So pure that it salutes the suns,
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,
Now names, and men still housing here,
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
For song our highest heaven to greet:
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
From firmest base to farthest leap,
Because their love of Earth is deep,
And they are warriors in accord
With life to serve, and pass reward,
So touching purest and so heard
In the brain's reflex of yon bird:
Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
Through self-forgetfulness divine,
In them, that song aloft maintains,
To fill the sky and thrill the plains
With showerings drawn from human stores,
As he to silence nearer soars,
Extends the world at wings and dome,
More spacious making more our home,
Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

(1881)

Lucifer in Starlight

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,

Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

(1883)

Phoebus with Admetus

Enraged because his son Aesculapius had been killed by the thunder of Zeus, Phoebus, the sun god, slew the Cyclopes, the giants who had forged the thunderbolts. In punishment Zeus sent him to earth to be a servant of Admetus, King of Thessaly, where he spent nine years as a shepherd.

I

When by Zeus relenting the mandate was revoked,
Sentencing to exile the bright Sun-God,
Mindful were the ploughmen of who the steer had yoked,
Who: and what a track showed the upturned sod!
Mindful were the shepherds as now the noon severe
Bent a burning eyebrow to brown evetide,
How the rustic flute drew the silver to the sphere,
Sister of his own, till her rays fell wide.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

II

Chirping none the scarlet cicalas crouched in ranks:
Slack the thistle-head piled its down-silk grey:
Scarce the stony lizard sucked hollows in his flanks:
Thick on spots of umbrage our drowsed flocks lay.
Sudden bowed the chestnuts beneath a wind unheard,
Lengthened ran the grasses, the sky grew slate:
Then amid a swift flight of winged seed white as curd,
Clear of limb a Youth smote the master's gate.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

III

Water, first of singers, o'er rocky mount and mead,
First of earthly singers, the sun-loved rill,
Sang of him, and flooded the ripples on the reed,
Seeking whom to waken and what ear fill.
Water, sweetest soother to kiss a wound and cool,
Sweetest and divinest, the sky-born brook,
Chuckled, with a whimper, and made a mirror-pool
Round the guest we welcomed, the strange hand shook.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

IV

Many swarms of wild bees descended on our fields;
Stately stood the wheatstalk with head bent high:
Big of heart we labored at storing mighty yields,
Wool and corn, and clusters to make men cry!
Hand-like rushed the vintage; we strung the bellied skins
Plump, and at the sealing the Youth's voice rose:
Maidens clung in circle, on little fists their chins;
Gentle beasties through pushed a cold long nose.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

V

Foot to fire in snowtime we trimmed the slender shaft:
Often down the pit spied the lean wolf's teeth
Grin against his will, trapped by masterstrokes of craft;
Helpless in his froth-wrath as green logs seethe!
Safe the tender lambs tugged the teats, and winter sped
Whirled before the crocus, the year's new gold.
Hung the hooky beak up aloft the arrow head
Reddened through his feathers for our dear fold.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VI

Tales we drank of giants at war with Gods above:
Rocks were they to look on, and earth climbed air!
Tales of search for simples, and those who sought of love
Ease because the creature was all too fair.
Pleasant ran our thinking that while our work was good,
Sure as fruits for sweat would the praise come fast.
He that wrestled stoutest and tamed the billow-brood
Danced in rings with girls, like a sail-flapped mast.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VII

Lo, the herb of healing, when once the herb is known,
Shines in shady woods bright as new-sprung flame.
Ere the string was tightened we heard the mellow tone,
After he had taught how the sweet sounds came.
Stretched about his feet, labor done, 't was as you see
Red pomegranates tumble and burst hard rind.
So began contention to give delight and be
Excellent in things aimed to make life kind.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VIII

You with shelly horns, rams! and promontory goats,
You whose browsing beards dip in coldest dew!
Bulls, that walk the pastures in kingly-flashing coats!
Laurel, ivy, vine, wreathed for feasts not few!
You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,
You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent:
He has been our fellow, the morning of our days;
Us he chose for housemates, and this way went.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

(1883)

Melampus

Melampus was, in Greek mythology, a soothsayer who had his ears cleansed by the tongues of snakes that he had aided and thus was given to understand the language of bird and beast.

I

With love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings
From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;
Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;
The good physician Melampus, loving them all,
Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

II

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key
Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.
The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we
To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours:
And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined
Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows
In them, in us, from the source by man unattained
Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

III

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast
Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,
The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best

Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape:
For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,
As babes they learn where her motherly help is great:
They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,
And need they medical antidotes find them straight.

IV

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,
Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain
Like swimmers varying billows: never in woods
Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all sane
The woods revolve: as the tree its shadowing limns
To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life
Restrains disorder: you hear the primitive hymns
Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.

V

Now sleeping once on a day of marvelous fire,
A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret
That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,
Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set
Their tongues to lick him: the swift affectionate tongue
Of each ran licking the slumberer: then his ears
A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly: sudden upsprung,
He heard a voice piping: Ay, for he has no fears!

VI

A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech
Of men, it seemed: and another renewed: He moves
To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach:
He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.
No fears have I of a man who goes with his head
To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand:
I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed;
I pipe him much for his good could he understand.

VII

Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist:
He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.
Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,
He spied the bird and the bill of the speaking bird.
His cushion mosses in shades of various green,
The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake
Slipped under: draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,[1]
It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

VIII

Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,
As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,
Ere yet they dart in a brook, are one bubble-pool
To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.
The soul of light vivid shone, a stream within stream;
The soul of sound from a musical shell outflew;
Where others hear but a hum and see but a beam,
The tongue and eye of the fountain of life he knew.

IX

He knew the Hours: they were round him, laden with seed
Of hours bestrewn upon vapor, and one by one
They winged as ripened in fruit the burden decreed
For each to scatter; they flushed like the buds in sun,
Bequeathing seed to successive similar rings,
Their sisters, bearers to men of what men have earned:
He knew them, talked with the yet unreddened; the stings,
The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms divined, discerned.

[1] The spring of the Muses.

X

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,
By riddling fingers expanded, oft watched in growth
With brooding deep as the noon-ray's quickening wheat,
Ere touch'd, the pendulous flower of the plants of sloth,
The plants of rigidness, answered question and squeeze,
Revealing wherefore it bloomed uninviting, bent,
Yet making harmony breathe of life and disease,
The deeper chord of a wonderful instrument.

XI

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and the fates
We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears were charged
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble hates,
With music wrought of distraction his heart enlarged.
Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer, though mute,
He drew the Master of harmonies, voiced or stilled,
To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-root
A song, beheld in fulfilment the unfulfilled.

XII

Him Phoebus,[2] lending to darkness color and form
Of light's excess, many lessons and counsels gave;
Showed Wisdom lord of the human intricate swarm,
And whence prophetic it looks on the hives that rave;
And how acquired, of the zeal of love to acquire,
And where it stands, in the centre of life a sphere;
And Measure, mood of the lyre, the rapturous lyre,
He said was Wisdom, and struck him the notes to hear.

XIII

Sweet, sweet: 'twas glory of vision, honey, the breeze
In heat, the run of the river on root and stone,
All senses joined, as the sister Pierides[3]
Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine, his own.
In stately order, evolved of sound into sight,
From sight to sound intershifting, the man descried
The growths of earth, his adored, like day out of night,
Ascend in song, seeing nature and song allied.

XIV

And there vitality, there, there solely in song,
Resides, where earth and her uses to men, their needs,
Their forceful cravings, the theme are: there is strong,
The Master said: and the studious eye that reads,
(Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods on the mount)
In links divine with the lyrical tongue is bound.
Pursue thy craft: it is music drawn of a fount,
To spring perennial; well-spring is common ground.

XV

Melampus dwelt among men: physician and sage,
He served them, loving them, healing them; sick or maimed
Or them that frenzied in some delirious rage
Outran the measure, his juice of the woods reclaimed.
He played on men, as his master, Phoebus, on strings
Melodious: as the God did he drive and check,
Through love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck.

(1883)

The Appeasement of Demeter

I

Demeter devastated our good land,
In blackness for her daughter snatched below.[1]

[2] Apollo, god of the sun and of the arts.
[3] the Muses.
[1] Proserpine.

Smoke-pillar or loose hillock was the sand,
Where soil had been to clasp warm seed and throw
The wheat, vine, olive, ripe to Summer's ray.
Now whether night advancing, whether day,
Scarce did the baldness show:
The hand of man was a defeated hand.

II

Necessity, the primal goad to growth,
Stood shrunken; Youth and Age appeared as one;
Like Winter Summer; good as labor sloth;
Nor was there answer wherefore beamed the sun,
Or why men drew the breath to carry pain.
High reared the ploughshare, broken lay the wain,
Idly the flax-wheel spun
Unridered: starving lords were wasp and moth.

III

Lean grassblades, losing green on their bent flags,
Sang chilly to themselves; lone honey-bees
Pursued the flowers that were not with dry bags;
Sole sound aloud the snap of sapless trees,
More sharp than slingstones on hard breastplates hurled.
Back to first chaos tumbled the stopped world,
Careless to lure or please.
A nature of gaunt ribs, an Earth of crags.

IV

No smile Demeter cast: the gloom she saw
Well draped her direful musing; for in gloom,
In thicker gloom, deep down the cavern-maw,
Her sweet had vanished; liker unto whom,
And whose pale place of habitation mute,
She and all seemed where seasons, pledged for fruit
Anciently, gaped for bloom:
Where hand of man was as a plucked fowl's claw.

V

The wrathful Queen descended on a vale,
That ere the ravished hour for richness heaved.
Iambe,[2] maiden of the merry tale,
Beside her eyed the once red-cheeked, green-leaved.
It looked as if the Deluge had withdrawn.

[2] Demeter's maidservant.

Pity caught at her throat; her jests were gone.
More than for her who grieved,
She could for this waste home have piped the wail.

VI

Iambe, her dear mountain-rivulet
To waken laughter from cold stones, beheld
A riven wheatfield cracking for the wet,
And seed like infant's teeth, that never swelled,
Apeep up flinty ridges, milkless round.
Teeth of the giants marked she where thin ground
Rocky in spikes rebelled
Against the hand here slack as rotted net.

VII

The valley people up the ashen scoop
She beckoned, aiming hopelessly to win
Her Mistress in compassion of yon group
So pinched and wizened; with their aged grin,
For lack of warmth to smile, on mouths of woe,
White as in chalk outlining little O
Dumb, from a falling chin;
Young, old, alike half-bent to make the hoop.

VIII

Their tongues of birds they wagged, weak-voiced as when
Dark underwaters the recesses choke;
With cluck and upper quiver of a hen
In grasp, past pecking: cry before the croak.
Relentlessly their gold-haired Heaven, their fount
Bountiful of old days, heard them recount
This and that cruel stroke:
Nor eye nor ear had she for piteous men.

IX

A figure of black rock by sunbeams crowned
Through stormclouds, where the volumed shades enfold
An earth in awe before the claps resound
And woods and dwellings are as billows rolled,
The barren Nourisher unmelted shed
Death from the looks that wandered with the dead
Out of the realms of gold,
In famine for her lost, her lost unfound.

X

Iambe from her Mistress tripped; she raised
The cattle-call above the moan of prayer;
And slowly out of the fields their fancy grazed
Among the droves, defiled a horse and mare:
The wrecks of horse and mare: such ribs as view
Seas that have struck brave ships ashore, while through
Shoots the swift foamspit: bare
They nodded, and Demeter on them gazed.

XI

Howbeit the season of the dancing blood,
Forgot was horse of mare, yea, mare of horse:
Reversed, each head at either's flank, they stood.
Whereat the Goddess, in a dim remorse,
Laid hand on them, and smacked; and her touch pricked.
Neighing within, at either's flank they licked;
Played on a moment's force
At courtship, withering to the crazy nod.

XII

The nod was that we gather for consent;
And mournfully amid the group a dame,
Interpreting the thing in nature meant,
Her hands held out like bearers of the flame,
And nodded for the negative sideways.
Keen at her Mistress glanced Iambe: rays
From the Great Mother[3] came:
Her lips were opened wide; the curse was rent.

XIII

She laughed: since our first harvesting heard none
Like thunder of the song of heart: her face,
The dreadful darkness, shook to mounted sun,
And peal on peal across the hills held chase.
She laughed herself to water; laughed to fire;
Laughed the torrential laugh on dam and sire
Full of the marrowy race.
Her laughter, Gods! was flesh on skeleton.

XIV

The valley people huddled, broke, afraid,
Assured, and taking lightning in the veins
They puffed, they leaped, linked hands, together swayed,
Unwitting happiness till golden rains
Of tears in laughter, laughter weeping, smote
Knowledge of milky mercy from that throat
Pouring to heal their pains:
And one bold youth set mouth at a shy maid.

XV

Iambe clapped to see the kindly lusts
Inspire the valley people, still on seas,
Like poplar-tops relieved from stress of gusts,
With rapture in their wonderment; but these,
Low homage being rendered, ran to plough,
Fed by the laugh, as by the mother cow
Calves at the teats they tease:
Soon drove they through the yielding furrow-crusts.

XVI

Uprose the blade in green, the leaf in red,
The tree of water and the tree of wood:
And soon among the branches overhead
Gave beauty juicy issue sweet for food.
O Laughter! beauty plumped and love had birth.
Laughter! O thou reviver of sick Earth!
Good for the spirit, good
For body, thou! to both art wine and bread!

(1888)

[3] Cybele, the Great Mother of the gods.

James Thomson ("B.V.")

(1834-1882)

The most melancholy poet of his generation, James Thomson was born at Port-Glasgow (Scotland), on November 23, 1834. He lived in an orphan asylum from his seventh year, and in 1850 entered a military asylum. When, as assistant army schoolmaster, he was stationed near Cork, he fell in love with the daughter of the armor-sergeant. She was beautiful and cultivated and returned his love. Her sudden death completely prostrated him, and thereafter his life was filled with gloom.

As early as 1858 he had begun to publish. Like Cowper, Coleridge, and Francis Thompson—derelict authors who were each saved by the unselfishness of a friend—"B. V.," as he called himself, owes his literary salvation to the help of Charles Bradlaugh, who stood by him in all the difficult moments of his life.

Bradlaugh's journal furnished him an avenue for publication and his friendship also found him work when he had lost his post in the army. The monotony and gloom of his life were rarely broken. Except for a disastrous business venture in America and an unfortunate attempt as newspaper correspondent during the Spanish Revolution, he spent the rest of his years in an unattractive London room, becoming more and more a victim of drink. His most important poem, *The City of Dreadful Night,* was published in 1880. One volume appeared after his death, which occurred June 3, 1882.

Especially as seen in his principal poem, Thomson's pessimism is the darkest that appears in English literature. It seems ingrained in his nature; there is no literary pose about it, though it has kinship with Schopenhauer's convictions (see p. 1173). Such poetry will never be stimulating reading, but in its kind it has not been surpassed. Imaginative power, intensity, and utter gloom are fitly expressed in these sonorous and somewhat monotonous verses. There is, however, another side to Thomson, exhibited in such poems as *Give a Man a Horse He Can Ride* and the two on *Art.* Here we find a man of virile energy and zest for living.

From *The City of Dreadful Night*

Hounded by insomnia, Thomson walked the London streets during the eerie hours, and found it a city of horror and death. The imaginings of his tortured mind he recorded in this, the best known, of his poems.

4

He stood alone within the spacious square
Declaiming from the central grassy mound,
With head uncovered and with streaming hair,
As if large multitudes were gathered round:
A stalwart shape, the gestures full of might,
The glances burning with unnatural light:—

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: All was black,
In heaven no single star, on earth no track;
A brooding hush without a stir or note,
The air so thick it clotted in my throat;
And thus for hours; then some enormous things
Swooped past with savage cries and clanking wings:
But I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Eyes of fire
Glared at me throbbing with a starved desire;
The hoarse and heavy and carnivorous breath
Was hot upon me from deep jaws of death;
Sharp claws, swift talons, fleshless fingers cold
Plucked at me from the bushes, tried to hold:
But I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Lo you, there,
That hillock burning with a brazen glare;
Those myriad dusky flames with points a-glow
Which writhed and hissed and darted to and fro;
A Sabbath of the Serpents, heaped pell-mell
For Devil's roll-call and some fête of Hell:
Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Meteors ran
And crossed their javelins on the black sky-span;
The zenith opened to a gulf of flame,
The dreadful thunderbolts jarred earth's fixed frame;
The ground all heaved in waves of fire that surged
And weltered round me sole there unsubmerged:
Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Air once more,
And I was close upon a wild sea-shore;
Enormous cliffs arose on either hand,
The deep tide thundered up a league-broad strand;
White foambelts seethed there, wan spray swept and flew;
The sky broke, moon and stars and clouds and blue:
And I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: On the left,
The sun arose and crowned a broad crag-cleft;
There stopped and burned out black, except a rim,
A bleeding eyeless socket, red and dim;
Whereon the moon fell suddenly southwest,
And stood above the right-hand cliffs at rest:

Still I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: From the right
A shape came slowly with a ruddy light;
A woman with a red lamp in her hand,
Bareheaded and barefooted on that strand;
O desolation moving with such grace!
O anguish with such beauty in thy face!
I fell as on my bier,
Hope travailed with such fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: I was twain,
Two selves distinct that cannot join again;
One stood apart and knew but could not stir,
And watched the other stark in swoon and her;
And she came on, and never turned aside,
Between such sun and moon and roaring tide:
And as she came more near
My soul grew mad with fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Hell is mild
And piteous matched with that accursed wild;
A large black sign was on her breast that bowed,
A broad black band ran down her snow-white shroud;
That lamp she held was her own burning heart,
Whose blood-drops trickled step by step apart:
The mystery was clear;
Mad rage had swallowed fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: By the sea
She knelt and bent above that senseless me;
Those lamp-drops fell upon my white brow there,
She tried to cleanse them with her tears and hair;
She murmured words of pity, love, and woe,
She heeded not the level rushing flow:
And mad with rage and fear,
I stood stonebound so near.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: When the tide
Swept up to her there kneeling by my side,
She clasped that corpse-like me, and they were borne
Away, and this vile me was left forlorn;
I know the whole sea cannot quench that heart,
Or cleanse that brow, or wash those two apart:
They love; their doom is drear,
Yet they nor hope nor fear;
But I, what do I here?

(1874)

Give a Man a Horse He Can Ride

This lyric shows the side of Thomson better known to his friends—a far cry from the brooding pessimism of *The City of Dreadful Night*. In common with the two poems on *Art*, it proves the poet a man with a vigorous, if frustrated love of life.

Give a man a horse he can ride,
Give a man a boat he can sail;
And his rank and wealth, his strength and health,
On sea nor shore shall fail.

Give a man a pipe he can smoke,
Give a man a book he can read;
And his home is bright with a calm delight,
Though the room be poor indeed.

Give a man a girl he can love,
As I, O my Love, love thee;
And his heart is great with the pulse of Fate
At home, on land, on sea.

(1869)

Art

I

Singing is sweet: but be sure of this,
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.

Did he ever suspire a tender lay
While her presence took his breath away?

Had his fingers been able to toy with her hair
Would they then have written the verses fair?

Had she let his arm steal round her waist
Would the lovely portrait yet be traced?

Since he could not embrace it flushed and warm
He has carved in stone the perfect form.

Who gives the fine report of the feast?
He who got none and enjoyed it least.

Were the wine really slipping down his throat
Would his song of the wine advance a note?

Will you puff out the music that sways the whirl,
Or dance and make love with a pretty girl?

Who shall the great battle-story write?
Not the hero down in the thick of the fight.

Statues and pictures and verse may be grand,
But they are not the Life for which they stand.

II

What precious thing are you making fast
In all these silken lines?
And where and to whom will it go at last?
Such subtle knots and twines!

I am tying up all my love in this,
With all its hopes and fears,
With all its anguish and all its bliss,
And its hours as heavy as years.

I am going to send it afar, afar,
To I know not where above;
To that sphere beyond the highest star
Where dwells the soul of my Love.

But in vain, in vain, would I make it fast
With countless subtle twines;
For ever its fire breaks out at last,
And shrivels all the lines.

(1881)

Arthur O'Shaughnessy

(1844-1881)

Although O'Shaughnessy is remembered today for only two or three poems, there was a time when he ranked very high in critical esteem. He was born in London March 14, 1844, and lived an uneventful life, varied only by periods of ill health. From the age of seventeen onward he held positions in the British Museum, where he specialized in ichthyology. His first literary success, *An Epic of Women* (1870), was followed by the even more successful *Music and Moonlight* (1874). He died in London January 30, 1881.

O'Shaughnessy's poetry is characterized by its fine melodies, strengthened by echoes and repetitions. But though the lines possess a certain beauty, their intellectual import is negligible. His editors have taken the liberty of pruning his poetry of bad stanzas and have thus improved it. In this way Palgrave in his *Golden Treasury* reduced *We Are the Music-Makers* from its original seven stanzas to the present three. His latest editor, W. A. Percy (1922), has taken similar liberties

Ode

We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample a kingdom down.

We, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel[1] itself in our mirth;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

(1872)

[1] Babylon

Gerard Manley Hopkins

(1844-1889)

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in Essex, at Stratford, studied at Sir Robert Cholmondeley's Grammar School in Highgate, and later at Balliol College, Oxford, where because of his fine mind and good fellowship he was nicknamed "the star of Balliol." From childhood he had been interested in music, drawing, and poetry. At Oxford he came under the influence of the great Jowett and Walter Pater (see p. 878). About half a year before the time when he had expected to take his degree he wrote to Newman telling him of his desire to leave the Church of England and enter the Roman Catholic Church. Though his father and many of his friends opposed the move, he became a priest in the Society of Jesus. As he entered his novitiate, he burned his early verse and decided to write no more "as not belonging to my profession, unless it were by the wish of my superiors." For seven years he composed no poetry, except for "two or three little presentation pieces which occasion called for." After a few months in Birmingham with Newman, and a period as missionary in Liverpool, he was given a church at Oxford. In 1884 he was granted a fellowship in the Catholic University at Dublin, and there he spent his last years.

When Hopkins began to write again, he received so little encouragement from the periodicals that he soon resigned himself to the prospect of his poems' remaining in manuscript. His chief audience was the poet Robert Bridges, to whom he sent his compositions. A few of these Bridges managed to insert into anthologies, but it was not until long after his friend's death that Bridges, to whose discretion Hopkins had left his poetry, issued Hopkins's *Poems* (1918) with an introduction and notes.

To find Hopkins's forebears we must go back to the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. Like Vaughan and Crashaw (see I, pp. 543, 544), Hopkins recorded in his poetry the intensity of his faith and of his spiritual experiences. On the technical side, however, Hopkins was very much of a "modern," and his volume has profoundly influenced our contemporaries. His letters reveal his devotion to prosodic theory, and his poems prove him to have been scrupulous in applying his theories. His careful concern over poetic effects made him, as is the case with many poets of our time, often obscure and strained in his utterance. But at its best his verse has the authentic sound of poetry.

In his preface, Hopkins explains that his poems are written in "Running Rhythm," "Sprung Rhythm," and "in a mixture of the two." By "Running Rhythm" he meant *syllabic verse*, and by "Sprung Rhythm" he meant *stressed verse*. His experiments in "Sprung Rhythm" were intended to revivify English versification by reintroducing the accentual basis of Old English verse—a basis which he considered more natural to the genius of our language. He was also a bold experimenter with alliteration and rhyme.

Heaven-Haven

A Nun Takes the Veil

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb
And out of the swing of the sea.

(written c. 1866)

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

(written 1877)

The Windhover

To Christ Our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-
drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein[1] of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion[2]
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

(written 1877)

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

(written 1877)

[1] to make a horse wheel around its trainer on a rein.
[2] ridge of earth between two furrows

Felix Randal

Felix Randal the farrier,[1] O he is dead then? my duty all ended,
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!

(written 1880)

[1] blacksmith.

The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo

(Maidens' Song From St. Winefred's Well)

The Leaden Echo

How to kéep—is there ány any, is there none such, nowhere known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, láce, latch or catch or key to keep
Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, . . . from vanishing away?
O is there no frowning of these wrinkles, rankèd wrinkles deep,

Dówn? no waving off of these most mournful messengers, still messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?
No there's none, there's none, O no there's none,
Nor can you long be, what you now are, called fair,
Do what you may do, what, do what you may,
And wisdom is early to despair:
Be beginning: since, no, nothing can be done
To keep at bay
Age and age's evils, hoar hair,
Ruck[1] and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death's worst, winding sheets, tombs and worms and tumbling to decay;
So be beginning, be beginning to despair.
O there's none; no no no there's none:
Be beginning to despair, to despair,
Despair, despair, despair, despair.

The Golden Echo

Spare!
There is one, yes I have one (Hush there!);
Only not within seeing of the sun,
Not within the singeing of the strong sun,
Tall sun's tingeing, or treacherous the tainting of the earth's air,
Somewhere elsewhere there is ah well where! one,
Óne. Yes I can tell such a key, I do not know such a place,
Where whatever's prized and passes of us, everything that's fresh and fast flying of us, seems to us sweet of us and swiftly away with, done away with, undone,
Undone, done with, soon done with, and yet dearly and dangerously sweet
Of us, the wimpled-water-dimpled, not-by-morning-matchèd face,
The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to, ah! to fleet,
Never fleets móre, fastened with the tenderest truth
To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it is an ever-lastingness of, O it is an all youth!
Come then, your ways and airs and looks, locks, maiden gear, gallantry and gaiety and grace,
Winning ways, airs innocent, maiden manners, sweet looks, loose locks, long locks, lovelocks, gaygear, going gallant, girlgrace—
Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them with breath,
And with sighs soaring, soaring sighs deliver
Them; beauty-in-the-ghost, deliver it, early now, long before death
Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver.
See; not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost; every hair
Is, hair of the head, numbered.
Nay, what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould
Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the wind whatwhile we slept,
This side, that side hurling a heavyheaded hundredfold
Whatwhile we, while we slumbered.
O then, weary then whý should we tread? O why are we so haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,
When the thing we freely fórfeit is kept with fonder a care,
Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept
Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer, fonder
A care kept.—Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where.—
Yonder.—What high as that! We follow, now we follow.—Yonder, yes yonder, yonder,
Yonder.

(written 1882)

[1] pucker.

Carrion Comfort

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more.* I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.
But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me

Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruiséd bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand, rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fóot tród
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God. (written 1885)

No Worst, There is None

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, skilled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked "No lingering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief."

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.
(written 1885-7)

I Wake and Feel

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hours we have spent
This night! what sighs you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.
With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.
(written 1885-7)

William Ernest Henley

(1849-1903)

William Ernest Henley was born August 23, 1849, at Gloucester. His education was confined to what he could obtain at the Gloucester Grammar School. Though in many ways he was intellectually a self-made man, he did have the good fortune to study under T. E. Brown, a poet of considerable talent who inspired him to read widely and awakened his literary ambitions.

From childhood he was affected with tuberculosis, and, in an effort to check the disease, his foot was amputated. Later he spent twenty months in the Old Infirmary in Edinburgh, where the great surgeon Lister helped him win a heroic struggle to save the other leg. Some of his most characteristic poems were written from the Hospital (1873-75). These were published in the *Cornhill Magazine* by the editor, Leslie Stephen. Through the offices of the latter, Robert Louis Stevenson visited Henley in the hospital and thus began a valued, influential friendship, unfortunately broken a few years before Stevenson's death.

In 1877 Henley began a long editorial career in London. He was successively editor of several important journals and acquired a position in the critical world that made him almost a literary dictator. For ten years he gave up his poetry and devoted himself unsparingly to journalism. In 1888, however, he renewed his poetic interest and published *A Book of Verses*. This volume was followed in the next years by *London Voluntaries* (1892) and *Hawthorne and Lavender* (1899). In 1890 he issued a volume of criticism called *Views and Reviews*. In 1892 were published the three plays which he had written with Stevenson. During his last ten years he did much miscellaneous editorial work. This last decade was saddened by the death of his young daughter; from the effects of this grief he never recovered. He died July 11, 1903.

In many ways Henley's work is paradoxical. There is about some of his best-known poetry a masculinity so self-conscious as to approach mere blatancy. It is hardly an accident that Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* should have first seen the light under Henley's editorship. Henley gloried in these poems which sang the vigor and energy of soldiers. His own best-known poem sings of the fearlessness of the hero whose head is bloody but unbowed. But he could turn from stoic imperturbability and heroic endeavor to poems of infinite tenderness. There is thus both the masculine and the gracious in his work, but he hated above all things the characteristic effeminacy of the new esthetes of his day.

Henley's place in English poetry may not be high. His heroics are perhaps too strident and his imperialistic fervor may now leave us cold. But he has written a few poems that the world could ill afford to be without.

As a critic he was discerning, being one of the first Englishmen to appreciate the painter Whistler and the sculptor Rodin, both iconoclasts in their art. Henley himself employed a vocabulary plain and "unpoetical," frequently wrote on subjects generally considered too indelicate for poetry, and accepted the medium of free verse long before it achieved any popularity in his country.

From *In Hospital*

Before

Behold me waiting—waiting for the knife.
A little while, and at a leap I storm
The thick, sweet mystery of chloroform,
The drunken dark, the little death-in-life.
The gods are good to me: I have no wife,
No innocent child, to think of as I near
The fateful minute; nothing all-too dear
Unmans me for my bout of passive strife.
Yet am I tremulous and a trifle sick,
And, face to face with chance, I shrink a little:
My hopes are strong, my will is something weak.
Here comes the basket? Thank you, I am ready.
But, gentlemen my porters, life is brittle:
You carry Cæsar and his fortunes—steady!

(written 1873-75)

Apparition

This sonnet is a portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered; in his face—
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion and impudence and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist;
A deal of Ariel,[1] just a streak of Puck,[2]
Much Antony,[3] of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.[4]

(written 1873-5)

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

(written 1875)

[1] airy spirit of Shakespeare's *Tempest*
[2] playful sprite of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*
[3] Mark Antony, Roman general (83-30 B.C.), the orator of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and great lover of *Antony and Cleopatra*
[4] believer in the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church, hence a strict Calvinist

I.M.: Margaritae Sorori[1]

A late lark twitters from the quiet skies;
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, gray city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine, and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep

So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

(1886)

A Bowl of Roses

It was a bowl of roses:
  There in the light they lay,
Languishing, glorying, glowing
  Their life away.

And the soul of them rose like a presence,
  Into me crept and grew,
And filled me with something—someone—
  O, was it you?

(1888)

To W. A.

Or ever the knightly years were gone
  With the old world to the grave,
I was a King in Babylon
  And you were a Christian Slave.

I saw, I took, I cast you by,
  I bent and broke your pride.

[1] written in memory of his wife's sister Margaret.

You loved me well, or I heard them lie,
  But your longing was denied.
Surely I knew that by and by
  You cursed your gods and died.

And a myriad suns have set and shone
  Since then upon the grave
Decreed by the King of Babylon
  To her that had been his Slave.

The pride I trampled is now my scathe,
  For it tramples me again.
The old resentment lasts like death,
  For you love, yet you refrain.
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,
  And I break my heart in vain.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone
  The deed beyond the grave,
When I was King in Babylon
  And you were a Virgin Slave.

(1888)

England, My England

What have I done for you,
  England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
  England, my own?
With your glorious eyes austere,
As the Lord were walking near,
Whispering terrible things and dear
  As the Song on your bugles blown,
    England—
  Round the world on your bugles blown!

Where shall the watchful Sun,
  England, my England,
Match the master-work you've done,
  England, my own?
When shall he rejoice again
Such a breed of mighty men
As come forward, one to ten,
  To the Song on your bugles blown,
    England—
  Down the years on your bugles blown?

Ever the faith endures,
  England, my England—
"Take and break us; we are yours,
  England, my own!

Life is good, and joy runs high
Between English earth and sky;
Death is death; but we shall die
To the Song on your bugles blown, England—
To the stars on your bugles blown!"

They call you proud and hard,
England, my England;
You with worlds to watch and ward,
England, my own!
You whose mailed hand keeps the keys
Of such teeming destinies
You could know nor dread nor ease
Were the Song on your bugles blown, England—
Round the Pit on your bugles blown!

Mother of Ships whose might,
England, my England,
Is the fierce old Sea's delight,
England, my own,
Chosen daughter of the Lord,
Spouse-in-Chief of the ancient Sword,
There's the menace of the Word
In the Song on your bugles blown, England—
Out of heaven on your bugles blown!

(1892)

Francis Thompson

(1859-1907)

The career of Cardinal Newman (see p. 687) was part of, and largely responsible for, a revival of Roman Catholic prestige in England during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The elevating mysticism of great Catholic theologians and the beauty of the Church's ritual afforded a welcome haven for a number of poets and artists who experienced a revulsion against Victorian smugness and materialism. Among distinguished men and women who became converts were Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Alice Meynell, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Lawrence Housman, and Oscar Wilde. Francis Thompson, on the other hand, was the son of devout Catholics and was raised in their religion.

He was born on December 18, 1859, at Preston, the son of a doctor. It would seem that Thompson at first intended to enter the priesthood, and that he went to Ushaw College with that end in view. His father, however, desired him to become a physician, so that he later went to Owens College at Manchester. After failing three times to obtain his degree, he abandoned all idea of practicing medicine. A singularly unworldly man, Thompson drifted aimlessly for a long time. For three years he lived in the most abject poverty in London. Too poor even to purchase stationery, he was supplied with old account books by a bootmaker, and on scraps from these he wrote two poems and an essay which he sent to *Merry England*, a periodical edited by Wilfrid Meynell.

His failure to inscribe any address made it very difficult for Meynell to find the whereabouts of the author, whom he realized to be a poet of genius. Discovered at last by the Meynells, he was rescued from oblivion just in time. He had already fallen victim to the opium habit, which he had contracted in search of relief from neuralgia. The Meynells became second parents to him, helped him overcome his complete subservience to the drug, and managed somehow to fix him—for brief intervals, at least—into a schedule of regular literary work. He issued three volumes of verse. *Poems* (1893), *Sister-Songs* (1895), and *New Poems* (1897). In addition he wrote a number of prose pieces, of which the most famous is his essay on his beloved Shelley, discovered among Thompson's papers after his death. He died of tuberculosis on November 13, 1907.

His poetry has been recognized as containing a fusion of Crashaw's mystical rapture (see I, p. 543) and Shelley's impassioned idealism. As Donald Davidson aptly describes Thompson, the poet, he "lifted up his eyes from London pavements and beheld Christ walking on Thames water, and Jacob's ladder shining over Charing Cross." Often he achieves an innocence almost childlike. At other times he has the rich sensuousness of his Pre-Raphaelite contemporaries. *The Hound of Heaven* is undoubtedly his most splendid creation. It portrays the flight of the rebellious Christian from God's love and his eventual capture.

The Hound of Heaven

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted[1] casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside);
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not[2] to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.[3]
I said to dawn, Be sudden; to eve, Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies;
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's[4] vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured dais,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."
So it was done:
I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with—made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound *I* speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe[5] me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:

[1] heart-shaped.
[2] knew not how.
[3] knocked at the doors of the moon until they were jarred into sweet and silvery sounds.
[4] Nature's.
[5] own.

Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not
Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
Ah! must—
Designer infinite!—
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
The harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?
Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said),
"And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms,
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

(1893)

Ernest Dowson

(1867-1900)

The so-called "Decadent" group of late Victorians was associated in the public mind with the magazine *The Yellow Book*, whose first numbers appeared in April 1894 under the editorship of Henry Harland and Aubrey Beardsley. Flaunting before an easily shocked audience their moral emancipation, a number of "impudent" young men were anxious to exhibit the triumph of art for art's sake. Strongly influenced by the literary currents of France which had produced a Baudelaire (see p. 1171) and a Verlaine (see p. 1175), they attempted to prove the validity of the former's dictum that poetry "has no purpose but itself." They

developed poetic techniques to a point of rare refinement, but had very little to say. Having denied any ethical or social import to poetry, they made a religion of art itself. Of these men perhaps the most characteristic was Ernest Dowson.

He was born in Kent on August 2, 1867. After attending Queen's College, Oxford, without taking his degree, he went to London, where he presently became a member of the Rhymer's Club, which included among its members John Davidson, Lionel Johnson, Richard Le Gallienne, Ernest Rhys, Arthur Symons, and W. B. Yeats. But Dowson's literary home was France, rather than England. Frequently he escaped to the Bohemian quarter of Paris or the countryside of Normandy. In London he felt like an expatriate, and often drugged himself with low company and alcohol.

It was his misfortune to fall madly in love with a restaurant-owner's daughter, the "Cynara" of his famous poem. She accepted his deeply felt worship for a few years, and then married a waiter. This was apparently the one experience of profound passion in his life. For the rest, he was a man who wasted himself, fluctuating between religious exaltation and a kind of half-sincere eroticism. Behind all he wrote is a sense of futility, a feeling of unimpassioned despair with life and himself. The failure of his unfulfilled love drove him into further recklessness, and he was destroyed by disease while still a young man.

His works include: two slender volumes of poetry, *Verses* (1896) and *Decorations* (1899); a poetic play, *The Pierrot of the Minute* (1897); a collection of stories, *Dilemmas* (1895); some fine translations (see Verlaine, p. 1175); and two novels written in collaboration with Arthur Moore. His poetry, though slight, has an admirable precision and finish which make the melancholy music of his verse all the more appealing. Certainly his poem to "Cynara" is one of the very best-known pieces of the period.

To One in Bedlam

With delicate, mad hands, behind his sordid bars,
Surely he hath his posies, which they tear and twine;
Those scentless wisps of straw, that miserably line
His strait, caged universe, whereat the dull world stares,

Pedant and pitiful. O, how his rapt gaze wars
With their stupidity! Know they what dreams divine
Lift his long, laughing reveries like enchaunted wine,
And make his melancholy germane to the stars?

O lamentable brother! if those pity thee,
Am I not fain of all thy lone eyes promise me;
Half a fool's kingdom, far from men who sow and reap,
All their days, vanity? Better than mortal flowers,
Thy moon-kissed roses seem: better than love or sleep,
The star-crowned solitude of thine oblivious hours!

(1896)

Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae[1]

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat,
Night-long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay;
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
When I awoke and found the dawn was gray:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

(1896)

[1] From Horace's Ode IV, 1. "I am not such as I was in the reign of good Cynara"

Sapientia Lunae[1]

The wisdom of the world said unto me:
"Go forth and run, the race is to the brave;
Perchance some honor tarrieth for thee!"
"As tarrieth," I said, "for sure, the grave."
For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
Which to her votaries the moon discloses.

The wisdom of the world said: *"There are bays:*
Go forth and run, for victory is good,
After the stress of the laborious days."
"Yet," said I, "shall I be the worms' sweet food,"
As I went musing on a rune of roses,
Which in her hour, the pale, soft moon discloses.

Then said my voices: *"Wherefore strive or run*
On dusty highways ever, a vain race?
The long night cometh, starless, void of sun,
What light shall serve thee like her golden face?"
For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
And knew some secrets which the moon discloses.

"Yea," said I, "for her eyes are pure and sweet
As lilies, and the fragrance of her hair
Is many laurels; and it is not meet
To run for shadows when the prize is here";
And I went reading in that rune of roses
Which to her votaries the moon discloses.

(1896)

[1] The Wisdom of the Moon.

Villanelle[1] *of Marguerites*[2]

"A little, passionately, not at all?"
She casts the snow petals on the air:
And what care we how many petals fall!

Nay, wherefore seek the Seasons to forestall?
It is but playing, and she will not care,
A little, passionately, not at all!

She would not answer us if we should call
Across the years: her visions are too fair;
And what care we how many petals fall?

She knows us not, nor recks if she enthrall
With voice and eyes and fashion of her hair,
A little, passionately, not at all!

Knee-deep she goes in meadow grasses tall,
Kissed by the daisies that her fingers tear:
And what care we how many petals fall!

We pass and go: but she shall not recall
What men we were, nor all she made us bear:
"A little, passionately, not at all!"
And what care we how many petals fall!

(1896)

[1] a French poetic form which is here illustrated.
[2] Marguerite is the French for "daisy"

Oscar Wilde

(1854-1900)

It is only recently that critics have dared to assign to Oscar Wilde the place among distinguished English authors which is rightfully his. Many histories published in the last few decades, indeed, make no mention of him. Now that the cloud of scandal which has obscured his name has been banished by the kindly breath of time, he is coming once more into his deserved inheritance. During his lifetime he rose like the brightest of meteors to the height of that fame he dearly loved, until catastrophe overtook him and prudery made his very name unmentionable among the sanctimonious.

He was born in Dublin on October 15, 1854, and given a surprising array of names: Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde. Though he may be deemed fortunate in having as parents a celebrated author as mother and a brilliant physician as father, his fate might have been less disastrous in a more commonplace home. For Lady Wilde was a highly artificial woman who lived in an unwholesome, unbalanced atmosphere, and did nothing to inculcate either fortitude or balanced judgment in her son. He attended Trinity College in his native city for a while; then, in 1874, he entered Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was soon a brilliant student in the classics. In 1878 he won the Newdigate Prize for his poem, *Ravenna*. He became one of the most devoted of disciples to Walter Pater (see p. 878), whose philosophy of estheticism he decided to propagate and elaborate. At Oxford his essential characteristics were fairly evident. Wilde was a highly social being, loved popularity even if it took the shape of notoriety, and he had already learned that the affectations which he delighted to cultivate were bound to attract notice. He had been gifted, too, with a scintillating wit, and his association with the painter Whistler, a master of impertinent epigram, quickly taught him how to be impudent and shocking with finesse.

After taking his B.A. he went to London, assuming the role of "Professor of Aesthetics," and became associated in the public mind as the leader of the movement which W. S. Gilbert satirized in *Patience* (see p. 865). In 1881 he issued a volume of *Poems* elegantly bound, whose contents were largely imitative of various models. But his personal reputation was already so well in the ascendant that he was invited to lecture in the United States the next year. His tour was an enormous triumph, and he returned to England a celebrated wit. In 1884 he married. Four years later appeared his book of fairy tales, *The Happy Prince* (1888). In 1891 he issued his brilliant series of critical essays, *Intentions*. His well-known novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), was the product of his admiration for the French *Décadents*, but is highly original and daring in execution.

He had made several unlucky efforts in the drama when, in 1892, he achieved dazzling success with the "problem" comedy, *Lady Windermere's Fan*. *Salomé*, written in French (1893), was later translated by Lord Alfred Douglas. He followed up his new fame with several plays, the most remarkable of which is *The Importance of Being Earnest* (see p. 917), which was produced in 1895. To a stage that had long been expiring under the weight of sentimentality and melodrama, Wilde restored the sparkle and banter of the best English comic tradition.

But the year of his greatest triumph proved to be the year of his fall. He was convicted of homosexual immorality in 1895 and imprisoned in Reading Gaol for two years. Prison for a man of his temper was worse than death, even though from his experience there came the material for his best poem, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, his most intensely sincere creation. He came out of prison full of good purposes, but he was already broken. Hounded everywhere by the self-righteous, he went to Paris, where, to deaden the pain of his recollections, he drank to excess. He died there in November 1900, and lies buried in the cemetery of Père Lachaise. Five years after his death appeared *De Profundis*, a prose account of his tragic life.

The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Wilde wrote *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* in France, where he went shortly after serving a two-year term (1895-97) in that institution. The narrative, based upon the hanging of Charles T. Wooldridge for the murder of his wife, serves merely as a framework for the revelation of Wilde's personal agonies. The poem resembles the ballad in stanza form and

in the use of repetition. The story, however, is told not in the objective manner traditional of the ballad but with an intense subjectivity which ends on a note of passionate exhortation.

In Memoriam C. T. W.

SOMETIME TROOPER OF THE ROYAL HORSE GUARDS
OBIIT[1] H. M.[2] PRISON, READING, BERKSHIRE
JULY 7, 1896

I

He did not wear his scarlet coat,
For blood and wine are red,
And blood and wine were on his hands
When they found him with the dead,
The poor dead woman whom he loved,
And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men
In a suit of shabby grey;
A cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay;
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,
Within another ring,
And was wondering if the man had done
A great or little thing,
When a voice behind me whispered low,
'That fellow's got to swing.'

Dear Christ! the very prison walls
Suddenly seemed to reel,
And the sky above my head became
Like a casque of scorching steel;
And, though I was a soul in pain,
My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought
Quickened his step, and why
He looked upon the garish day
With such a wistful eye;
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame
On a day of dark disgrace,
Nor have a noose about his neck,
Nor a cloth upon his face,
Nor drop feet foremost through the floor
Into an empty space.

He does not sit with silent men
Who watch him night and day;
Who watch him when he tries to weep,
And when he tries to pray;
Who watch him lest himself should rob
The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see
Dread figures throng his room,
The shivering Chaplain robed in white,
The Sheriff stern with gloom,
And the Governor all in shiny black,
With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste
To put on convict-clothes,
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes
Each new and nerve-twitched pose,

[1] Died. [2] His Majesty's.

Fingering a watch whose little ticks
Are like horrible hammer-blows.

He does not know that sickening thirst
That sands one's throat, before
The hangman with his gardener's gloves
Slips through the padded door,
And binds one with three leathern thongs,
That the throat may thirst no more.

He does not bend his head to hear
The Burial Office read,
Nor, while the terror of his soul
Tells him he is not dead,
Cross his own coffin, as he moves
Into the hideous shed.

He does not stare upon the air
Through a little roof of glass:
He does not pray with lips of clay
For his agony to pass;
Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek
The kiss of Caiaphas.[8]

II

Six weeks our guardsman walked the yard,
In the suit of shabby grey:
His cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay,
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do
Those witless men who dare
To try to rear the changeling Hope
In the cave of black Despair:
He only looked upon the sun,
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,
Nor did he peek or pine,
But he drank the air as though it held
Some healthful anodyne;
With open mouth he drank the sun
As though it had been wine!

[8] the high priest who tried Jesus.

And I and all the souls in pain,
Who tramped the other ring,
Forgot if we ourselves had done
A great or little thing,
And watched with gaze of dull amaze
The man who had to swing.

And strange it was to see him pass
With a step so light and gay,
And strange it was to see him look
So wistfully at the day,
And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves
That in the spring-time shoot:
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,
With its adder-bitten root,
And, green or dry, a man must die
Before it bears its fruit!

The loftiest place is that seat of grace
For which all worldlings try:
But who would stand in hempen band
Upon a scaffold high,
And through a murderer's collar take
His last look at the sky?

It is sweet to dance to violins
When Love and Life are fair:
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare:
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air!

So with curious eyes and sick surmise
We watched him day by day,
And wondered if each one of us
Would end the self-same way,
For none can tell to what red Hell
His sightless soul may stray.

At last the dead man walked no more
Amongst the Trial Men,
And I knew that he was standing up
In the black dock's dreadful pen,
And that never would I see his face
In God's sweet world again.

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
We had crossed each other's way:
But we made no sign, we said no word,
We had no word to say;

For we did not meet in the holy night,
But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,
Two outcast men we were:
The world had thrust us from its heart,
And God from out His care:
And the iron gin that waits for Sin
Had caught us in its snare.

III

In Debtors' Yard the stones are hard,
And the dripping wall is high,
So it was there he took the air
Beneath the leaden sky,
And by each side a Warder walked,
For fear the man might die.

Or else he sat with those who watched
His anguish night and day;
Who watched him when he rose to weep,
And when he crouched to pray;
Who watched him lest himself should rob
Their scaffold of its prey.

The Governor was strong upon
The Regulations Act:
The Doctor said that Death was but
A scientific fact:
And twice a day the Chaplain called,
And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,
And drank his quart of beer:
His soul was resolute, and held
No hiding-place for fear;
He often said that he was glad
The hangman's hands were near.

But why he said so strange a thing
No Warder dared to ask:
For he to whom a watcher's doom
Is given as his task,
Must set a lock upon his lips,
And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try
To comfort or console:
And what should Human Pity do
Pent up in Murderers' Hole?
What word of grace in such a place
Could help a brother's soul?

With slouch and swing around the ring
We trod the Fools' Parade!
We did not care: we knew we were
The Devil's Own Brigade:
And shaven head and feet of lead
Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds
With blunt and bleeding nails;
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,
And cleaned the shining rails:
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
We turned the dusty drill:
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
And sweated on the mill:
But in the heart of every man
Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day
Crawled like a weed-clogged wave:
And we forgot the bitter lot
That waits for fool and knave,
Till once, as we tramped in from work,
We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole
Gaped for a living thing;
The very mud cried out for blood
To the thirsty asphalt ring:
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair
Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent
On Death and Dread and Doom:
The hangman with his little bag,
Went shuffling through the gloom:
And each man trembled as he crept
Into his numbered tomb.

That night the empty corridors
Were full of forms of Fear,
And up and down the iron town
Stole feet we could not hear,
And through the bars that hid the stars
White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams
In a pleasant meadow-land,
The watchers watched him as he slept,
And could not understand

How one could sleep so sweet a sleep
With a hangman close at hand,

But there is no sleep when men must weep
Who never yet have wept:
So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—
That endless vigil kept,
And through each brain on hands of pain
Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing
To feel another's guilt!
For, right within, the sword of Sin
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,
And as molten lead were the tears we shed
For the blood we had not spilt.

The Warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,
Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed,
Mad mourners of a corse!
The troubled plumes of midnight were
The plumes upon a hearse;
And bitter wine upon a sponge
Was the savor of Remorse.

The grey cock crew, the red cock crew,
But never came the day:
And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,
In the corners where we lay:
And each evil sprite that walks the night
Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast
Like travellers through a mist:
They mocked the moon in a rigadoon[4]
Of delicate turn and twist,
And with formal pace and loathsome grace
The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,
Slim shadows hand in hand:
About, about, in ghostly rout
They trod a saraband:
And the damned grotesques made arabesques,
Like the wind upon the sand!

[4] an old-fashioned dance.

With the pirouettes of marionettes,
They tripped on pointed tread:
But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,
As their grisly masque they led,
And loud they sang, and long they sang,
For they sang to wake the dead.

'Oho!' they cried, 'The world is wide,
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the secret House of Shame.'

No things of air these antics were,
That frolicked with such glee:
To men whose lives were held in gyves,
And whose feet might not go free,
Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;
Some wheeled in smirking pairs;
With the mincing step of a demirep
Some sidled up the stairs:
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,
Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan,
But still the night went on:
Through its giant loom the web of gloom
Crept till each thread was spun:
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round
The weeping prison wall:
Till like a wheel of turning steel
We felt the minutes crawl:
O moaning wind! what had we done
To have such a seneschal?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,
Like a lattice wrought in lead,
Move right across the whitewashed wall
That faced my three-plank bed,
And I knew that somewhere in the world
God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,
At seven all was still,
But the sough and swing of a mighty wing
The prison seemed to fill,

For the Lord of Death with icy breath
  Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,
  Nor ride a moon-white steed,
Three yards of cord and a sliding board
  Are all the gallows' need:
So with a rope of shame the Herald came
  To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen
  Of filthy darkness grope:
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
  Or to give our anguish scope:
Something was dead in each of us,
  And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way,
  And will not swerve aside:
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
  It has a deadly stride:
With iron heel it slays the strong,
  The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight:
  Each tongue was thick with thirst:
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate
  That makes a man accursed,
And Fate will use a running noose
  For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,
  Save to wait for the sign to come:
So, like things of stone in a valley lone,
  Quiet we sat and dumb:
But each man's heart beat thick and quick,
  Like a madman on a drum!

With sudden shock the prison-clock
  Smote on the shivering air,
And from all the gaol rose up a wail
  Of impotent despair,
Like the sound the frightened marshes hear
  From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things
  In the crystal of a dream,
We saw the greasy hempen rope
  Hooked to the blackened beam,
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
  Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so
  That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
  None knew so well as I:
For he who lives more lives than one
  More deaths than one must die.

IV

There is no chapel on the day
  On which they hang a man:
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,
  Or his face is far too wan,
Or there is that written in his eyes
  Which none should look upon.

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,
  And then they rang the bell,
And the Warders with their jingling keys
  Opened each listening cell,
And down the iron stair we tramped,
  Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,
  But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with fear,
  And that man's face was grey,
And I never saw sad men who looked
  So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked
  With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
  We prisoners called the sky,
And at every careless cloud that passed
  In happy freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all
  Who walked with downcast head,
And knew that, had each got his due,
  They should have died instead:
He had but killed a thing that lived,
  Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time
  Wakes a dead soul to pain,
And draws it from its spotted shroud,
  And makes it bleed again,
And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,
  And makes it bleed in vain!

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb
  With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
  The slippery asphalt yard;

Silently we went round and round,
And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,
And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind.

The Warders strutted up and down,
And kept their herd of brutes,
Their uniforms were spick and span,
And they wore their Sunday suits,
But we knew the work they had been at,
By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide,
There was no grave at all:
Only a stretch of mud and sand
By the hideous prison-wall,
And a little heap of burning lime,
That the man should have his pall.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,
Such as few men can claim:
Deep down below a prison-yard,
Naked for greater shame,
He lies, with fetters on each foot,
Wrapt in a sheet of flame!

And all the while the burning lime
Eats flesh and bone away,
It eats the brittle bone by night,
And the soft flesh by day,
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
But it eats the heart alway.

For three long years they will not sow
Or root or seedling there:
For three long years the unblessed spot
Will sterile be and bare,
And look upon the wondering sky
With unreproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint
Each simple seed they sow.
It is not true! God's kindly earth
Is kindlier than men know,
And the red rose would but blow more red,
The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
Out of his heart a white!

For who can say by what strange way,
Christ brings His will to light,
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?[5]

But neither milk-white rose nor red
May bloom in prison air;
The shard, the pebble, and the flint,
Are what they give us there:
For flowers have been known to heal
A common man's despair.

So never will wine-red rose or white,
Petal by petal, fall
On that stretch of mud and sand that lies
By the hideous prison-wall,
To tell the men who tramp the yard
That God's Son died for all.

Yet though the hideous prison-wall
Still hems him round and round,
And a spirit may not walk by night
That is with fetters bound,
And a spirit may but weep that lies
In such unholy ground,

He is at peace—this wretched man—
At peace, or will be soon:
There is no thing to make him mad,
Nor does Terror walk at noon,
For the lampless Earth in which he lies
Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged:
They did not even toll
A requiem that might have brought
Rest to his startled soul,
But hurriedly they took him out,
And hid him in a hole.

They stripped him of his canvas clothes,
And gave him to the flies:
They mocked the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes:
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
In which their convict lies.

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray
By his dishonored grave:

[5] Tannhäuser, having asked absolution for his long sojourn with Venus in the Venusberg, is told by the Pope that he will not receive God's forgiveness until the staff in the Pope's hand shall bloom. Shortly after Tannhauser's departure, the staff blooms.

Nor mark it with that blessed Cross
That Christ for sinners gave,
Because the man was one of those
Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well; he has but passed
To Life's appointed bourne:
And alien tears will fill for him
Pity's long-broken urn,
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn.

V

I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men have made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,
And blind the goodly sun:
And they do well to hide their Hell,
For in it things are done
That Son of God nor son of Man
Ever should look upon!

The vilest deeds like poison weeds,
Bloom well in prison-air;
It is only what is good in Man
That wastes and withers there:
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night and day:
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and grey,
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living Death
Chokes up each grated screen,
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime,
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
Like asp with adder fight,
We have little care of prison fare,
For what chills and kills outright
Is that every stone one lifts by day
Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,
And twilight in one's cell,
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
Each in his separate Hell,
And the silence is more awful far
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word:
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard:
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain
Degraded and alone:
And some men curse, and some men weep,
And some men make no moan:
But God's eternal Laws are kind
And break the heart of stone.

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win!
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

And he of the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes,
Waits for the holy hands that took
The Thief to Paradise;
And a broken and a contrite heart
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law
Gave him three weeks of life,
Three little weeks in which to heal
His soul of his soul's strife,
And cleanse from every blot of blood
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,
The hand that held the steel:
For only blood can wipe out blood,
And only tears can heal:
And the crimson stain that was of Cain
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI

In Reading gaol by Reading town
There is a pit of shame,
And in it lies a wretched man
Eaten by teeth of flame,
In a burning winding-sheet he lies,
And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,
In silence let him lie:
No need to waste the foolish tear,
Or heave the windy sigh:
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword! (1898)

Thomas Hardy

(1840-1928)

The great literary landscapist of Wessex was born at Dorchester in the center of this district on June 2, 1840. The land of his birth and the profession of architecture for which he was trained were both to play leading roles in his novels and poems. Especially in his novels the varying countryside of the southern English counties, and the forces of nature which find play there, seem almost as important agents as any of the human characters.

The son of a builder, Hardy was apprenticed at sixteen to an architect in his native Dorsetshire. In 1862 he became the assistant of a London architect and before long had won two prizes for his work. But he had ambitions as a poet and storyteller and wrote eagerly in his spare time. With the appearance of his first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, in 1871, his efforts in verse were relegated to the background.

Until he was nearly sixty he wrote novels, filled with a fatalism and deeply-grounded pessimism that at once shocked his readers and impelled their interest. Of these perhaps the best are *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1896). He called these "novels of character and environment," and although he

never entirely abandoned the habit of arranging sensational coincidences in his plots to illustrate the crushing power of Fate in life, it is the subtle interpenetration of character and environment that makes his novels outstanding.

The unfavorable reception given to *Jude* caused Hardy to abandon the novel and resume the writing of poetry. Thus at an advanced age he began a new career extremely productive not only in quantity but also in originality and high poetic worth. In 1903 he published the first part of *The Dynasts*, a gigantic drama of the Napoleonic wars extending through three books, nineteen acts, and a hundred and thirty scenes. Thereafter he wrote voluminously in verse until the end of his life, and with increased rather than diminished powers. He died in his eighty-eighth year on January 11, 1928.

It would be a mistake to try to characterize Hardy's literary work by the use of any one simple formula. There is a great variety in his production. When he wishes he is able to write lyrics of the greatest beauty. At other times when he desires to present a realistic picture, of disagreeable people or of tragic conflict, he bends his verse to fit the needs of the situation. He is able, whether in his cameo-like *Satires of Circumstances* or in the fuller canvas of his longer narratives, to tell a tale in a manner seldom equaled by the novelist.

Hardy's readers have always been struck by his pessimism and, though he himself denied that he was a pessimist, there is no doubt that even when he was trying to look at men and women with unbiased eyes, he saw them only as helpless pawns in a losing game. How much the work of Schopenhauer (see p. 1173) may have actually affected Hardy's view of life it is impossible to state. Although Hardy knew Schopenhauer's work well, he protested vigorously against a critic who implied that *The Dynasts* was written to spread the gloomy German's philosophy. But the fatalism and hopelessness that that philosopher had expressed to the generation of Hardy's childhood had, certainly, become a part of the intellectual atmosphere in which the novelist lived and wrote, and must be considered an influence on his work.

Hap

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

(1866)

Rome

AT THE PYRAMID OF CESTIUS NEAR THE GRAVES OF SHELLEY AND KEATS

Who, then, was Cestius,
And what is he to me?—
Amid thick thoughts and memories multitudinous
One thought alone brings he.

I can recall no word
Of anything he did:
For me he is a man who died and was interred
To leave a pyramid

Whose purpose was exprest
Not with its first design,

Nor till, far down in Time, beside it found their rest
Two countrymen of mine.

Cestius in life, maybe,
Slew, breathed out threatening;
I know not. This I know: in death all silently
He does a finer thing,

In beckoning pilgrim feet
With marble finger high
To where, by shadowy wall and history-haunted street,
Those matchless singers lie. . . .

—Say, then, he lived and died
That stones which bear his name
Should mark, through Time, where two immortal Shades abide;
It is an ample fame. (written 1887)

A Christmas Ghost-Story

South of the Line, inland from far Durban,
A moldering soldier lies—your countryman.
Awry and doubled up are his gray bones,
And on the breeze his puzzled phantom moans
Nightly to clear Canopus: "I would know
By whom and when the All-Earth-gladdening Law
Of Peace, brought in by that Man Crucified,
Was ruled to be inept, and set aside?
And what of logic or of truth appears
In tacking 'Anno Domini' to the years?
Near twenty-hundred liveried thus have hied,
But tarries yet the Cause for which He died."
(written Christmas Eve, 1899)

The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.
(written December 1900)

At Casterbridge Fair

1. The Ballad-Singer

Sing, Ballad-Singer, raise a hearty tune;
Make me forget that there was ever a one
I walked with in the meek light of the moon
When the day's work was done.

Rime, Ballad-rimer, start a country song;
Make me forget that she whom I loved well
Swore she would love me dearly, love me long,
Then—what I cannot tell!

Sing, Ballad-singer, from your little book;
Make me forget those heart-breaks, achings, fears;
Make me forget her name, her sweet sweet look—
Make me forget her tears.

2. Former Beauties

These market-dames, mid-aged, with lips thin-drawn,

And tissues sere,
Are they the ones we loved in years agone,
And courted here?

Are these the muslined pink young things to whom
We vowed and swore
In nooks on summer Sundays by the Froom,[1]
Or Budmouth[2] shore?

Do they remember those gay tunes we trod
Clasped on the green;
Aye; trod till moonlight set on the beaten sod
A satin sheen?

They must forget, forget! They cannot know
What once they were,
Or memory would transfigure them, and show
Them always fair.

3. After the Club-dance

Black'on[3] frowns east on Maidon,[4]
And westward to the sea,
But on neither is his frown laden
With scorn, as his frown on me!

At dawn my heart grew heavy,
I could not sip the wine,
I left the jocund bevy
And that young man o' mine.

The roadside elms pass by me—
Why do I sink with shame
When the birds a-perch there eye me?
They, too, have done the same!

4. The Market-girl

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on the causey[5] curb,
All eager to sell her honey and apples and bunches of garden herb;
And if she had offered to give her wares and herself with them too that day,
I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a bargain so choice away.
But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that morning as I passed nigh,
I went and I said, "Poor maidy dear!—and will none of the people buy?"
And so it began; and soon we knew what the end of it all must be,
And I found that though no others had bid, a prize had been won by me.

5. The Inquiry

And are ye one of Hermitage[6]—
Of Hermitage, by Ivel Road,
And do ye know, in Hermitage
A thatch-roofed house where sengreens[7] grow?
And does John Waywood live there still—
He of the name that there abode
When father hurdled[8] on the hill
Some fifteen years ago?

Does he now speak o' Patty Beech,
The Patty Beech he used to—see,
Or ask at all if Patty Beech
Is known or heard of out this way?
—Ask if ever she's living yet,
And where her present home may be,
And how she bears life's fag and fret
After so long a day?

In years agone at Hermitage
This faded face was counted fair,
None fairer; and at Hermitage
We swore to wed when he should thrive.
But never a chance had he or I,
And waiting made his wish outwear,
And Time, that dooms man's love to die,
Preserves a maid's alive.

6. A Wife Waits

Will's at the dance in the Club-room below,
Where the tall liquor-cups foam;
I on the pavement up here by the Bow,[9]
Wait, wait, to steady him home.

Will and his partner are treading a tune,
Loving companions they be;
Willy, before we were married in June,
Said he loved no one but me:

Said he would let his old pleasures all go
Ever to live with his Dear.
Will's at the dance in the Club-room below;
Shivering I wait for him here.

[1] a river in Dorchester.
[2] sea-resort in Dorset.
[3] Blackdown Hill.
[4] a castle.
[5] bridge.
[6] village near Dorchester.
[7] climbing plants (on the houses).
[8] made hurdles (for fences).
[9] main intersection of streets in Dorchester.

7. After the Fair

The singers are gone from the Cornmarket-place[10]
With their broadsheets[11] of rimes,
The street rings no longer in treble and bass
With their skits on the times,
And the Cross,[12] lately thronged, is a dim naked space
That but echoes the stammering chimes.

From Clock-corner steps, as each quarter ding-dongs,
Away the folk roam
By the "Hart"[13] and Grey's Bridge into byways and "drongs,"[14]
Or across the ridged loam;
The younger ones shrilling the lately heard songs,
The old saying, "Would we were home."

The shy-seeming maiden so mute in the fair
Now rattles and talks,
And that one who looked the most swaggering there
Grows sad as she walks,
And she who seemed eaten by cankering care
In statuesque sturdiness stalks.

And midnight clears High Street[15] of all but the ghosts
Of its buried burghees,[16]
From the latest far back to those old Roman hosts
Whose remains one yet sees,
Who loved, laughed, and fought, hailed their friends, drank their toasts
At their meeting-times here, just as these!

(1902)

The Conformers

Yes; we'll wed, my little fay,
And you shall write you mine,
And in a villa chastely gray
We'll house, and sleep, and dine.
But those night-screened, divine,
Stolen trysts of heretofore,
We of choice ecstasies and fine
Shall know no more.

The formal faced cohue[1]
Will then no more upbraid
With smiting smiles and whisperings two
Who have thrown less loves in shade.
We shall no more evade
The searching light of the sun,
Our game of passion will be played,
Our dreaming done.

We shall not go in stealth
To rendezvous unknown,
But friends will ask me of your health,
And you about my own.
When we abide alone,
No leapings each to each,
But syllables in frigid tone
Of household speech.

When down to dust we glide
Men will not say askance,
As now: "How all the country side
Rings with their mad romance!"
But as they graveward glance
Remark: "In them we lose
A worthy pair, who helped advance
Sound parish views."

(1909)

At the Draper's

"I stood at the back of the shop, my dear,
But you did not perceive me.
Well, when they deliver what you were shown
I shall know nothing of it, believe me!"

And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said,
"O, I didn't see you come in there—
Why couldn't you speak?"—"Well, I didn't. I left
That you should not notice I'd been there.

"You were viewing some lovely things. *'Soon re-quired*
For a widow, of latest fashion';
And I knew 'twould upset you to meet the man
Who had to be cold and ashen

"And screwed in a box before they could dress you
'In the last new note in mourning,'
As they defined it. So, not to distress you,
I left you to your adorning."

(1911)

[10] market-place in Dorchester.
[11] (of popular ballads).
[12] to mark the site of a market.
[13] an inn
[14] narrow passage-ways
[15] main street in Dorchester.
[16] citizens
[1] crowd.

Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?

"Ah, are you digging on my grave
My loved one?—planting rue?"
—"No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
'That I should not be true.'"

"Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?"
—"Ah, no: they sit and think, 'What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.'"

"But some one digs upon my grave?
My enemy?—prodding sly?"
—"Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie."

"Then, who is digging on my grave?
Say—since I have not guessed!"
—"O it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog, who still lives near,
And much I hope my movements here
Have not disturbed your rest?"

"Ah, yes! *You* dig upon my grave . . .
Why flashed it not on me
That one true heart was left behind!
What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity!"

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place."

(1914)

In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass:
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by;
War's annals will fade into night
Ere their story die.

(written 1915)

Afterwards

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as a new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
"He was a man who used to notice such things?"

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
"To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries?"

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things?"

(1915)

Rudyard Kipling

(1865-1936)

At the end of the nineteenth century no English writer approached Rudyard Kipling in popularity. Born in Bombay December 30, 1865, he was educated in England. At the age of seventeen, in India as subeditor of the Lahore *Civil and Military Gazette*, he capably filled the role of interpreter of the life of India to other parts of the British Empire and to the world. By his twenty-first year he had published *Departmental Ditties*, which contained one or two poems giving promise of his future success. It was not, however, in poetry that he was first to become famous. In 1888 he published his *Plain Tales from the Hills* and during the next two years wrote six of his best short stories. These were everywhere acclaimed, and Kipling was the sensation of the day. He traveled around the world and published fascinating accounts of his journeys. In 1891 he made secure his position as the leading short story writer in English by the publication of a new collection called *Life's Handicaps*.

Throughout his career Kipling continued the writing of short stories. He also wrote *The Light that Failed* and *Kim*, but was not altogether successful as a novelist. In his *Jungle Book* and *Second Jungle Book* (1894-95) he showed that when he wished he could tell some of the most engaging stories for young people that have been produced in English.

Kipling's success as a writer of prose in all its forms would be enough to establish him as an important literary figure, but to his generation he was above all things a poet. It is fitting that his introduction in this role to the British public should have come through the pages of Henley's *National Observer*. With his dislike of the esthetic and effeminate poems produced by the imitators of the Victorians and the Pre-Raphaelites, Henley gloried in the masculinity of Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads*, and he was joined by millions of readers everywhere. At last there was a poet whom full-blooded men without artistic training could read and understand. *Mandalay* and *Gunga Din* were recited everywhere and soon were being sung by baritones and imitated by young poets.

In many ways Kipling was the first poet of the British Empire, for his view was by no means limited to England. He writes of Australia, Canada, and the far-flung outposts of British imperialism. A whole series of his poems concerns the war in South Africa. In all these there is no hint of doubt about the righteousness of England's ambitions in extending her sway. There is much talk of the white man's burden and not a little of plain British jingoism. In only one poem does he seem to realize the virtue of national humility, and for this reason it comes near to being his most permanent contribution. *Recessional* will probably be admired when all those poems in which, as Arthur Guiterman says, he

> *bellowed double bass*
> *For the glory of the race*

have become mere curiosities illustrating the war fever of a generation we can hardly understand.

Kipling's decline in public favor was almost as rapid and complete as his success. In 1900 his poems were cabled abroad and published on the front pages of our newspapers. In 1910 we were already speaking of him as of the past. Yet Kipling was to live on and continue writing for another quarter-century until his death January 18, 1936.

As we reread his poems, we see some of the reasons for his ultimate failure. Seldom has he not written at twice the necessary length. Not all his zest for life, the strong drum-beat of his measures, can quite overcome the tedium of many of those poems highly praised in their generation. But it is well to remember that their generation did praise them, that they came as a new revelation to a world that had grown a little weary of its ladylike poets and found in Kipling the singer who expressed their thoughts and gave voice to their emotions.

Danny Deever

"What are the bugles blowin' for?" said Files-on-Parade.[1]
"To turn you out, to turn you out," the Color-Sergeant said.
"What makes you look so white, so white?" said Files-on-Parade.
"I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch," the Color-Sergeant said.
For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can hear the Dead March play,
The regiment's in 'ollow square—they're hangin' him today;
They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes away,

[1] a soldier who closes up the ranks.

An' they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What makes the rear-rank breathe so 'ard?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's bitter cold, it's bitter cold," the Color-Sergeant said.
"What makes that front-rank man fall down?" said Files-on-Parade.
"A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun," the Color-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, they are marchin' of 'im round,
They 'ave 'alted Danny Deever by 'is coffin on the ground;
An' 'e'll swing in 'arf a minute for a sneakin' shootin' hound—
O they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!

"'Is cot was right-'and cot to mine," said Files-on-Parade.
"'E's sleepin' out an' far tonight," the Color-Sergeant said.
"I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times," said Files-on-Parade.
"'E's drinkin' bitter beer alone," the Color-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, you must mark 'im to 'is place,
For 'e shot a comrade sleepin'—you must look 'im in the face;
Nine 'undred of 'is county an' the Regiment's disgrace,
While they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What's that so black agin the sun?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's Danny fightin' 'ard for life," the Color-Sergeant said.
"What's that that whimpers over'ead?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's Danny's soul that's passin' now," the Color-Sergeant said.
For they're done with Danny Deever, you can 'ear the quickstep[2] play,
The regiment's in column, an' they're marchin' us away;
Ho! the young recruits are shakin', an' they'll want their beer today,
After hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

(1890)

[2] lively tune (after the funeral march is played).

Tommy

I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer,
The publican[1] 'e up an' sez, "We serve no red-coats here."
The girls be'ind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die,
I outs into the street again an' to myself sez I:
O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, go away";
But it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins," when the band begins to play,
The band begins to play, my boys, the band begins to play—
O it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins," when the band begins to play.

I went into a theater as sober as could be,
They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'adn't none for me;
They sent me to the gallery or round the music-'alls,
But when it comes to fightin', Lord! they'll shove me in the stalls![2]
For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, wait outside";
But it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide—
The troopship's on the tide, my boys, the troopship's on the tide,
O it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide.

Yes, makin' mock o' uniforms that guard you while you sleep
Is cheaper than them uniforms, an' they're starvation cheap;
An' hustlin' drunken soldiers when they're goin' large a bit
Is five times better business than paradin' in full kit.
Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?"
But it's "Thin red line of 'eroes"[3] when the drums begin to roll—
The drums begin to roll, my boys, the drums begin to roll,
O it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll.

[1] proprietor of the pub.
[2] seats in the orchestra.
[3] (according to the war correspondents).

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,
But single men in barricks, most remarkable like you;
An' if sometimes our conduck isn't all your fancy paints,
Why, single men in barricks don't grow into plaster saints;
While it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, fall be'ind,"
But it's "Please to walk in front, sir," when there's trouble in the wind—
There's trouble in the wind, my boys, there's trouble in the wind,
O it's "Please to walk in front, sir," when there's trouble in the wind.

You talk o' better food for us, an' schools, an' fires, an' all:
We'll wait for extry rations if you treat us rational.
Don't mess about the cook-room slops,[4] but prove it to our face
The Widow's[5] Uniform is not the soldierman's disgrace.
For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Chuck him out, the brute!"
But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot;
An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;
An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool—you bet that Tommy sees!

(1890)

Fuzzy Wuzzy

(Sudan Expeditionary Force)

We've fought with many men acrost the seas,
An' some of 'em was brave an' some was not:
The Paythan an' the Zulu an' Burmese;
But the Fuzzy was the finest o' the lot.
We never got a ha'porth's[1] change of 'im:
'E squatted in the scrub an' 'ocked our 'orses,[2]
'E cut our sentries up at Sua*kim*,[3]
An' 'e played the cat an' banjo with our forces.
So 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Sudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;
We gives you your certificate, an' if you want it signed,
We'll come an' 'ave a romp with you whenever you're inclined.

We took our chanst among the Kyber 'ills,[4]
The Boers[5] knocked us silly at a mile,
The Burman give us Irriwaddy[6] chills,
An' a Zulu *impi*[7] dished us up in style:
But all we ever got from such as they
Was pop to what the Fuzzy made us swaller;
We 'eld our bloomin' own, the papers say,
But man for man the Fuzzy knocked us 'oller.
Then 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' the missis and the kid;
Our orders was to break you, an' of course we went an' did.
We sloshed you with Martinis,[8] an' it wasn't 'ardly fair;
But for all the odds agin' you, Fuzzy-Wuz, you broke the square.[9]

'E 'asn't got no papers of 'is own,
'E 'asn't got no medals nor rewards,
So *we* must certify the skill 'e's shown
In usin' of 'is long two-'anded swords:
When 'e's 'oppin' in an' out among the bush
With 'is coffin-'eaded shield an' shovel-spear,
An 'appy day with Fuzzy on the rush
Will last an 'ealthy Tommy for a year.
So 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' your friends which are no more,
If we 'adn't lost some messmates, we would 'elp you to deplore.
But give an' take's the gospel, an' we'll call the bargain fair,
For if you 'ave lost more than us, you crumpled up the square!

'E rushes at the smoke when we let drive,
An', before we know, 'e 's 'ackin' at our 'ead;
'E's all 'ot sand an' ginger when alive,
An' 'e 's generally shammin' when 'e 's dead.
'E's a daisy, 'e 's a ducky, 'e 's a lamb!
'E's a injia-rubber idiot on the spree,
'E's the on'y thing that doesn't give a damn

[4] cheap food.
[1] half-penny's worth.
[2] disabled our horses by cutting their tendons.
[3] seaport on the Red Sea.
[5] Queen Victoria.
[4] the scene of bitter fighting, situated between India and Afghanistan.
[5] the Dutch in South Africa.
[6] river in Burma, in a region malaria-infested
[7] army.
[8] rifles, named after their inventor.
[9] a fighting formation

For a Regiment o' British Infantree!
So 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Sudan;
You're a poor benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;
An' 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air—
You big black boundin' beggar—for you broke a British square!

(1890)

Gunga Din

You may talk o' gin and beer
When you're quartered safe out 'ere,[1]
An' you're sent to penny-fights an' Aldershot it;[2]
But when it comes to slaughter
You will do your work on water,
An' you'll lick the bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it.
Now in Injia's sunny clime,
Where I used to spend my time
A-servin' of 'Er Majesty the Queen,[3]
Of all them black-faced crew
The finest man I knew
Was our regimental bhisti,[4] Gunga Din.
He was "Din! Din! Din!
"You limpin' lump o' brick-dust, Gunga Din!
"Hi! *Slippy hitherao!*[5]
"Water, get it! *Panee lao!*[6]
"You squidgy-nosed old idol, Gunga Din!"

The uniform 'e wore
Was nothin' much before,
An' rather less than 'arf o' that be'ind,
For a piece o' twisty rag
An' a goatskin water-bag
Was all the field-equipment 'e could find.
When the sweatin' troop-train lay
In a sidin' through the day,
Where the 'eat would make your bloomin' eyebrows crawl,
We shouted "Harry By!"[7]
Till our throats were bricky-dry,
Then we wopped[8] 'im 'cause 'e couldn't serve us all.

It was "Din! Din! Din!
"You 'eathen, where the mischief 'ave you been?
"You put some *juldee*[9] in it
"Or I'll *marrow*[10] you this minute
"If you don't fill up my helmet, Gunga Din!"

'E would dot an' carry one
Till the longest day was done;
An' 'e didn't seem to know the use o' fear.
If we charged or broke or cut,
You could bet your bloomin' nut,
'E'd be waitin' fifty paces right flank rear.
With 'is mussick[11] on 'is back,
'E would skip with our attack,
An' watch us till the bugles made "Retire,"
An' for all 'is dirty 'ide
'E was white, clear white, inside
When 'e went to tend the wounded under fire!
It was "Din! Din! Din!"
With the bullets kickin' dust-spots on the green.
When the cartridges ran out,
You could 'ear the front-ranks shout,
"Hi! ammunition-mules an' Gunga Din!"

I sha'n't forgit the night
When I dropped be'ind the fight
With a bullet where my belt-plate should 'a' been.
I was chokin' mad with thirst,
An' the man that spied me first
Was our good old grinnin', gruntin' Gunga Din.
'E lifted up my 'ead,
An' 'e plugged me where I bled,
An' 'e guv me 'arf-a-pint o' water green.
It was crawlin' and it stunk,
But of all the drinks I've drunk,
I'm gratefullest to one from Gunga Din.
It was "Din! Din! Din!
"'Ere's a beggar with a bullet through 'is spleen;
"'E's chawin' up the ground,
"An' 'e's kickin' all around:
"For Gawd's sake, git the water, Gunga Din!"

'E carried me away
To where a dooli[12] lay,
An' a bullet come an' drilled the beggar clean.
'E put me safe inside,
An' just before 'e died,
"I 'ope you liked your drink," sez Gunga Din.

[1] in India.
[2] live in Aldershot (in Hampshire).
[3] Victoria.
[4] water-carrier.
[5] "slip here" (in dialect).
[6] bring the water quickly.
[7] O brother!
[8] hit.
[9] speed.
[10] pummel.
[11] water-bag.
[12] stretcher.

So I'll meet 'im later on
In the place where 'e is gone—
Where it's always double drill and no canteen.
'E'll be squattin' on the coals
Givin' drink to poor damned souls,
An' I'll get a swig in hell from Gunga Din!
Yes, Din! Din! Din!
You Lazarushian-leather[13] Gunga Din!
Though I've belted you an' flayed you,
By the livin' God that made you,
You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!

(1890)

Mandalay

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-settin', an' I know she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm-trees, an' the temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"
Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

'Er petticut was yeller an' 'er little cap was green,
An' 'er name was Supi-yaw-lat[1]—jes' the same as Theebaw's Queen;
An' I seed her fust a-smokin' of a whackin' white cheroot,
An' a-wastin' Christian kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot:
Bloomin' idol made o' mud—
Wot they called the Great Gawd Budd—
Plucky lot she cared for idols when I kissed 'er where she stud!
On the road to Mandalay—

When the mist was on the rice-fields an' the sun was droppin' slow,
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing *"Kulla-lo-lo!"*
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' her cheek agin my cheek
We useter watch the steamers an' the *hathis*[2] pilin' teak.[3]
Elephints a-pilin' teak
In the sludgy, squdgy creek,
Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you was 'arf afraid to speak!
On the road to Mandalay—

But that's all shove be'ind me—long ago an' fur away,
An' there ain't no 'buses runnin' from the Benk to Mandalay;
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the tenyear sodger tells:
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', why, you won't 'eed nothin' else."
No! you won't 'eed nothin' else
But them spicy garlic smells
An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees an' the tinkly temple bells!
On the road to Mandalay—

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-stones,
An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the fever in my bones;
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea to the Strand,
An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do they understand?
Beefy face an' grubby 'and—
Law! wot *do* they understand?
I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land!
On the road to Mandalay—

Ship me somewheres east of Suez where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments, an' a man can raise a thirst;
For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's there that I would be—
By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' lazy at the sea—
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay,
With our sick beneath the awnings when we went to Mandalay!
Oh, the road to Mandalay,

[13] dark-skinned (slang).
[1] queen of Theebaw, last king of Burma (1876-1885), noted for her cruelty
[2] elephants
[3] teak-wood

Where the flying-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

(1890)

Recessional

"Reverence is the master-key of knowledge."

God of our fathers, known of old—
Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—
The captains and the kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away—
On dune and headland sinks the fire—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—
Such boasting as the Gentiles use
Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!
Amen.

(1897)

The White Man's Burden

This poem was published shortly after the close of the Spanish-American War, when American forces in the Philippines were still struggling to suppress the insurrection led by Emilio Aguinaldo. Kipling is here giving his American cousins a gratuitous lesson in empire-building. More than any other poem, *The White Man's Burden* has been cited in the attack on Kipling's imperialism.

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden—
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain,
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hope to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden—
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper—
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go make them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden—
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard—
The cry of hosts ye humor
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—
"Why brought ye us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden—
  Ye dare not stoop to less—
Nor call too loud on Freedom
  To cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
  By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
  Shall weigh your Gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  Have done with childish days—
The lightly proffered laurel,
  The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
  Through all the thankless years,
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
  The judgment of your peers!

(1899)

Alfred Edward Housman

(1859-1936)

Nothing would perhaps have more surprised the reader of 1896, if he could have looked forward forty years, than the fact that the most important poetic production of that year was not the work of Rudyard Kipling but that of a quiet professor of Latin at University College, London. *A Shropshire Lad* brought no attention to the author, who did not even take the trouble to secure copyright on his work. But year by year this group of short lyrics has risen in critical esteem while the vast majority of poems written at the same time have long been forgotten.

A. E. Housman was born March 26, 1859. After taking his Master's degree at Oxford, he held a position in the British Patent Office until 1892. After this he became Professor of Latin, first at University College, London, and later (after 1911) at Cambridge. In the classics he was an outstanding scholar. In all its outward aspects, his life was almost altogether uneventful. He died May 2, 1936.

After the appearance of *A Shropshire Lad* in 1896 he issued no poetry for twenty-six years. In 1922 appeared his *Last Poems*, of which he said: "I publish these poems, few though they are, because it is not likely that I shall ever be impelled to write much more. I can no longer expect to be revisited by the continuous excitement under which in the early months of 1895 I wrote the greater part of my other book, nor indeed could I well sustain it if it came." There is remarkable similarity between the poems of the later collection and those of its predecessor. After his death his brother issued a final volume, *More Poems* (1936), though it is generally agreed that the standard is not so high as in either of the previous ones. Perhaps many of these poems represent attempts which Housman's meticulous taste had discarded.

As a writer of pure lyrics, Housman has seldom been surpassed. His understanding of the capacities of the English language to produce desired sound effects has made him able to write with what seems the utmost ease, so that his readers are deceived by the simplicity of his verse. But under their surface beauty lurks a profound pessimism. Life is short. Even the youth of twenty remembers that he has only fifty springs left. It is useless to try to deceive oneself, whether with fair words or with ale. Though one may hope for good, he must prepare for ill. Golden boys and rose-lipped girls have all gone to death. The beauty of the idle hill of summer is disturbed by the tramp of soldiers marching off to die—"lovely lads, and dead, and rotten." In such a world nothing goes quicker than love. The great comforter of all men is death.

And yet this extreme pessimism is not the pessimism of defeat. Housman looks the world in the face and reports what he sees. Knowing that life is struggle, he urges us to enter it with knowledge of all the odds. If we inoculate ourselves with all the poisons of Mithridates, we shall be able like him to survive all the poison that appears in our cup.

From *A Shropshire Lad*

Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

Reveille

Wake: the silver dusk returning
  Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
  Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
  Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
  Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
  Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
  "Who'll beyond the hills away?"

Towns and countries woo together,
  Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
  Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
  Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
  Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
  Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: when the journey's over
  There'll be time enough to sleep.

Oh, See How Thick the Goldcup Flowers

Oh, see how thick the goldcup flowers
  Are lying in field and lane,
With dandelions to tell the hours
  That never are told again.
Oh, may I squire you round the meads
  And pick you posies gay?
—'T will do no harm to take my arm.
  'You may, young man, you may.'

Ah, spring was sent for lass and lad,
  'T is now the blood runs gold,
And man and maid had best be glad
  Before the world is old.
What flowers to-day may flower to-morrow,
  But never as good as new.
—Suppose I wound my right arm round—
  ' 'T is true, young man, 't is true.'

Some lads there are, 't is shame to say,
  That only court to thieve,
And once they bear the bloom away
  'T is little enough they leave.
Then keep your heart for men like me
  And safe from trustless chaps.
My love is true for all and you.
  'Perhaps, young men, perhaps.'

Oh, look in my eyes then, can you doubt?
  —Why, 't is a mile from town.
How green the grass is all about!
  We might as well sit down.
—Ah, life, what is it but a flower?
  Why must true lovers sigh?
Be kind, have pity, my own, my pretty,—
  'Good-by, young man, good-by.'

Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree

"Farewell to barn and stack and tree,
Farewell to Severn shore.
Terence, look your last at me,
For I come home no more.

"The sun burns on the half-mown hill,
By now the blood is dried;
And Maurice amongst the hay lies still
And my knife is in his side.

"My mother thinks us long away;
'Tis time the field were mown.
She had two sons at rising day,
Tonight she'll be alone.

"And here's a bloody hand to shake,
And, oh, man, here's good-by;
We'll sweat no more on scythe and rake,
My bloody hands and I.

"I wish you strength to bring you pride,
And a love to keep you clean,
And I wish you luck, come Lammastide,
At racing on the green.

"Long for me the rick will wait,
And long will wait the fold,
And long will stand the empty plate,
And dinner will be cold."

When I Was One-and-Twenty

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a-plenty
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

To an Athlete Dying Young

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home.
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears.

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honors out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade.
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

Bredon Hill

In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
My love and I would lie,
And see the colored counties,[1]

[1] From Bredon Hill may be seen the varied landscape of five counties—Worcester, Gloucester, Hereford, Warwick, and Oxford.

And hear the larks so high
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her
In valleys miles away:
"Come all to church, good people;
Good people, come and pray."
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer
Among the springing thyme,
"Oh, peal upon our wedding,
And we will hear the chime,
And come to church in time."

But when the snows at Christmas
On Bredon top were strown,
My love rose up so early
And stole out unbeknown
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,
Groom there was none to see,
The mourners followed after,
And so to church went she,
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeples hum.
"Come all to church, good people,"—
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.

White in the Moon

White in the moon the long road lies,
The moon stands blank above;
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

Still hangs the hedge without a gust.
Still, still the shadows stay:
My feet upon the moonlight dust
Pursue the ceaseless way.

The world is round, so travellers tell,
And straight though reach the track,
Trudge on, trudge on, 'twill all be well,
The way will guide one back.

But ere the circle homeward hies
Far, far it must remove:
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

Far in a Western Brookland

Far in a western brookland
That bred me long ago
The poplars stand and tremble
By pools I used to know.

There, in the windless night-time
The wanderer, marvelling why,
Halts on the bridge to hearken
How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: long since forgotten
In fields where I was known,
Here I lie down in London
And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,
The wanderer halts and hears
My soul that lingers sighing
About the glimmering weirs.

With Rue My Heart Is Laden

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

From *Last Poems*

Could Man Be Drunk Forever

Could man be drunk forever
With liquor, love, or fights,
Lief should I rouse at morning
And lief lie down of nights.

But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts,
And if they think, they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts.

With jail and gallows and hell-fire.
And how am I to face the odds
Of man's bedevilment and God's?
I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.
They will be master, right or wrong;
Though both are foolish, both are strong.
And since, my soul, we cannot fly
To Saturn nor to Mercury,
Keep we must, if keep we can,
These foreign laws of God and man.

The Laws of God, the Laws of Man

The laws of God, the laws of man,
He may keep that will and can;
Not I: let God and man decree
Laws for themselves and not for me;
And if my ways are not as theirs
Let them mind their own affairs.
Their deeds I judge and much condemn,
Yet when did I make laws for them?
Please yourselves, say I, and they
Need only look the other way.
But no, they will not; they must still
Wrest their neighbour to their will,
And make me dance as they desire

When First My Way to Fair I Took

When first my way to fair I took
Few pence in purse had I,
And long I used to stand and look
At things I could not buy.

Now times are altered: if I care
To buy a thing, I can;
The pence are here and here's the fair
But where's the lost young man?

—To think that two and two are four
And neither five nor three
The heart of man has long been sore
And long 'tis like to be.

From *More Poems*

Dedication

They say my verse is sad: no wonder;
Its narrow measure spans
Tears of eternity, and sorrow,
Not mine, but man's.

This is for all ill-treated fellows
Unborn and unbegot,
For them to read when they're in trouble
And I am not.

I to My Perils

I to my perils
Of cheat and charmer
Came clad in armour
By stars benign.
Hope lies to mortals
And most believe her,
But man's deceiver
Was never mine.
The thoughts of others
Were light and fleeting,

Of lover's meeting
Or luck or fame.
Mine were of trouble,
And mine were steady,
So I was ready
When trouble came.

To Stand Up Straight and Tread the Turning Mill

To stand up straight and tread the turning mill,
To lie flat and know nothing and be still,
Are the two trades of man; and which is worse
I know not, but I know that both are ill.

Stars, I Have Seen Them Fall

Stars, I have seen them fall,
But when they drop and die
No star is lost at all
From all the star-sown sky.
The toil of all that be
Helps not the primal fault;
It rains into the sea,
And still the sea is salt.

With Seed the Sowers Scatter

With seed the sowers scatter
The furrows as they go;
Poor lads, 'tis little matter
How many sorts they sow,
For only one will grow.

The charlock on the fallow
Will take the traveller's eyes,
And gild the ploughland sallow
With flowers before it dies,
But twice 'twill not arise.

The stinging nettle only
Will still be found to stand:
The numberless, the lonely,
The thronger of the land,
The leaf that hurts the hand.

It thrives, come sun, come showers,
Blow east, blow west, it springs;
It peoples towns, and towers
About the courts of Kings,
And touch it and it stings.

From *My Brother, A. E. Housman*

Housman's lighter side is revealed in a series of verses appended to the biography published by his brother Laurence in 1937.

The Stars Have Not Dealt Me

The stars have not dealt me the worst they could do:
My pleasures are plenty, my troubles are two.
But oh, my two troubles they reave me of rest,
The brains in my head and the heart in my breast.

O grant me the ease that is granted so free,
The birthright of multitudes, give it to me,
That relish their victuals and rest on their bed
With flint in the bosom and guts in the head.

Infant Innocence

This quatrain, originally "accompanied by a picture of a large fat bear, a nursemaid fleeing in the distance, and an empty perambulator," is representative of the fugitive nonsense verses which reveal that Housman was not a chronic misanthrope.

Reader, behold! this monster wild
Has gobbled up the infant child.
The infant child is not aware
It has been eaten by the bear.

Edward Lear
(1812-1888)

Edward Lear's first book, published when he was only twenty, was entitled *The Family of the Psittacidae* (1832). This was not a book of nonsense but a serious zoological treatise illustrated by the author. For, like Lewis Carroll, Lear had a serious vocation. As a specialist in drawing birds and animals with strict scientific accuracy—a kind of English Audubon—as an art teacher in Rome, and as a wandering landscape painter in southern Europe, Palestine, and India, Lear devoted his life to art. He illustrated the poems of his friend Tennyson, and in 1845, on a trip to England interrupting his voluntary exile abroad, he even tried to teach Queen Victoria to draw.

Today Lear the serious artist is no better known than Charles Lutwidge Dodgson the mathematician. Both are remembered instead as the authors of immortal books for children. *A Book of Nonsense* (1846), originally written to amuse the grandchildren of the Earl of Derby, was followed years later by four other nonsense books (1871-77); and in the popular imagination the distinguished artist gave way to the "old man with a beard" who made "little folks merry" with whimsical stories and verses and grotesque, amorphous sketches.

Whimsy is a tender annual, and in America at least, Lear has given way in the nursery to A. A. Milne (*Winnie-the-Pooh*) in the 'twenties and to the ubiquitous comic books in the 'forties. But Lear is still remembered for a handful of beautiful nonsense lyrics. The Owl and the Pussy Cat, the Jumblies, the Pobble Who Has No Toes, and the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò are all denizens of the land of pure nonsense, where nothing is impossible. The gates of this land are forever barred to the student who asks hopefully for a scientific definition of a "pobble" and the professor who earnestly annotates a "runcible spoon" as "a kind of fork with three broad prongs or tines, one having a sharp edge." The adjective "runcible" is everywhere in Lear because he liked the sound and shape and color of the word. His love for words helped to make him a genuine lyric poet who could gild the courtship of an owl and a pussy cat with infectious gaiety and bring to the incredible saga of the Jumblies a note of authentic nostalgia. His many nonsense limericks are not so well known today as their less whimsical twentieth-century descendants. But it is doubtful whether the limerick would have survived as one of the universal types of folk literature if it had not been for the hundreds of innocuous originals written and illustrated by the old man with a beard.

The Jumblies

They went to sea in a sieve, they did;
  In a sieve they went to sea;
In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
  In a sieve they went to sea.
And when the sieve turned round and round,
And every one cried "You'll all be drowned!"
They called aloud, "Our sieve ain't big:
But we don't care a button; we don't care a fig:
  In a sieve we'll go to sea!"
    Far and few, far and few,
      Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
    Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
      And they went to sea in sieve.

They sailed away in a sieve, they did,
  In a sieve they sailed so fast,
With only a beautiful pea-green veil
Tied with a ribbon, by way of a sail,
  To a small tobacco-pipe mast.
And every one said who saw them go,
"Oh! won't they be soon upset, you know:
For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long;
And happen what may, it's extremely wrong
  In a sieve to sail so fast."

The water it soon came in, it did;
  The water it soon came in:
So, to keep them dry, they wrapped their feet
In a pinky paper all folded neat:
  And they fastened it down with a pin.
And they passed the night in a crockery-jar;
And each of them said, "How wise we are!
Though the sky be dark, and the voyage be long,
Yet we never can think we were rash or wrong,
  While around in our sieve we spin."

And all night long they sailed away;
  And, when the sun went down,
They whistled and warbled a moony song
To the echoing sound of a coppery gong,

In the shade of the mountains brown,
"O Timballoo! how happy we are
When we live in a sieve and a crockery-jar!
And all night long, in the moonlight pale,
We sail away with a pea-green sail
In the shade of the mountains brown."

They sailed to the Western Sea, they did,—
To a land all covered with trees:
And they bought an awl, and a useful cart,
And a pound of rice, and a cranberry-tart,
And a hive of silvery bees;
And they bought a pig, and some green jackdaws,
And a lovely monkey with lollipop paws,
And forty bottles of ring-bo-ree,
And no end of Stilton cheese:

And in twenty years they all came back,—
In twenty years or more;
And every one said, "How tall they've grown!
For they've been to the Lakes and the Torrible Zone,
And the hills of the Chankly Bore."
And they drank their health, and gave them a feast
Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;
And every one said, "If we only live,
We, too, will go to sea in a sieve,
To the hills of the Chankly Bore."
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

(1871)

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat;
They took some honey, and plenty of money
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl,
How charmingly sweet you sing!
Oh! let us be married; too long we have tarried;
But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the bong-tree grows;
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood,
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

(1871)

Charles Stuart Calverley

(1831-1884)

The blend of scholarship, elegance, and airy wit which characterizes Calverley's verses was an intrinsic part of his personality. In 1852 he was sent down from Oxford for boyish bumptiousness, and later at Cambridge, he was a social success for his charm, repartee, and indolence. But he was also a classical scholar of unusual attainments. His first volume, *Verses and Translations* (1862), was followed by *Translations into English and Latin* (1866), including renderings from Homer, Virgil, and Horace into English, and from Milton, Herbert, Pope, and Tennyson into Latin. In 1869 appeared his graceful translation of Theocritus and in 1872 a collection of light verse entitled *Fly Leaves*. From this last volume comes his famous parody of Pre-Raphaelite ballads (see *Sister Helen*, p. 594).

In this poem, with its smoothly flowing nonsense narrative, Calverley displays his affinity with Lear and Carroll. But he did not write nonsense verses for children; his special mixture of serious irony and pure playfulness has an intellectual appeal to mature adults. As a virtuoso in versification, a craftsman who could pour ingenious double rhymes into intricate metrical moulds without leaving any sign of a struggle, he had much in common with W. S. Gilbert. As a parodist, he had no peers in an age of gifted mimics. Whether he was mimicking the ballads of Rossetti and Morris,

taking off the discursiveness of Byron's *Don Juan* in a grateful tribute to Beer, aping Longfellow in a mock-solemn *Ode to Tobacco,* or distilling the essense of Browning's *Ring and the Book* into the cryptic absurdities of *The Cock and the Bull*, Calverley was a master at catching not only the surface manner and meter of the original but the subtler nuances of its mood. In his hands light verse was a fine art, not merely a pleasant plaything to fill the empty spaces in the magazines.

The Auld Wife Sat at Her Ivied Door

PART 1

The auld wife sat at her ivied door,
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
A thing she had frequently done before;
And her spectacles lay on her aproned knees.

The piper he piped on the hilltop high,
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
Till the cow said, "I die," and the goose asked "Why?"
And the dog said nothing, but searched for fleas.

The farmer he strode through the square farmyard;
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
His last brew of ale was a trifle hard,
The connection of which with the plot one sees.

The farmer's daughter hath frank blue eyes;
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
She hears the rooks caw in the windy skies,
As she sits at her lattice and shells her peas.

The farmer's daughter hath ripe red lips;
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
If you try to approach her away she skips
Over tables and chairs with apparent ease.

The farmer's daughter hath soft brown hair;
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
And I met with a ballad, I can't say where,
Which wholly consisted of lines like these.

PART 2

She sat with her hands 'neath her dimpled cheeks,
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
And spake not a word. While a lady speaks
There is hope, but she didn't even sneeze.

She sat with her hands 'neath her crimson cheeks;
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
She gave up mending her father's breeks,[1]
And let the cat roll in her best chemise.

She sat with her hands 'neath her burning cheeks,
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
And gazed at the piper for thirteen weeks;
Then she followed him out o'er the misty leas.

Her sheep followed her, as their tails did them,
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)
And this song is considered a perfect gem;
And as to the meaning, it's what you please.

(1872)

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson ("Lewis Carroll")

(1832-1898)

Charles L. Dodgson, lecturer on mathematics at Oxford and author of texts in that subject, makes an entirely uninteresting study for the biographer. As Alexander Woollcott has said of him, you must picture him "as living precisely in his quarters in the Tom Quad at Christ Church, all his life neatly pigeonholed, all the letters he wrote or received in thirty-seven years elaborately summarized or catalogued, so that by the time he died there were more than 98,000 cross references in the files of his correspondence. He was the kind of man who kept a diagram showing where you sat when you dined with him and what you ate, lest he serve you the same dish when you came again. . . . He was the kind of man who gravely stipulated that no illustrations for a book of his be drawn on Sunday. . . . Above all he was the kind of man who, in publishing his *Pillow Problems* . . . recommended these exercises in mental arithmetic not only as an agreeable diversion but, more especially, as a way of driving out the skeptical thoughts, the blasphemous thoughts, and 'the unholy thoughts, which torture with their hateful presence the fancy that would fain be pure.' "

[1] breeches.

But there was another personality hidden within the bosom of Charles Dodgson which adults, of whom he was shy, never saw, and to that other self he gave the name of "Lewis Carroll." Lewis Carroll loved children, struck up acquaintance with them in trains and at the seashore, and kept a supply of puzzles in his pockets for their delight. To please his young friend Alice Liddell, he made a story with her as the heroine. The result, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), won him fame all over the world. In the story which he wrote as a sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872), she figured again. His other masterpieces of fun are *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) and *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889-93).

It is now an old question as to whether children are able to enjoy these inimitable mixtures of humor, parody, and whimsicality as well as adults. The truth, at any rate, is that Lewis Carroll is beloved by children of all ages, and that "older children" are most suited to appreciate his immortal nonsense. Nonsense, indeed, would seem to be an almost exclusive property of the English, and good minds among other peoples have often been unable to tolerate it. (For example, the heaviness of hand of the French and German translators of *Alice* may be taken in evidence.) It can be found in Sterne, Smollett, and Dickens, for instance, among the novelists. And the Victorians were particularly productive in this field, as witness the work of Thomas Hood (see p. 331), Edward Lear, Charles Stuart Calverley, and W. S. Gilbert (see p. 861).

From *Alice in Wonderland*

The Crocodile

This poem mocks the pious sentimentality of Isaac Watts' "Against Idleness" from the famous hymn-maker's *Divine Songs of Children* (1715). The original begins:

> How doth the little busy bee
> Improve each shining hour,
> And gather honey all the day
> From every opening flower!

and goes on to advise the little ones to take refuge from Satan in books, work, or healthful play.

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every shining scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in
With gently smiling jaws.

(1865)

The Mock Turtle's Song
(A Quadrille)

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail,
"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail.
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle—will you come and join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?

"You can really have no notion how delightful it will be
When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea!"
But the snail replied, "Too far, too far!" and gave a look askance—
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.

"What matters it how far we go?" his scaly friend replied,
"There is another shore, you know, upon the other side.
The further off from England the nearer is to France;
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance.
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?"

(1865)

From *Through the Looking-Glass*

Jabberwocky

Jabberwocky is probably the best known piece of lyric nonsense in the language. Readers who, like Alice, wish to know the exact meaning of "brillig" and of the original portmanteau word "slithy" are referred to Humpty-Dumpty's official gloss in the sixth chapter of *Through the Looking-Glass*. We have the author's authority that "the 'i' in 'slithy' is long, as in 'writhe'; and 'toves' is pronounced so as to rhyme with 'groves.' Again the first 'o' in 'borogoves' is pronounced like the 'o' in 'borrow.' I have heard people try to give it the sound of the 'o' in 'worry.' Such is Human Perversity." The poem has been parodied *ad nauseam* and translated into German, French, Greek, and Latin. F. L. Warrin's French translation, "Le Jaseroque" (*New Yorker*, January 10, 1931), is one of many efforts to out-carol Carroll.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
  And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
  The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
  The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
  Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
  And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
  The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
  And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
  The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
  He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
  Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
  He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
  And the mome raths outgrabe.

(1872)

The White Knight's Song

This is a delightful parody on Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence* (see p. 167).

HADDOCKS' EYES *or* THE AGED AGED MAN *or* WAYS AND MEANS *or* A-SITTING ON A GATE

I'll tell thee everything I can;
  There's little to relate.
I saw an aged, aged man,
  A-sitting on a gate.
"Who are you, aged man?" I said.
  "And how is it you live?"
And his answer trickled through my head
  Like water through a sieve.

He said "I look for butterflies
  That sleep among the wheat;
I make them into mutton-pies,
  And sell them in the street.
I sell them unto men," he said,
  "Who sail on stormy seas;
And that's the way I get my bread—
  A trifle, if you please."

But I was thinking of a plan
  To dye one's whiskers green,
And always use so large a fan
  That they could not be seen.
So, having no reply to give
  To what the old man said,
I cried, "Come, tell me how you live!"
  And thumped him on the head.

His accents mild took up the tale;
  He said, "I go my ways,
And when I find a mountain-rill,
  I set it in a blaze;
And thence they make a stuff they call
  Rowland's Macassar Oil—

Yet twopence-halfpenny is all
They give me for my toil."

But I was thinking of a way
To feed oneself on batter,
And so go on from day to day
Getting a little fatter.
I shook him well from side to side,
Until his face was blue;
"Come, tell me how you live," I cried
"And what it is you do!"

He said, "I hunt for haddocks' eyes
Among the heather bright,
And work them into waistcoat-buttons
In the silent night.
And these I do not sell for gold
Or coin of silvery shine,
But for a copper halfpenny,
And that will purchase nine.

"I sometimes dig for buttered rolls,
Or set limed twigs for crabs;
I sometimes search the grassy knolls
For wheels of hansom-cabs.
And that's the way" (he gave a wink)
"By which I get my wealth—
And very gladly will I drink
Your Honor's noble health."

I heard him then, for I had just
Completed my design
To keep the Menai[1] bridge from rust
By boiling it in wine.
I thanked him much for telling me
The way he got his wealth,
But chiefly for his wish that he
Might drink my noble health.

And now, if e'er by chance I put
My fingers into glue,
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
A very heavy weight,
I weep, for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—
That summer evening long ago
A-sitting on a gate.

(1872)

From *Sylvie and Bruno*

The Gardener's Song

These stanzas are among the finest examples of "pure nonsense" in English.

He thought he saw an Elephant
That practised on a fife;
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.
"At length I realise," he said,
"The bitterness of life!"

He thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimney-piece;
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's Husband's Niece.
"Unless you leave this house," he said,
"I'll send for the police!"

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek;
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
"The one thing I regret," he said,
"Is that it cannot speak!"

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
Descending from the 'bus;
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus.
"If this should stay to dine," he said,
"There won't be much for us!"

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered round the lamp;
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny Postage-Stamp.
"You'd best be getting home," he said,
"The nights are very damp!"

(1889)

[1] the bridge connecting Wales and the island of Anglesea. It was built between 1819 and 1826 and was one of the longest bridges of that time.

Sir William Schwenk Gilbert

(1836-1911)

The comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan need no introduction to the English-speaking world. W. S. Gilbert, author of the libretti for these beloved operas, had a varied career. Born in London, he attended London University, was an officer in the Gordon Highlanders, then a clerk in a government office, and later practiced law. These experiences furnished ample material for his delightful satires on all these occupations. His gift for nonsense was first exhibited in his *Bab Ballads* of 1869 and 1873, for which he made his own characteristically fantastic drawings. In the meantime, he became interested in the stage, and after trying his hand at dramatic criticism, took to writing for the theatre himself. His fruitful collaboration with the composer Arthur Sullivan began with a relative failure, *Thespis,* in 1871. This was succeeded by *Trial by Jury* (1875), *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), *Patience* (1881), *Iolanthe* (1882), *The Mikado* (1885), *Ruddigore* (1887), *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1888), and *The Gondoliers* (1889)—a treasury of humor, satire and nonsense which continues to delight thousands. Lovers of these infectious light operas have an excellent time arguing on the respective merits of each work. But there is not one of them that is not full of buoyant writing. Many of the plots are elaborations of items in Gilbert's earlier volumes of verse; as he himself put it, he was forced to admit "his indebtedness to the author of the *Bab Ballads*, from whom he had unblushingly cribbed."

Gilbert possessed a gift for rhyme and metrical device that many a serious poet might have envied. No one has succeeded in making rhyme so much of a treat as he has at his best—and he is often at his best. Thoroughly middle class in his tastes, he lashed out with zest at the nobility and its House of Lords, politicians in general, judges, lawyers, doctors, snobs, artistic pretenders, sentimentalists of various shades, and the claptrap of Italian opera. In many of his hits, he managed to strike at the kind of folly which has long been with us and will probably long continue so to be.

From *Bab Ballads*

Etiquette

The *Ballyshannon* foundered off the coast of Cariboo,
And down in fathoms many went the captain and the crew;
Down went the owners—greedy men whom hope of gain allured:
Oh, dry the starting tear, for they were heavily insured.

Besides the captain and the mate, the owners and the crew,
The passengers were also drowned excepting only two:
Young *Peter Gray*, who tasted teas for *Baker, Croop*, and *Co.*,
And *Somers*, who from Eastern shores imported indigo.

These passengers, by reason of their clinging to a mast,
Upon a desert island were eventually cast.
They hunted for their meals, as *Alexander Selkirk*[1] used,
But they couldn't chat together—they had not been introduced.

For *Peter Gray*, and *Somers* too, though certainly in trade,
Were properly particular about the friends they made;
And somehow thus they settled it without a word of mouth—
That *Gray* should take the northern half, while *Somers* took the south.

[1] a Scottish sailor (1676-1723), the supposed original of Robinson Crusoe.

On *Peter's* portion oysters grew—a delicacy rare,
But oysters were a delicacy *Peter* couldn't bear.
On *Somers'* side was turtle, on the shingle lying thick,
Which *Somers* couldn't eat, because it always made him sick.

Gray gnashed his teeth with envy as he saw a mighty store
Of turtle unmolested on his fellow-creature's shore:
The oysters at his feet aside impatiently he shoved,
For turtle and his mother were the only things he loved.

And *Somers* sighed in sorrow as he settled in the south,
For the thought of *Peter's* oysters brought the water to his mouth.
He longed to lay him down upon the shelly bed, and stuff:
He had often eaten oysters, but had never had enough.

How they wished an introduction to each other they had had
When on board the *Ballyshannon*! And it drove them nearly mad
To think how very friendly with each other they might get,
If it wasn't for the arbitrary rule of etiquette!

One day, when out a-hunting for the *mus ridiculus*,[2]
Gray overheard his fellow-man soliloquising thus:
"I wonder how the playmates of my youth are getting on,
M'Connell, S. B. Walters, Paddy Byles, and *Robinson*?"

These simple words made *Peter* as delighted as could be,
Old chummies at the Charterhouse were *Robinson* and he!
He walked straight up to *Somers*, then he turned extremely red,
Hesitated, hummed and hawed a bit, then cleared his throat, and said:

"I beg your pardon—pray forgive me if I seem too bold,
But you have breathed a name I knew familiarly of old.
You spoke aloud of *Robinson*—I happened to be by—
You know him?" "Yes, extremely well." "Allow me—so do I!"

It was enough: they felt they could more sociably get on,
For (ah, the magic of the fact!) they each knew Robinson!
And Mr. *Somers'* turtle was at *Peter's* service quite,
And Mr. *Somers* punished *Peter's* oyster-beds all night.

They soon became like brothers from community of wrongs:
They wrote each other little odes and sang each other songs;
They told each other anecdotes disparaging their wives;
On several occasions, too, they saved each other's lives.

They felt quite melancholy when they parted for the night,
And got up in the morning soon as ever it was light;
Each other's pleasant company they reckoned so upon,
And all because it happened that they both knew *Robinson*!

They lived for many years on that inhospitable shore,
And day by day they learned to love each other more and more.
At last, to their astonishment, on getting up one day,
They saw a vessel anchored in the offing of the bay!

To *Peter* an idea occurred. "Suppose we cross the main?
So good an opportunity may not occur again."
And *Somers* thought a minute, then ejaculated, "Done!
I wonder how my business in the City's getting on?"

"But stay," said *Mr. Peter*: "when in England, as you know,

[2] ridiculous mouse, a reference to Horace's lines about the mountain in labor which gives birth to the ridiculous mouse.

I earned a living tasting teas for *Baker, Croop,* and *Co.*,
I may be superseded—my employers think me dead!"
"Then come with me," said *Somers*, "and taste indigo instead."

But all their plans were scattered in a moment when they found
The vessel was a convict ship from Portland, outward bound!
When a boat came off to fetch them, though they felt it very kind,
To go on board they firmly but respectfully declined.

As both the happy settlers roared with laughter at the joke,
They recognised an unattractive fellow pulling stroke:
'Twas *Robinson*—a convict, in an unbecoming frock!
Condemned to seven years for misappropriating stock!!!

They laughed no more, for *Somers* thought he had been rather rash
In knowing one whose friend had misappropriated cash;
And *Peter* thought a foolish tack he must have gone upon
In making the acquaintance of a friend of *Robinson*.

At first they didn't quarrel very openly, I've heard;
They nodded when they met, and now and then exchanged a word:
The word grew rare, and rarer still the nodding of the head,
And when they meet each other now, they cut each other dead.

To allocate the island they agreed by word of mouth,
And *Peter* takes the north again, and *Somers* takes the south;
And *Peter* has the oysters, which he loathes with horror grim,
And *Somers* has the turtle—turtle disagrees with him.

(1869)

The Lost Mr. Blake

This meandering Bab Ballad presents ample evidence that Ogden Nash did not originate the technique that has made him the most popular of modern American light versifiers.

Mr. Blake was a regular out-and-out hardened sinner,
Who was quite out of the pale of Christianity, so to speak:
He was in the habit of smoking a long pipe and drinking a glass of grog on Sunday after dinner,
And seldom thought of going to church more than twice (or if Good Friday or Christmas Day happened to come in it) three times a week.

He was quite indifferent as to the particular kinds of dresses
That the clergyman wore at the church where he used to go to pray,
And whatever he did in the way of relieving a chap's distresses,
He always did in a nasty, sneaking, underhanded, hole-and-corner sort of way.

I have known him indulge in profane, ungentlemanly emphatics,
When the Protestant Church has been divided on the subject of the width of a chasuble's hem;
I have even known him to sneer at albs—and as for dalmatics,
Words can't convey an idea of the contempt he expressed for *them*.

He didn't believe in persons who, not being well off themselves, are obliged to confine their charitable exertions to collecting money from wealthier people,
And looked upon individuals of the former class as ecclesiastical hawks;
He used to say that he would no more think of interfering with his priest's robes than with his church or his steeple,

And that he did not consider his soul imperilled because somebody over whom he had no influence whatever, chose to dress himself up like an ecclesiastical Guy Fawkes.[1]

This shocking old vagabond was so unutterably shameless
That he actually went a-courting a very respectable and pious middle-aged sister by the name of Biggs:
She was a rather attractive widow whose life, as such, had always been particularly blameless;
Her first husband had left her a secure but moderate competence owing to some fortunate speculations in the matter of figs.

She was an excellent person in every way—and won the respect even of Mrs. Grundy,[2]
She was a good housewife, too, and wouldn't have wasted a penny if she had owned the Koh-i-noor;[3]
She was just as strict as he was lax in her observance of Sunday,
And being a good economist, and charitable besides, she took all the bones and cold potatoes and broken pie-crusts and candle-ends (when she had quite done with them), and made them into an excellent soup for the deserving poor.

I am sorry to say that she rather took to Blake—that outcast of society;
And when respectable brothers who were fond of her began to look dubious and to cough,
She would say, "Oh, my friends, it's because I hope to bring this poor benighted soul back to virtue and propriety"
(And besides, the poor benighted soul, with all his faults was uncommonly well off).

And when Mr. Blake's dissipated friends called his attention to the frown or the pout of her,
Whenever he did anything which appeared to her to savour of an unmentionable place,
He would say she would be a very decent old girl when all that nonsense was knocked out of her—
And his method of knocking it out of her is one that covered him with disgrace.

She was fond of going to church services four times every Sunday, and four or five times in the week, and never seemed to pall of them,
So he hunted out all the churches within a convenient distance that had services at different hours, so to speak;
And when he had married her he positively insisted upon their going to all of them,
So they contrived to do about twelve churches every Sunday, and, if they had luck, from twenty-two to twenty-three in the course of the week.

She was fond of dropping his sovereigns ostentatiously into the plate, and she liked to see them stand out rather conspicuously against the commonplace halfcrowns and shillings,
So he took her to all the charity sermons, and if by any extraordinary chance there wasn't a charity sermon anywhere, he would drop a couple of sovereigns (one for him and one for her) into the poor-box at the door;
And as he always deducted the sums thus given in charity from the housekeeping money, and the money he allowed her for her bonnets and frillings,
She soon began to find that even charity, if you allow it to interfere with your personal luxuries, becomes an intolerable bore.

On Sundays she was always melancholy and anything but good society,
For that day in her household was a day of sighings and sobbings and wringing of hands and shaking of heads:
She wouldn't hear of a button being sewn on a glove, because it was work neither of necessity nor of piety,
And strictly prohibited her servants from amusing themselves, or indeed doing anything at all except dusting the drawing-rooms, cleaning the boots and shoes, cooking the dinner, waiting generally on the family, and making the beds.

But Blake even went farther than that, and said that, on Sundays, people should do their own

[1] a ragged, grotesque figure—originally (on Guy Fawkes Day) the effigy of the instigator of the Gunpowder Plot (Nov. 5, 1605). [2] symbol of prudery.
[3] mammoth Indian diamond, one of the British crown jewels.

works of necessity, and not delegate them to persons in a menial situation,
So he wouldn't allow his servants to do so much as even answer a bell.
Here he is making his wife carry up the water for her bath to the second floor, much against her inclination,—
And why in the world the gentleman who illustrates these ballads has put him into a cocked hat is more than I can tell.[4]

After about three months of this sort of thing, taking the smooth with the rough of it
(Blacking her own boots and peeling her own potatoes was not her notion of connubial bliss),
Mrs. Blake began to find that she had pretty nearly had enough of it,
And came, in course of time, to think that Blake's own original line of conduct wasn't so much amiss.

And now that wicked person—that detestable sinner ("Belial Blake" his friends and well-wishers call him for his atrocities),
And his poor deluded victim whom all her Christian brothers dislike and pity so,
Go to the parish church only on Sunday morning and afternoon and occasionally on a week-day, and spend their evenings in connubial fondlings and affectionate reciprocities,
And I should like to know where in the world (or rather, out of it) they expect to go.

(1869)

From *Patience*

The Aesthete

To literary people *Patience* is likely to be the favorite of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. It is a deadly satire on the whole "aesthetic" movement and takes chance shots at the languid medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, the decorations of Morris, the "fleshly" lyricism of Swinburne, and the notoriety-seeking of Wilde. Swinburne it was, particularly, that Gilbert wished to ridicule; but since gossip at the time was rife about Wilde, the hero of *Patience*, Bunthorne, the fleshly poet, became identified in the public mind with the young "Professor of Aesthetics," Oscar Wilde.

[4] See p. 799.

This song of Bunthorne manages to catch all that staid England objected to in the "aesthetes."

If you're anxious for to shine in the high aesthetic line as a man of culture rare,
You must get up all the germs[1] of the transcendental terms, and plant them everywhere.
You must lie upon the daisies, and discourse in novel phrases of your complicated state of mind,
The meaning doesn't matter if it's only idle chatter of a transcendental kind.
And everyone will say,
As you walk your mystic way,
"If this young man expresses himself in terms too deep for ME,
Why, what a very singularly deep young man this deep young man must be!"

Be eloquent in praise of the very dull old days which have long since passed away,
And convince 'em, if you can, that the reign of good Queen Anne was Culture's palmiest day.
Of course you will pooh-pooh whatever's fresh and new, and declare it's crude and mean,
For Art stopped short in the cultivated court of the Empress Josephine.
And everyone will say,
As you walk your mystic way,
"If that's not good enough for him which is good enough for ME,
Why, what a very cultivated kind of youth this kind of youth must be!"

Then a sentimental passion of a vegetable fashion must excite your languid spleen,
An attachment À LA Plato for a bashful young potato, or a not-too-French French bean!
Though the Philistines may jostle, you will rank as an apostle in the high aesthetic band,
If you walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in your medieval hand.
And everyone will say,
As you walk your flowery way,
"If he's content with a vegetable love, which would certainly not suit ME,
Why, what a most particularly pure young man this pure young man must be!"

(1881)

[1] perhaps a sly pun on the name of the pre-Raphaelite magazine, *The Germ*.

From *Iolanthe*

The Contemplative Sentry

This profound masterpiece of political philosophy is sung by Private Willis, the sentry outside of Westminster Hall, at the beginning of Act II.

When all night long a chap remains
On sentry-go, to chase monotony
He exercises of his brains,
That is, assuming that he's got any.
Though never nurtured in the lap
Of luxury, yet I admonish you,
I am an intellectual chap,
And think of things that would astonish you.
I often think it's comical
How Nature always does contrive
That every boy and every gal,
That's born into the world alive,
Is either a little Liberal,
Or else a little Conservative!
Fal lal la!

When in that house[1] M.P.'s divide,
If they've a brain and cerebellum, too,
They've got to leave that brain outside,
And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to
But then the prospect of a lot
Of dull M.P.'s, in close proximity,
A-thinking for themselves, is what
No man can face with equanimity.
Then let's rejoice with loud Fal lal
That Nature wisely does contrive
That every boy and every gal,
That's born into the world alive,
Is either a little Liberal,
Or else a little Conservative!
Fal lal la!

(1882)

From *The Mikado*

They'll None of 'em Be Missed

This famous patter song is sung in *The Mikado* by Ko-Ko, Lord High Executioner of Titipu. He has just reassured Nanki-Poo and Pooh-Bah of his devotion to duty: "If I should ever be called upon to act professionally, I am happy to think that there will be no difficulty in finding plenty of people whose loss of life will be a distinct gain to society at large."

As some day it may happen that a victim must be found,
I've got a little list—I've got a little list
Of society offenders who might well be underground,
And who never would be missed—who never would be missed!
There's the pestilential nuisances who write for autographs—
All people who have flabby hands and irritating laughs—
All children who are up in dates, and floor you with 'em flat—
All persons who in shaking hands, shake hands with you like *that*—
And all third persons who on spoiling *tête-à-têtes* insist—
They'd none of 'em be missed—they'd none of 'em be missed!

There's the nigger serenader, and the others of his race,
And the piano-organist—I've got him on the list!
And the people who eat peppermint and puff it in your face,
They never would be missed—they never would be missed!
Then the idiot who praises, with enthusiastic tone,
All centuries but this, and every country but his own;
And the lady from the provinces who dresses like a guy,
And "who doesn't think she waltzes, but would rather like to try"!
And that singular anomaly, the lady novelist—
I don't think she'd be missed—I'm *sure* she'd not be missed!

And that *Nisi Prius* nuisance, who just now is rather rife,
The Judicial humorist—I've got *him* on the list
All funny fellows, comic men, and clowns of private life—
They'd none of 'em be missed—they'd none of 'em be missed!

[1] House of Commons.

And apologetic statesmen of a compromising kind,
Such as—What d'ye call him—Thing'em bob, and likewise Never Mind,
And 'St—'st—'st—and What's-his-name, and also You-know-who—
The task of filling up the blanks I'd rather leave to *you*.
But it really doesn't matter whom you put upon the list,
For they'd none of 'em be missed—they'd none of 'em be missed!

(1885)

James Kenneth Stephen

(1859-1892)

James Kenneth Stephen died of a brain tumor at thirty-three. Severe headaches for a number of years before his death had prevented him from succeeding in the law like his distinguished father, though an excellent record at both Eton and Cambridge had promised a brilliant career. In 1888 he experimented with a weekly periodical without advertisements, but this venture was short-lived. Two years later he settled at Cambridge as a tutor, and in 1891 he published *Lapsus Calami* and *Quo Musa Tendis?*, the two books of light verse which made his small reputation. From the first of these come the two poems for which he is still remembered. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he is remembered for one sonnet and two puns.

Two Voices Are There

The two sonnets of Wordsworth echoed in this ingenious parody are *Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland* (see p. 177) and *The World is Too Much With Us* (see p. 175).

Two voices are there: one is of the deep;
It learns the storm-cloud's thunderous melody,
Now roars, now murmurs with the changing sea,
Now bird-like pipes, now closes soft in sleep;
And one is of an old half-witted sheep
Which bleats articulate monotony,
And indicates that two and one are three,
That grass is green, lakes damp, and mountains steep:
And, Wordsworth, both are thine; at certain times,
Forth from the heart of thy melodious rimes
The form and pressure of high thoughts will burst;
At other times—good Lord! I'd rather be
Quite unacquainted with the A.B.C.
Than write such hopeless rubbish as thy worst.

(1891)

To R.K.

The writer whose pen name induced Stephen to victimize him along with Rudyard Kipling is Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925), author of *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), *Allan Quatermain* (1887), and *She* (1887)—best-selling romantic novels which exploited the mysteries of darkest Africa in somewhat the same way in which Kipling treated India.

As long as I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrendous[1]
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
BROWNING

Will there never come a season
Which shall rid us from the curse
Of a prose that knows no reason
And an unmelodious verse:
When the world shall cease to wonder
At the genius of an Ass,
And a boy's eccentric blunder
Shall not bring success to pass;

When mankind shall be delivered
From the clash of magazines,
And the inkstands shall be shivered
Into countless smithereens:
When there stands a muzzled stripling,
Mute, beside a muzzled bore:
When the Rudyards cease from Kipling
And the Haggards Ride no more?

(1891)

[1] paraphrase of Virgil's famous line describing the Cyclops: "Monstrum, horrendum, informe, ingens cui lumen ademptum." ("a monster, horrible, unshapely, gigantic, and eyeless," *Aeneid*, III, 658) The whole quotation is from Browning's *Waring*, lines 52-56.

George Meredith

(1828-1909)

From *The Idea of Comedy*

This essay was first delivered as a lecture in 1877. To the reader of Meredith, it is important because it epitomizes the author's approach to the characters of his own novels. To the general reader, who may not take to Meredith's highly individual narrative manner, it presents a series of useful distinctions among comedy, satire, humor, irony, and wit—terms which are too often confused in literary criticism. For an account of the life of Meredith, see page 801.

. . . Taking them generally, the English public are most in sympathy with this primitive Aristophanic comedy, wherein the comic is capped by the grotesque, irony tips the wit, and satire is a naked sword. They have the basis of the Comic in them: an esteem for common-sense. They cordially dislike the reverse of it. They have a rich laugh, though it is not the *gros rire*[1] of the Gaul tossing *gros sel*,[2] nor the polished Frenchman's mentally digestive laugh. And if they have now, like a monarch with a troop of dwarfs, too many jesters kicking the dictionary about, to let them reflect that they are dull, occasionally, like the pensive monarch surprising himself with an idea of an idea of his own, they look so. And they are given to looking in the glass. They must see that something ails them. How much even the better order of them will endure, without a thought of the defensive, when the person afflicting them is protected from satire, we read in Memoirs of a Preceding Age, where the vulgarly tyrannous hostess of a great house of reception shuffled the guests and played them like a pack of cards, with her exact estimate of the strength of each one printed on them: and still this house continued to be the most popular in England; nor did the lady ever appear in print or on the boards as the comic type that she was.

It has been suggested that they have not yet spiritually comprehended the signification of living in society; for who are cheerfuller, brisker of wit, in the fields, and as explorers, colonizers, backwoodsmen? They are happy in rough exercise, and also in complete repose. The intermediate condition, when they are called upon to talk to one another, upon other than affairs of business or their hobbies, reveals them wearing a curious look of vacancy, as it were the socket of an eye wanting. The Comic is perpetually springing up in social life, and it oppresses them from not being perceived.

Thus, at a dinner-party, one of the guests, who happens to have enrolled himself in a Burial Company, politely entreats the others to inscribe their names as shareholders, expatiating on the advantages accruing to them in the event of their very possible speedy death, the salubrity of the site, the aptitude of the soil for a quick consumption of their remains, etc.; and they drink sadness from the incongruous man, and conceive indigestion, not seeing him in a sharply defined light, that would bid them taste the comic of him. Or it is mentioned that a newly elected member of our Parliament celebrates his arrival at eminence by the publication of a book on cab-fares, dedicated to a beloved female relative deceased, and the comment on it is the word 'Indeed.' But, merely for a contrast, turn to a not uncommon scene of yesterday in the hunting-field, where a brilliant young rider, having broken his collar-bone, trots away very soon after, against medical interdict, half put together in splinters, to the most distant meet of his neighbourhood, sure of escaping his doctor, who is the first person he encounters. 'I came here purposely to avoid you,' says the patient. 'I came here purposely to take care of you,' says the doctor. Off they go and come to a swollen brook. The patient clears it handsomely: the doctor tumbles in. All the field are alive with the heartiest relish of every incident and every cross-light on it; and dull would the man have been thought who had not his word to say about it when riding home.

In our prose literature we have had delightful Comic writers. Besides Fielding[3] and Goldsmith,[4] there is Miss Austen,[5] whose Emma and Mr. Elton might walk straight into a comedy, were the plot arranged for them. Galt's[6] neglected novels have some characters and strokes of shrewd comedy. In

[1] loud laughter. [2] coarse salt.

[3] See I, p. 788. [4] See p 950. [5] See I, p 788.
[6] John Galt, Scottish novelist (1779-1839).

our poetic literature the comic is delicate and graceful above the touch of Italian and French. Generally, however, the English elect excel in satire, and they are noble humourists. The national disposition is for hard-hitting, with a moral purpose to sanction it; or for a rosy, sometimes a larmoyant, geniality, not unmanly in its verging upon tenderness, and with a singular attraction for thick-headedness, to decorate it with asses' ears and the most beautiful sylvan haloes. But the Comic is a different spirit.

You may estimate your capacity for Comic perception by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love, without loving them less: and more by being able to see yourself somewhat ridiculous in dear eyes, and accepting the correction their image of you proposes.

Each one of an affectionate couple may be willing, as we say, to die for the other, yet unwilling to utter the agreeable word at the right moment; but if the wits were sufficiently quick for them to perceive that they are in a comic situation, as affectionate couples must be when they quarrel, they would not wait for the moon or the almanac, or a Dorine,[7] to bring back the flood-tide of tender feelings, that they should join hands and lips.

If you detect the ridicule, and your kindliness is chilled by it, you are slipping into the grasp of Satire.

If instead of falling foul of the ridiculous person with a satiric rod, to make him writhe and shriek aloud, you prefer to sting him under a semi-caress, by which he shall in his anguish be rendered dubious whether indeed anything has hurt him, you are an engine of Irony.

If you laugh all round him, tumble him, roll him about, deal him a smack, and drop a tear on him, own his likeness to you and yours to your neighbour, spare him as little as you shun, pity him as much as you expose, it is a spirit of Humour that is moving you.

The Comic, which is the perceptive, is the governing spirit, awakening and giving aim to these powers of laughter, but it is not to be confounded with them: it enfolds a thinner form of them, differing from satire, in not sharply driving into the quivering sensibilities, and from humour, in not comforting them and tucking them up, or indicating a broader than the range of this bustling world to them.

Fielding's Jonathan Wild presents a case of this peculiar distinction, when that man of eminent greatness remarks upon the unfairness of a trial in which the condemnation has been brought about by twelve men of the opposite party; for it is not satiric, it is not humorous; yet it is immensely comic to hear a guilty villain protesting that his own 'party' should have a voice in the Law. It opens an avenue into villains' ratiocination. And the Comic is not cancelled though we should suppose Jonathan to be giving play to his humour. I may have dreamed this or had it suggested to me, for on referring to *Jonathan Wild*, I do not find it.

Apply the case to the man of deep wit, who is ever certain of his condemnation by the opposite party, and then it ceases to be comic, and will be satiric.

The look of Fielding upon Richardson is essentially comic. His method of correcting the sentimental writer is a mixture of the comic and the humorous. Parson Adams[8] is a creation of humour. But both the conception and the presentation of Alceste and of Tartuffe, of Célimène and Philaminte,[9] are purely comic, addressed to the intellect: there is no humour in them, and they refresh the intellect they quicken to detect their comedy, by force of the contrast they offer between themselves and the wiser world about them; that is to say, society, or that assemblage of minds whereof the Comic spirit has its origin.

Byron had splendid powers of humour, and the most poetic satire that we have example of, fusing at times to hard irony. He had no strong comic sense, or he would not have taken an anti-social position, which is directly opposed to the Comic; and in his philosophy, judged by philosophers, he is a comic figure, by reason of this deficiency. 'Sobald er philosophirt ist er ein Kind,'[10] Goethe says of him. Carlyle sees him in this comic light, treats him in the humourous manner.

The satirist is a moral agent, often a social scavenger, working on a storage of bile.

The Ironeist is one thing or another, according to his caprice. Irony is the humour of satire; it may be savage as in Swift, with a moral object, or sedate, as in Gibbon,[11] with a malicious. The foppish irony fretting to be seen, and the irony which leers, that you shall not mistake its intention, are failures in satiric effort pretending to the treasures of ambiguity.

[7] devoted servant in Molière's *Tartuffe* (1664).

[8] in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742).

[9] Alceste and Célimène in Molière's *Le Misanthrope* (1666), Philaminte in his *Les Femmes Savantes* (1672).

[10] As soon as he philosophizes he becomes a child.

[11] English historian (1737-94), author of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88).

The Humourist of mean order is a refreshing laugher, giving tone to the feelings and sometimes allowing the feelings to be too much for him. But the humourist of high has an embrace of contrasts beyond the scope of the Comic poet.

Heart and mind laugh out at Don Quixote,[12] and still you brood on him. The juxtaposition of the knight and squire is a Comic conception, the opposition of their natures most humourous. They are as different as the two hemispheres in the time of Columbus, yet they touch and are bound in one by laughter. The knight's great aims and constant mishaps, his chivalrous valiancy exercised on absurd objects, his good sense along the highroad of the craziest of expeditions; the compassion he plucks out of derision, and the admirable figure he preserves while stalking through the frantically grotesque and burlesque assailing him, are in the loftiest moods of humour, fusing the Tragic sentiment with the Comic narrative.

The stroke of the great humourist is world-wide, with lights of Tragedy in his laughter. . . .

The Comic poet is in the narrow field, or enclosed square, of the society he depicts; and he addresses the still narrower enclosure of men's intellects, with reference to the operation of the social world upon their characters. He is not concerned with beginnings or endings or surroundings, but with what you are now weaving. To understand his work and value it, you must have a sober liking of your kind and a sober estimate of our civilized qualities. The aim and business of the Comic poet are misunderstood, his meaning is not seized nor his point of view taken, when he is accused of dishonouring our nature and being hostile to sentiment, tending to spitefulness and making an unfair use of laughter. Those who detect irony in Comedy do so because they choose to see it in life. Poverty, says the satirist, has nothing harder in itself than that it makes men ridiculous. But poverty is never ridiculous to Comic perception until it attempts to make its rags conceal its bareness in a forlorn attempt at decency, or foolishly to rival ostentation. Caleb Balderstone[13] in his endeavour to keep up the honour of a noble household in a state of beggary, is an exquisitely comic character. In the case of 'poor relatives,' on the other hand, it is the rich, whom they perplex, that are really comic; and to laugh at the former, not seeing the comedy of the latter, is to betray dulness of vision. Humourist and Satirist frequently hunt together as Ironeïsts in pursuit of the grotesque, to the exclusion of the Comic. That was an affecting moment in the history of the Prince Regent, when the First Gentleman of Europe burst into tears at a sarcastic remark of Beau Brummel's[14] on the cut of his coat. Humour, Satire, Irony, pounce on it altogether as their common prey. The Comic spirit eyes but does not touch it. Put into action, it would be farcical. It is too gross for Comedy.

Incidents of a kind casting ridicule on our unfortunate nature instead of our conventional life, provoke derisive laughter, which thwarts the Comic idea. But derision is foiled by the play of the intellect. Most of doubtful causes in contest are open to Comic interpretation, and any intellectual pleading of a doubtful cause contains germs of an Idea of Comedy.

The laughter of satire is a blow in the back or the face. The laughter of Comedy is impersonal and of unrivalled politeness, nearer a smile; often no more than a smile. It laughs through the mind, for the mind directs it; and it might be called the humour of the mind.

One excellent test of the civilization of a country, as I have said, I take to be the flourishing of the Comic idea and Comedy; and the test of true Comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter.

If you believe that our civilization is founded in common-sense (and it is the first condition of sanity to believe it), you will, when contemplating men, discern a Spirit overhead; not more heavenly than the light flashed upward from glassy surfaces, but luminous and watchful; never shooting beyond them, nor lagging in the rear; so closely attached to them that it may be taken for a slavish reflex, until its features are studied. It has the sage's brows, and the sunny malice of a faun lurks at the corners of the half-closed lips drawn in an idle wariness of half tension. That slim feasting smile, shaped like the long-bow, was once a big round satyr's laugh, that flung up the brows like a fortress lifted by gunpowder. The laugh will come again, but it will be of the order of the smile, finely tempered, showing sunlight of the mind, mental richness rather than noisy enormity. Its common aspect is one of unsolicitous observation, as if surveying a full field and having leisure to dart on its

[12] hero of Cervantes' satirical romance of the same name (1605-15).

[13] comic servant in Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor* (1819)

[14] George Bryan Brummel (1778-1840), intimate of the prince regent (George IV) and leading London fashion plate.

chosen morsels, without any fluttering eagerness. Men's future upon earth does not attract it; their honesty and shapeliness in the present does; and whenever they wax out of proportion, overblown, affected, pretentious, bombastical, hypocritical, pedantic, fantastically delicate; whenever it sees them self-deceived or hoodwinked, given to run riot in idolatries, drifting into vanities, congregating in absurdities, planning short-sightedly, plotting dementedly; whenever they are at variance with their professions, and violate the unwritten but perceptible laws binding them in consideration one to another; whenever they offend sound reason, fair justice; are false in humility or mined with conceit, individually, or in the bulk—the Spirit overhead will look humanely malign and cast an oblique light on them, followed by volleys of silvery laughter. That is the Comic Spirit.

Not to distinguish it is to be bull-blind to the spiritual, and to deny the existence of a mind of man where minds of men are in working conjunction.

You must, as I have said, believe that our state of society is founded in common-sense, otherwise you will not be struck by the contrasts the Comic Spirit perceives, or have it to look to for your consolation. You will, in fact, be standing in that peculiar oblique beam of light, yourself illuminated to the general eye as the very object of chase and doomed quarry of the thing obscure to you. But to feel its presence and to see it is your assurance that many sane and solid minds are with you in what you are experiencing: and this of itself spares you the pain of satirical heat, and the bitter craving to strike heavy blows. You share the sublime of wrath, that would not have hurt the foolish, but merely demonstrate their foolishness. Molière was contented to revenge himself on the critics of the *École des Femmes*, by writing the *Critique de l'École des Femmes*, one of the wisest as well as the playfullest of studies in criticism. A perception of the comic spirit gives high fellowship. You become a citizen of the selecter world, the highest we know of in connection with our old world, which is not supermundane. Look there for your unchallengeable upper class! You feel that you are one of this our civilized community, that you cannot escape from it, and would not if you could. Good hope sustains you; weariness does not overwhelm you; in isolation you see no charms for vanity; personal pride is greatly moderated. Nor shall your title of citizenship exclude you from worlds of imagination or of devotion. The Comic spirit is not hostile to the sweetest songfully poetic. Chaucer bubbles with it: Shakespeare overflows: there is a mild moon's ray of it (pale with super-refinement through distance from our flesh and blood planet) in *Comus*.[15] Pope has it, and it is the daylight side of the night half obscuring Cowper. It is only hostile to the priestly element, when that, by baleful swelling, transcends and overlaps the bounds of its office: and then, in extreme cases, it is too true to itself to speak, and veils the lamp: as, for example, the spectacle of Bossuet[16] over the dead body of Molière: at which the dark angels may, but men do not laugh.

We have had comic pulpits, for a sign that the laughter-moving and the worshipful may be in alliance: I know not how far comic, or how much assisted in seeming so by the unexpectedness and the relief of its appearance: at least they are popular, they are said to win the ear. Laughter is open to perversion, like other good things; the scornful and the brutal sorts are not unknown to us; but the laughter directed by the Comic spirit is a harmless wine, conducing to sobriety in the degree that it enlivens. It enters you like fresh air into a study; as when one of the sudden contrasts of the comic idea floods the brain like reassuring daylight. You are cognizant of the true kind by feeling that you take it in, savour it, and have what flowers live on, natural air for food. That which you give out—the joyful roar—is not the better part; let that go to good fellowship and the benefit of the lungs. Aristophanes[17] promises his auditors that if they will retain the ideas of the comic poet carefully, as they keep dried fruits in boxes, their garments shall smell odoriferous of wisdom throughout the year. The boast will not be thought an empty one by those who have choice friends that have stocked themselves according to his directions. Such treasuries of sparkling laughter are wells in our desert. Sensitiveness to the comic laugh is a step in civilization. To shrink from being an object of it is a step in cultivation. We know the degree of refinement in men by the matter they will laugh at, and the ring of the laugh; but we know likewise that the larger natures are distinguished by the great breadth of their power of laughter, and no one really loving Molière is refined by that love to despise or be dense to Aristophanes, though it may be that the lover of Aristophanes will not have risen to the height of Molière. Embrace them

[15] Milton's masque, see I, p. 600.
[16] Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, French divine (1627-1704)
[17] Greek comic dramatist (c. 444-c.-380 B.C.).

both, and you have the whole scale of laughter in your breast. Nothing in the world surpasses in stormy fun the scene in *The Frogs*, when Bacchus and Xanthias receive their thrashings from the hands of businesslike Oeacus, to discover which is the divinity of the two, by his imperviousness to the mortal condition of pain, and each, under the obligation of not crying out, makes believe that his horrible bellow—the god's *iou iou* being the lustier —means only the stopping of a sneeze, or horseman sighted, or the prelude to an invocation to some deity: and the slave contrives that the god shall get the bigger lot of blows. Passages of Rabelais,[18] one or two in *Don Quixote*, and the Supper in the Manner of the Ancients, in *Peregrine Pickle*,[19] are of a similar cataract of laughter. But it is not illuminating; it is not the laughter of the mind. Molière's laughter, in his purest comedies, is ethereal, as light to our nature, as colour to our thoughts. The *Misanthrope* and the *Tartuffe* have no audible laughter; but the characters are steeped in the comic spirit. They quicken the mind through laughter, from coming out of the mind; and the mind accepts them because they are clear interpretations of certain chapters of the Book lying open before us all. Between these two stand Shakespeare and Cervantes, with the richer laugh of heart and mind in one; with much of the Aristophanic robustness, something of Molière's delicacy.

The laughter heard in circles not pervaded by the Comic idea, will sound harsh and soulless, like versified prose, if you step into them with a sense of the distinction. You will fancy you have changed your habitation to a planet remoter from the sun. You may be among powerful brains, too. You will not find poets—or but a stray one, over-worshipped. You will find learned men undoubtedly, professors, reputed philosophers, and illustrious dilettanti. They have in them, perhaps, every element composing light, except the Comic. They read verse, they discourse of art; but their eminent faculties are not under that vigilant sense of a collective supervision, spiritual and present, which we have taken note of. They build a temple of arrogance; they speak much in the voice of oracles; their hilarity, if it does not dip in grossness, is usually a form of pugnacity.

Insufficiency of sight in the eye looking outward has deprived them of the eye that should look inward. They have never weighed themselves in the delicate balance of the Comic idea so as to obtain a suspicion of the rights and dues of the world; and they have, in consequence, an irritable personality. A very learned English professor crushed an argument in a political discussion by asking his adversary angrily: "Are you aware, sir, that I am a philologer?" . . .

I do not know that the fly in amber is of any particular use, but the Comic idea enclosed in a comedy makes it more generally perceptible and portable, and that is an advantage. There is a benefit to men in taking the lessons of Comedy in congregations, for it enlivens the wits; and to writers it is beneficial, for they must have a clear scheme, and even if they have no idea to present, they must prove that they have made the public sit to them before the sitting, to see the picture. And writing for the stage would be a corrective of a too-incrusted scholarly style, into which some great ones fall at times. It keeps minor writers to a definite plan, and to English. Many of them now swelling a plethoric market in the composition of novels, in pun-manufactories and in journalism; attached to the machinery forcing perishable matter on a public that swallows voraciously and groans; might, with encouragement, be attending to the study of art in literature. Our critics appear to be fascinated by the quaintness of our public, as the world is when our beast-garden has a new importation of magnitude, and the creature's appetite is reverently consulted. They stipulate for a writer's popularity before they will do much more than take the position of umpires to record his failure or success. Now, the pig supplies the most popular of dishes, but it is not accounted the most honoured of animals, unless it be by the cottager. Our public might surely be led to try other, perhaps finer, meat. It has good taste in song. It might be taught as justly, on the whole, and the sooner when the cottager's view of the feast shall cease to be the humble one of our literary critics, to extend this capacity for delicate choosing in the direction of the matter arousing laughter. (1877)

[18] François Rabelais, French satirist (1494?-1553).
[19] novel by Tobias Smollett (1751).

Samuel Butler

(1835-1902)

"I am the *enfant terrible* of literature and science. If I cannot, and I know I cannot, get the literary and scientific bigwigs to give me a shilling, I can, and I know I can, heave bricks into the middle of them."

When Samuel Butler wrote that miniature self-portrait in his notebooks, he was not simply stringing words together. His literary career was a continual process of heaving bricks. He heaved them not only at the literary and scientific bigwigs but at nearly all the comfortable orthodoxies which the Victorians held most sacred. He was a genius with the impudence of a naughty boy.

His rebellion began early. With Dr. Samuel Butler, Bishop of Lichfield, for a grandfather, and the Reverend Thomas Butler for a father, he was naturally expected to take his place among the respectable ranks of the Church of England clergy. After an excellent record as a classical scholar at Cambridge, he went to London in 1858 and began to prepare for ordination by doing parish work among the poor. But he was assailed by doubts, particularly on the value of infant baptism, and in the following year he abandoned his embryonic career in the Church, sailed for New Zealand, and took up sheep farming. During his five-year exile he took his first steps in literature by publishing a number of articles in a local newspaper, including *Darwin on the Origin of Species* (1862) and *Darwin among the Machines* (1863). When he returned to England in 1864, he was to devote the rest of his life to painting, photography, music, and writing.

Butler's lesser known works reveal a surprising variety of interests which would have transformed an ordinary man into a mere dilettante. He wrote a travel book bristling with miscellaneous prejudices; co-edited a collection of piano pieces; fashioned an elaborate argument to prove that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman; and "reconsidered and in part rearranged" Shakespeare's sonnets. More important than any of these is a series of treatises in which he questioned the new heresies of Darwin and his followers. With the boldness of an amateur without formal training in scientific method, Butler ambitiously rewrote the new evolution by turning back to such early evolutionists as Buffon, Lamarck, and Charles Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin. He maintained that the cell controls its own destiny, not by blind luck, but by inherent cunning, and that useful habits can be transmitted from generation to generation through unconscious memory.

To the general reader, however, Butler is better known as the author of one piece of satiric verse and two satiric prose works. In *A Psalm of Montreal*, written on a visit to Canada in 1875, he poured into a single poem the bitter essence of Matthew Arnold's attacks on the Philistines. In *Erewhon* (1872, see p. 874), he painted a devastating caricature of Victorian England in the time-honored frame of a voyage to a mythical kingdom. In *The Way of All Flesh*—written at intervals between 1872 and 1885 but published posthumously—he distorted the rebellion of his own youth into an autobiographical novel. Portraying the struggle of his hero, Ernest, against the smug, self-righteous tribe of the Pontifexes, Butler attacked the tyranny of his own family, the hypocrisy of its religion, and the stupidity of its educational theories.

Such a rebel could hardly be a popular writer in Victorian England. An analysis of sales, scrawled in Butler's notebooks three years before his death, reveals that only two of his numerous books, *Erewhon* and *Life and Habit* (1877), had made a profit for the author. But in our century Butler has come into his own. The *enfant terrible* has developed from a naughty boy into one of the major satirists of the late Victorian scene.

From *Erewhon*

In *Erewhon* (1872) (the title is an anagram for Nowhere and is pronounced in three syllables) Butler followed the broad pattern set by More's *Utopia* (see I, p. 349), Bacon's *New Atlantis* (see I, p. 388), and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (see I, p. 849). He conjured up a world in which the sick are criminally liable for their disease, "Musical Banks" and "Colleges of Unreason" are reminiscent respectively of the churches and colleges of his native England, and the all-too-human machines have long since been abolished to prevent them from overpowering their trembling makers. A less famous sequel, *Erewhon Revisited*, appeared in 1900.

Like the father of Bacon's Solomon's House and Swift's helpful Houyhnhnm, Mr. Thims is here explaining one of Erewhon's institutions to the curious author-traveler. This selection begins about one-third of the way through Chapter XXI and continues almost to the end of XXII. Butler's satiric picture of English education should be compared with Arnold's *Literature and Science* (see p. 742) and Huxley's *Science and Culture* (see p. 777).

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Chapter XXI

. . . After supper Mr. Thims told me a good deal about the system of education which is here practiced. I already knew a part of what I heard, but much was new to me, and I obtained a better idea of the Erewhonian position than I had done hitherto: nevertheless there were parts of the scheme of which I could not comprehend the fitness, although I fully admit that this inability was probably the result of my having been trained so very differently and to my being then much out of sorts.

The main feature in their system is the prominence which they give to a study which I can only translate by the word "hypothetics." They argue thus—that to teach a boy merely the nature of the things which exist in the world around him, and about which he will have to be conversant during his whole life, would be giving him but a narrow and shallow conception of the universe, which it is urged might contain all manner of things which are not now to be found therein. To open his eyes to these possibilities, and so to prepare him for all sorts of emergencies, is the object of this system of hypothetics. To imagine a set of utterly strange and impossible contingencies, and require the youths to give intelligent answers to the questions that arise therefrom, is reckoned the fittest conceivable way of preparing them for the actual conduct of their affairs in after life.

Thus they are taught what is called the hypothetical language for many of their best years—a language which was originally composed at a time when the country was in a very different state of civilization to what it is at present, a state which has long since disappeared and been superseded. Many valuable maxims and noble thoughts which were at one time concealed in it have become current in their modern literature, and have been translated over and over again into the language now spoken. Surely then it would seem enough that the study of the original language should be confined to the few whose instincts led them naturally to pursue it.

But the Erewhonians think differently; the store they set by this hypothetical language can hardly be believed; they will even give any one a maintenance for life if he attains a considerable proficiency in the study of it; nay, they will spend years in learning to translate some of their own good poetry into the hypothetical language—to do so with fluency being reckoned a distinguishing mark of a scholar and a gentleman. Heaven forbid that I should be flippant, but it appeared to me to be a wanton waste of good human energy that men should spend years and years in the perfection of so barren an exercise, when their own civilization presented problems by the hundred which cried aloud for solution and would have paid the solver handsomely; but people know their own affairs best. If the youths chose it for themselves I should have wondered less; but they do not choose it; they have it thrust upon them, and for the most part are disinclined towards it. I can only say that all I heard in defense of the system was insufficient

to make me think very highly of its advantages.

The arguments in favor of the deliberate development of the unreasoning faculties were much more cogent. But here they depart from the principles on which they justify their study of hypothetics; for they base the importance which they assign to hypothetics upon the fact of their being a preparation for the extraordinary, while their study of Unreason rests upon its developing those faculties which are required for the daily conduct of affairs. Hence their professorships of Inconsistency and Evasion, in both of which studies the youths are examined before being allowed to proceed to their degree in hypothetics. The more earnest and conscientious students attain to a proficiency in these subjects which is quite surprising; there is hardly any inconsistency so glaring but they soon learn to defend it, or injunction so clear that they cannot find some pretext for disregarding it.

Life, they urge, would be intolerable if men were to be guided in all they did by reason and reason only. Reason betrays men into the drawing of hard and fast lines, and to the defining by language —language being like the sun, which rears and then scorches. Extremes are alone logical, but they are always absurd; the mean is illogical, but an illogical mean is better than the sheer absurdity of an extreme. There are no follies and no unreasonablenesses so great as those which can apparently be irrefragably defended by reason itself, and there is hardly an error into which men may not easily be led if they base their conduct upon reason only.

Reason might very possibly abolish the double currency; it might even attack the personality of Hope and Justice. Besides, people have such a strong natural bias towards it that they will seek it for themselves and act upon it quite as much as or more than is good for them: there is no need of encouraging reason. With unreason the case is different. She is the natural complement of reason, without whose existence reason itself were non-existent.

If, then, reason would be non-existent were there no such thing as unreason, surely it follows that the more unreason there is, the more reason there must be also? Hence the necessity for the development of unreason, even in the interests of reason herself. The Professors of Unreason deny that they undervalue reason: none can be more convinced than they are, that if the double currency cannot be rigorously deduced as a necessary consequence of human reason, the double currency should cease forthwith; but they say that it must be deduced from no narrow and exclusive view of reason which should deprive that admirable faculty of the one-half of its own existence. Unreason is a part of reason; it must therefore be allowed its full share in stating the initial conditions.

Chapter XXII

Of genius they make no account, for they say that every one is a genius, more or less. No one is so physically sound that no part of him will be even a little unsound, and no one is so diseased but that some part of him will be healthy—so no man is so mentally and morally sound, but that he will be in part both mad and wicked; and no man is so mad and wicked but he will be sensible and honorable in part. In like manner there is no genius who is not also a fool, and no fool who is not also a genius.

When I talked about originality and genius to some gentlemen whom I met at a supper party given by Mr. Thims in my honor, and said that original thought ought to be encouraged, I had to eat my words at once. Their view evidently was that genius was like offenses—needs must that it come, but woe unto that man through whom it comes. A man's business, they hold, is to think as his neighbors do, for Heaven help him if he thinks good what they count bad. And really it is hard to see how the Erewhonian theory differs from our own, for the word "idiot" only means a person who forms his opinions for himself.

The venerable Professor of Worldly Wisdom, a man verging on eighty but still hale, spoke to me very seriously on this subject in consequence of the few words that I had imprudently let fall in defense of genius. He was one of those who carried most weight in the university, and had the reputation of having done more perhaps than any other living man to suppress any kind of originality.

"It is not our business," he said, "to help students to think for themselves. Surely this is the very last thing which one who wishes them well should encourage them to do. Our duty is to ensure that they shall think as we do, or at any rate, as we hold it expedient to say we do." In some respects, however, he was thought to hold somewhat radical opinions, for he was President of the Society for the Suppression of Useless Knowledge, and for the Completer Obliteration of the Past.

As regards the tests that a youth must pass before he can get a degree, I found that they have no class lists, and discourage anything like competition among the students; this, indeed, they regard as self-seeking and unneighborly. The examinations are conducted by way of papers written by the candidate on set subjects, some of which are known to him beforehand, while others are devised with a view of testing his general capacity and *savoir faire*.

My friend the Professor of Worldly Wisdom was the terror of the greater number of students; and, so far as I could judge, he very well might be, for he had taken his Professorship more seriously than any of the other Professors had done. I heard of his having plucked one poor fellow for want of sufficient vagueness in his saving clauses paper. Another was sent down for having written an article on a scientific subject without having made free enough use of the words "carefully," "patiently," and "earnestly." One man was refused a degree for being too often and too seriously in the right, while a few days before I came a whole batch had been plucked for insufficient distrust of printed matter.

About this there was just then rather a ferment, for it seems that the Professor had written an article in the leading university magazine, which was well known to be by him, and which abounded in all sorts of plausible blunders. He then set a paper which afforded the examinees an opportunity of repeating these blunders—which, believing the article to be by their own examiner, they of course did. The Professor plucked every single one of them, but his action was considered to have been not quite handsome.

I told them of Homer's noble line to the effect that a man should strive ever to be foremost and in all things to outvie his peers; but they said that no wonder the countries in which such a detestable maxim was held in admiration were always flying at one another's throats.

"Why," asked one Professor, "should a man want to be better than his neighbors? Let him be thankful if he is no worse."

I ventured feebly to say that I did not see how progress could be made in any art or science, or indeed in anything at all, without more or less self-seeking and hence unamiability.

"Of course it cannot," said the Professor, "and therefore we object to progress."

After which there was no more to be said. Later on, however, a young Professor took me aside and said he did not think I quite understood their views about progress.

"We like progress," he said, "but it must commend itself to the common sense of the people. If a man gets to know more than his neighbors he should keep his knowledge to himself till he has sounded them, and seen whether they agree, or are likely to agree with him." He said it was as immoral to be too far in front of one's own age, as to lag too far behind it. "If a man can carry his neighbors with him, he may say what he likes; but if not, what insult can be more gratuitous than the telling them what they do not want to know? A man should remember that intellectual over-indulgence is one of the most insidious and disgraceful forms that excess can take. Granted that every one should exceed more or less, inasmuch as absolutely perfect sanity would drive any man mad the moment he reached it, but . . ."

He was now warming to his subject and I was beginning to wonder how I should get rid of him, when the party broke up, and though I promised to call on him before I left, I was unfortunately prevented from doing so. . . .

. . . Nothing surprised me more than to see the occasional flashes of common sense with which one branch of study or another was lit up, while not a single ray fell upon so many others. I was particularly struck with this on strolling into the Art School of the University. Here I found that the course of study was divided into two branches—the practical and the commercial—no student being permitted to continue his studies in the actual practice of the art he had taken up, unless he made equal progress in its commercial history.

Thus those who were studying painting were examined at frequent intervals in the prices which all the leading pictures of the last fifty or a hundred years had realized, and in the fluctuations in their values when (as often happened) they had been sold and resold three or four times. The artist, they contend, is a dealer in pictures, and it is as important for him to learn how to adapt his wares to the market, and to know approximately what kind of a picture will fetch how much, as it is for him to be able to paint the picture. This, I suppose, is what the French mean by laying so much stress upon "values."

As regards the city itself, the more I saw the more enchanted I became. I dare not trust myself with any description of the exquisite beauty of the different colleges, and their walks and gardens. Truly in these things alone there must be a hallow-

ing and refining influence which is in itself half an education, and which no amount of error can wholly spoil. I was introduced to many of the Professors, who showed me every hospitality and kindness; nevertheless I could hardly avoid a sort of suspicion that some of those whom I was taken to see had been so long engrossed in their own study of hypothetics that they had become the exact antitheses of the Athenians in the days of St. Paul; for whereas the Athenians spent their lives in nothing save to see and to hear some new thing, there were some here who seemed to devote themselves to the avoidance of every opinion with which they were not perfectly familiar, and regarded their own brains as a sort of sanctuary, to which if an opinion had once resorted, none other was to attack it.

I should warn the reader, however, that I was rarely sure what the men whom I met while staying with Mr. Thims really meant; for there was no getting anything out of them if they scented even a suspicion that they might be what they call "giving themselves away." As there is hardly any subject on which this suspicion cannot arise, I found it difficult to get definite opinions from any of them, except on such subjects as the weather, eating and drinking, holiday excursions, or games of skill.

If they cannot wriggle out of expressing an opinion of some sort, they will commonly retail those of some one who has already written upon the subject, and conclude by saying that though they quite admit that there is an element of truth in what the writer has said, there are many points on which they are unable to agree with him. Which these points were, I invariably found myself unable to determine; indeed, it seemed to be counted the perfection of scholarship and good breeding among them not to have—much less to express—an opinion on any subject on which it might prove later that they had been mistaken. The art of sitting gracefully on a fence has never, I should think, been brought to greater perfection than at the Erewhonian Colleges of Unreason.

Even when, wriggle as they may, they find themselves pinned down to some expression of definite opinion, as often as not they will argue in support of what they perfectly well know to be untrue. I repeatedly met with reviews and articles even in their best journals, between the lines of which I had little difficulty in detecting a sense exactly contrary to the one ostensibly put forward. So well is this understood, that a man must be a mere tyro in the arts of Erewhonian polite society, unless he instinctively suspects a hidden "yea" in every "nay" that meets him. Granted that it comes to much the same in the end, for it does not matter whether "yea" is called "yea" or "nay," so long as it is understood which it is to be; but our own more direct way of calling a spade a spade, rather than a rake, with the intention that every one should understand it as a spade, seems more satisfactory. On the other hand, the Erewhonian system lends itself better to the suppression of that downrightness which it seems the express aim of Erewhonian philosophy to discountenance.

However this may be, the fear-of-giving-themselves-away disease was fatal to the intelligence of those infected by it, and almost every one at the Colleges of Unreason had caught it to a greater or less degree. After a few years atrophy of the opinions invariably supervened, and the sufferer became stone dead to everything except the more superficial aspects of those material objects with which he came most in contact. The expression on the faces of these people was repellent; they did not, however, seem particularly unhappy, for they none of them had the faintest idea that they were in reality more dead than alive. No cure for this disgusting fear-of-giving-themselves-away disease has yet been discovered.

(1872)

Walter Pater

(1839-1894)

That quest for beauty to which the Pre-Raphaelites, and Rossetti in particular, had given impetus, resulted toward the end of the century in the growth of the "esthetic movement." Its creed has been identified in the public mind with the doctrine of "art for art's sake." Of this estheticism the philosopher was Walter Pater, the popularizer Oscar Wilde (see p. 828), and the satirist W. S. Gilbert (in *Patience*; see p. 865). During the political stress of our own century it has been common to speak contemptuously of the esthetes as a collection of futile, precious, emasculate men. But such a judgment is as rash as it is undeserved. Viewed historically, the esthetic movement was a culmination of the reaction of artistic taste against the ugliness of industrial society. Walter Pater, therefore, in a sense, took up the work of Ruskin and Arnold where they had left it. Nor was the basis of his teaching unsound, for his insistence on the fact that art must be judged by criteria of its own was both just and necessary. Whatever preciosity developed from the exaggeration—and distortion—of his ideas cannot, with any fairness, be charged against him. He was not, like many of his disciples, amoral. On the contrary, he felt that art had this "moral significancy": to teach us to make of life itself an art.

He was born on August 4, 1839, in a poor quarter of the East End of London, where his father practiced the locally unlucrative profession of physician. Pater's father died when the boy was five, and the family moved to Enfield, a village a few miles out of London. There he remained under the tutelage of three attentive women—his mother, aunt, and grandmother—who encouraged him in such pursuits as increased his natural sensitiveness at the expense of all the physical exploits and sports which are common to boyhood. These years of almost exclusively feminine influence, which he has immortalized in his beautiful essay, *The Child in the House* (see p. 881), were responsible for a certain absence of virility in Pater's make-up, the rare refinement of his perceptions, and his studious avoidance of contact with the world of practical affairs. At the age of fourteen he was sent to King's College, Canterbury, where he was agreeable to his aunt's desire to have him prepare for the ministry. In 1858 he entered Queen's College, Oxford, and it was at this university that he was to make his home for the rest of his life. His studies induced religious skepticism in him, and by the time he was twenty-one he renounced all belief in Christianity. He now devoted himself to philosophy, particularly the works of Plato and the German thinkers. Several visits to Germany during college vacations augmented his enthusiasm for German culture. In 1864 he was elected to a classical fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford, and thereafter his life was the uneventful one of a college don—a destiny utterly to the satisfaction of a man of his tastes and inclinations.

His readings in the German estheticians led him to a study of the Renaissance, and in 1865 he went to Italy to make personal acquaintance with classic and Renaissance art. At this time, too, he was considerably interested in the English romanticists, and his first published paper, which appeared in the *Westminster Review* for January 1866, was on Coleridge, the apostle of German philosophy in England. Perhaps his most important intellectual experience was his discovery of a biography of Winckelman, the famous German

critic of Greek art. In 1867 Pater published an essay, *Winckelman,* the first of a series on art of the Renaissance, which were collected in 1873 as *Studies in the History of the Renaissance.* The celebrated *Conclusion* to this volume (see p. 879) contains what is perhaps the fullest statement of Pater's philosophy. So far from facing, as did most Victorian leaders, the challenge of social problems, Pater gave no place to them in his speculations. Taking as his point of departure the axiom that all a man can know of his soul is what it experiences in this terrestrial world, he argued, as did Epicurus long ago, that it was the intelligent being's duty to seek, select, and cherish as many moments of exquisite sensation as possible. Such a view struck the English middle-class mind as practically immoral, and certainly irreligious, and Pater felt obliged to modify it in the second edition of the book.

In 1885 appeared his novel, *Marius the Epicurean,* on which he had worked for five years, a wonderful reconstruction of Roman society at the time of Marcus Aurelius, in which Pater's favorite idea is again exemplified through the person of his hero. Here we find a cultivated disciple of Epicurus who discovers that the perfect fulfillment of the only life he believes in, is sacrificing that life for another man.

To Pater the quintessential worth of all art is its style. Here he adopted completely the doctrine of Flaubert (see p. 1177) that the author must find the perfect expression for every one of his ideas, for every part of each idea, and that the conscientious writer is obliged to be satisfied with nothing less than *le mot juste* (the precise word) for his meaning. His essay on *Style* (see p. 888), which appeared in the volume of *Appreciations* (1889), is an exposition of his theory of writing as a fine art. Pater's own style, over which he worked with loving care, has perhaps too much the air of self-conscious perfection to serve as a model; and the thought which he lavished upon the weight and worth of every word tends to rob his writings of all power and masculinity. But it must be conceded that he attained the perfection he sought, and there is a languorous grace in all his compositions.

His other works include *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), called by some critics his masterpiece, *Plato and Platonism* (1893), *The Child in the House* (1894), *Greek Studies* (1895), and *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895). Pater's greatest triumphs are his splendid reproductions through the medium of language of the masterworks of other arts, of which he was ever a sensitive and discriminating devotee.

From *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*

Conclusion

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals,—the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But these elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the wasting and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain by every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us; it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven by many

forces; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or if we begin with the inward whirl of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye and fading of color from the wall,—the movement of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest,—but the race of the midstream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to act upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like a trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—color, odor, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further; the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.

Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it—a relic more or less fleeting—of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

Philosophiren, says Novalis,[1] *ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren.*[2] The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it into sharp and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us,—but for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colors, and curious odors, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendor of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impres-

[1] German lyric poet (1772-1801).

[2] This German is accurately paraphrased in the succeeding sentence.

sions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte,[3] or of Hegel,[4] or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought." The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful passages in the writings of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions*, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had always clung about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire. Well! we are all *condamnés*,[5] as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve—*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis;* we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest—at least among "the children of this world"—in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

(1873)

The Child in the House

This is a sensitive re-creation of the author's own cloistered childhood.

As Florian Deleal walked, one hot afternoon, he overtook by the wayside a poor aged man, and, as he seemed weary with the road, helped him on with the burden which he carried, a certain distance. And as the man told his story, it chanced that he named the place, a little place in the neighborhood of a great city, where Florian had passed his earliest years, but which he had never since seen, and, the story told, went forward on his journey comforted. And that night, like a reward for his pity, a dream of that place came to Florian, a dream which did for him the office of the finer sort of memory, bringing its object to mind with a great clearness, yet, as sometimes happens in dreams, raised a little above itself, and above ordinary retrospect. The true aspect of the place, especially of the house there in which he had lived as a child, the fashion of its doors, its hearths, its windows, the very scent upon the air of it, was with him in sleep for a season; only, with tints more musically blent on wall and floor, and some finer light and shadow running in and out along its curves and angles, and with all its little carvings daintier. He awoke with a sigh at the thought of almost thirty years which lay between him and that place, yet with a flutter of pleasure still within him at the fair light, as if it were a smile, upon it. And it happened that this accident of his dream was just the thing needed for the beginning of a certain design he then had in view, the noting, namely, of some things in the story of his spirit—in that process of brain-building by which we are, each one of us, what we are. With the image of the place so clear and favorable upon him, he fell to thinking of himself therein, and how his thoughts had grown up to him. In that half-spiritualized house he could watch the better, over again, the gradual expansion of the soul which had come to be there—of which, indeed, through the law which makes the material objects about them so large an element in children's lives, it had actually become a part; inward and outward being woven through and through each other into one inextricable texture—half, tint and trace and

[3] Auguste Comte (1798-1857), French philosopher and founder of positivism.

[4] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), German philosopher.

[5] sentenced to death.

accident of homely color and form, from the wood and the bricks; half, mere soul-stuff, floated thither from who knows how far. In the house and garden of his dream he saw a child moving, and could divide the main streams at least of the winds that had played on him, and study so the first stage in that mental journey.

The *old house*, as when Florian talked of it afterwards he always called it (as all children do, who can recollect a change of home, soon enough but not too soon to mark a period in their lives), really was an old house; and an element of French descent in its inmates—descent from Watteau, the old court-painter, one of whose gallant pieces still hung in one of the rooms—might explain, together with some other things, a noticeable trimness and comely whiteness about everything there—the curtains, the couches, the paint on the walls with which the light and shadow played so delicately; might explain also the tolerance of the great poplar in the garden, a tree most often despised by English people, but which French people love, having observed a certain fresh way its leaves have of dealing with the wind, making it sound, in never so slight a stirring of the air, like running water.

The old-fashioned, low wainscoting went round the rooms, and up the staircase with carved balusters and shadowy angles, landing half-way up at a broad window, with a swallow's nest below the sill, and the blossom of an old pear-tree showing across it in late April, against the blue, below which the perfumed juice of the find of fallen fruit in autumn was so fresh. At the next turning came the closet which held on its deep shelves the best china. Little angel faces and reedy flutings stood out round the fireplace of the children's room. And on the top of the house, above the large attic, where the white mice ran in the twilight—an infinite, unexplored wonderland of childish treasures, glass beads, empty scent-bottles still sweet, thrum of colored silks, among its lumber—a flat space of roof, railed round, gave a view of the neighboring steeples; for the house, as I said, stood near a great city, which sent up heavenwards, over the twisting weather-vanes, not seldom, its beds of rolling cloud and smoke, touched with storm or sunshine. But the child of whom I am writing did not hate the fog because of the crimson lights which fell from it sometimes upon the chimneys, and the whites which gleamed through its openings, on summer mornings, on turret or pavement. For it is false to suppose that a child's sense of beauty is dependent on any choiceness of special fineness in the objects which present themselves to it, though this indeed comes to be the rule with most of us in later life; earlier, in some degree, we see inwardly; and the child finds for itself, and with unstinted delight, a difference for the sense, in those whites and reds through the smoke on very homely buildings, and in the gold of the dandelions at the roadside, just beyond the houses, where not a handful of earth is virgin and untouched, in the lack of better ministries to its desire of beauty.

This house then stood not far beyond the gloom and rumors of the town, among high garden-walls, bright all summer-time with golden-rod and brown-and-golden wall-flower—*flos parietis*, as the children's Latin-reading father taught them to call it, while he was with them. Tracing back the threads of his complex spiritual habit, as he was used in after years to do, Florian found that he owed to the place many tones of sentiment afterwards customary with him, certain inward lights under which things most naturally presented themselves to him. The coming and going of travellers to the town along the way, the shadow of the streets, the sudden breath of the neighboring gardens, the singular brightness of bright weather there, its singular darknesses which linked themselves in his mind to certain engraved illustrations in the old big Bible at home, the coolness of the dark, cavernous shops round the great church, with its giddy winding stair up to the pigeons and the bells—a citadel of peace in the heart of the trouble—all this acted on his childish fancy, so that ever afterwards the like aspects and incidents never failed to throw him into a well-recognized imaginative mood, seeming actually to have become a part of the texture of his mind. Also, Florian could trace home to this point a pervading preference in himself for a kind of comeliness and dignity, an *urbanity* literally, in modes of life, which he connected with the pale people of towns, and which made him susceptible to a kind of exquisite satisfaction in the trimness and well-considered grace of certain things and persons he afterwards met with, here and there, in his way through the world.

So the child of whom I am writing lived on there quietly; things without ministering to him, as he sat daily at the window with the bird-cage hanging below it, and his mother taught him to read, wondering at the ease with which he learned, and at the quickness of his memory. The perfume

of the little flowers of the lime-tree fell through the air upon them like rain; while time seemed to move ever more slowly to the murmur of the bees in it, till it almost stood still on June afternoons. How insignificant, at the moment, seem the influences of the sensible things which are tossed and fall and lie about us, so, or so, in the environment of early childhood. How indelibly, as we afterwards discover, they affect us; with what capricious attractions and associations they figure themselves on the white paper, the smooth wax, of our ingenuous souls, as "with lead in the rock for ever," giving form and feature, and as it were assigned house-room in our memory, to early experiences of feeling and thought, which abide with us ever afterwards, thus, and not otherwise. The realities and passions, the rumors of the greater world without, steal in upon us, each by its own special little passage-way, through the wall of custom about us; and never afterwards quite detach themselves from this or that accident, or trick, in the mode of their first entrance to us. Our susceptibilities, the discovery of our powers, manifold experiences—our various experiences of the coming and going of bodily pain, for instance—belong to this or the other well-remembered place in the material habitation—that little white room with the window across which the heavy blossoms could beat so peevishly in the wind, with just that particular catch or throb, such a sense of teasing in it, on gusty mornings; and the early habitation thus gradually becomes a sort of material shrine or sanctuary of sentiment; a system of visible symbolism interweaves itself through all our thoughts and passions; and irresistibly, little shapes, voices, accidents—the angle at which the sun in the morning fell on the pillow—become parts of the great chain wherewith we are bound.

Thus far, for Florian, what all this had determined was a peculiarly strong sense of home—so forcible a motive with all of us—prompting to us our customary love of the earth, and the larger part of our fear of death, that revulsion we have from it, as from something strange, untried, unfriendly; though life-long imprisonment, they tell you, and final banishment from home is a thing bitterer still; the looking forward to but a short space, a mere childish *goûter* and dessert of it, before the end, being so great a resource of effort to pilgrims and wayfarers, and the soldier in distant quarters, and lending, in lack of that, some power of solace to the thought of sleep in the home churchyard, at least—dead cheek by dead cheek, and with the rain soaking in upon one from above.

So powerful is this instinct, and yet accidents like those I have been speaking of so mechanically determine it; its essence being indeed the early familiar, as constituting our ideal, or typical conception, of rest and security. Out of so many possible conditions, just this for you and that for me, brings ever the unmistakable realization of the delightful *chez soi*[1]; this for the Englishman, for me and you, with the closely drawn white curtain and the shaded lamp; that, quite other, for the wandering Arab, who folds his tent every morning, and makes his sleeping-place among haunted ruins or in old tombs.

With Florian then the sense of home became singularly intense, his good fortune being that the special character of his home was in itself so essentially homelike. As after many wanderings I have come to fancy that some parts of Surrey and Kent are, for Englishmen, the true landscape, true home-counties, by right, partly, of a certain earthy warmth in the yellow of the sand below their gorse-bushes, and of a certain gray-blue mist after rain, in the hollows of the hills there, welcome to fatigued eyes, and never seen farther south; so I think that the sort of house I have described, with precisely those proportions of red-brick and green, and with a just perceptible monotony in the subdued order of it, for its distinguishing note, is for Englishmen at least typically homelike. And so for Florian that general human instinct was reinforced by this special home-likeness in the place his wandering soul had happened to light on, as, in the second degree, its body and earthly tabernacle; the sense of harmony between his soul and its physical environment became, for a time at least, like perfectly played music, and the life led there singularly tranquil and filled with a curious sense of self-possession. The love of security, of an habitually undisputed standing-ground or sleeping-place, came to count for much in the generation and correcting of his thoughts, and afterwards as a salutary principle of restraint in all his wanderings of spirit. The wistful yearning towards home, in absence from it, as the shadows of evening deepened, and he followed in thought what was doing there from hour to hour, interpreted to him much of a yearning and regret he experienced afterwards, towards he knew not what, out of strange ways of feeling and thought in which, from time to time, his spirit found itself alone;

[1] at home.

and in the tears shed in such absences there seemed always to be some soul-subduing foretaste of what his last tears might be.

And the sense of security could hardly have been deeper, the quiet of the child's soul being one with the quiet of its home, a place "inclosed" and "sealed." But upon this assured place, upon the child's assured soul which resembled it, there came floating in from the larger world without, as at windows left ajar unknowingly, or over the high garden walls, two streams of impressions, the sentiments of beauty and pain—recognitions of the visible, tangible, audible loveliness of things, as a very real and somewhat tyrannous element in them —and of the sorrow of the world, of grown people and children and animals, as a thing not to be put by in them. From this point he could trace two predominant processes of mental change in him—the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright color and choise form—the sweet curvings, for instance, of the lips of those who seemed to him comely persons, modulated in such delicate unison to the things they said or sang,—marking early the activity in him of a more than customary sensuousness, "the lust of the eye," as the Preacher says, which might lead him, one day, how far! Could he have foreseen the weariness of the way! In music sometimes the two sorts of impressions came together, and he would weep, to the surprise of older people. Tears of joy too the child knew, also to older people's surprise; real tears, once, of relief from long-strung, childish expectation, when he found returned at evening, with new roses in her cheeks, the little sister who had been to a place where there was a wood, and brought back for him a treasure of fallen acorns, and black crow's feathers, and his peace at finding her again near him mingled all night with some intimate sense of the distant forest, the rumor of its breezes, with the glossy blackbirds aslant and the branches lifted in them, and of the perfect nicety of the little cups that fell. So those two elementary apprehensions of the tenderness and of the color in things grew apace in him, and were seen by him afterwards to send their roots back into the beginnings of life.

Let me note first some of the occasions of his recognition of the element of pain in things—incidents, now and again, which seemed suddenly to awake in him the whole force of that sentiment which Goethe[2] has called the *Weltschmerz*,[3] and in which the concentrated sorrow of the world seemed suddenly to lie heavy upon him. A book lay in an old book-case, of which he cared to remember one picture—a woman sitting, with hands bound behind her, the dress, the cap, the hair, folded with a simplicity which touched him strangely, as if not by her own hands, but with some ambiguous care at the hands of others—Queen Marie Antoinette, on her way to execution —we all remember David's[4] drawing, meant merely to make her ridiculous. The face that had been so high had learned to be mute and resistless; but out of its very resistlessness seemed now to call on men to have pity, and forbear; and he took note of that, as he closed the book, as a thing to look at again, if he should at any time find himself tempted to be cruel. Again, he would never quite forget the appeal in the small sister's face, in the garden under the lilacs, terrified at a spider lighted on her sleeve. He could trace back to the look then noted a certain mercy he conceived always for people in fear, even of little things, which seemed to make him, though but for a moment, capable of almost any sacrifice of himself. Impressible, susceptible persons, indeed, who had had their sorrows, lived about him; and this sensibility was due in part to the tacit influence of their presence, enforcing upon him habitually the fact that there are those who pass their days, as a matter of course, in a sort of "going quietly." Most poignantly of all he could recall, in unfading minutest circumstance, the cry on the stair, sounding bitterly through the house, and struck into his soul for ever, of an aged woman, his father's sister, come now to announce his death in distant India; how it seemed to make the aged woman like a child again; and, he knew not why, but this fancy was full of pity to him. There were the little sorrows of the dumb animals too—of the white angora, with a dark tail like an ermine's, and a face like a flower, who fell into a lingering sickness, and became quite delicately human in its valetudinarianism, and came to have a hundred different expressions of voice—how it grew worse and worse, till it began to feel the light too much for it, and at last, after one wild morning of pain, the little soul flickered away from the body, quite worn to death already, and now but feebly retaining it.

So he wanted another pet; and as there were starlings about the place, which could be taught to speak, one of them was caught, and he meant to

[2] See p. 1149.

[3] sentimental pessimism.

[4] Jacques Louis David (1748-1825), French painter.

treat it kindly; but in the night its young ones could be heard crying after it, and the responsive cry of the mother-bird towards them; and at last, with the first light, though not till after some debate with himself, he went down and opened the cage, and saw a sharp bound of the prisoner up to her nestlings; and therewith came the sense of remorse,—that he too was become an accomplice in moving, to the limit of his small power, the springs and handles of that great machine in things, constructed so ingeniously to play pain-fugues on the delicate nerve-work of living creatures.

I have remarked how, in the process of our brain-building, as the house of thought in which we live gets itself together, like some airy bird's-nest of floating thistle-down and chance straws, compact at last, little accidents have their consequence; and thus it happened that as he walked one evening, a garden gate, usually closed, stood open; and lo! within, a great red hawthorn in full flower, embossing heavily the bleached and twisted trunk and branches, so aged that there were but few green leaves thereon—a plumage of tender, crimson fire out of the heart of the dry wood. The perfume of the tree had now and again reached him, in the currents of the wind, over the wall, and he had wondered what might be behind it, and was now allowed to fill his arms with the flowers—flowers enough for all the old blue-china pots along the chimney-piece, making *fête* in the children's room. Was it some periodic moment in the expansion of soul within him, or mere trick of heat in the heavily laden summer air? But the beauty of the thing struck home to him feverishly; and in dreams at night he loitered along a magic roadway of crimson flowers, which seemed to open ruddily in thick, fresh masses about his feet, and fill softly all the little hollows in the banks on either side. Always afterwards, summer by summer, as the flowers came on, the blossom of the red hawthorn still seemed to him absolutely the reddest of all things; and the goodly crimson, still alive in the works of old Venetian masters or old Flemish tapestries, called out always from afar the recollection of the flame in those perishing little petals, as it pulsed gradually out of them, kept long in the drawers of an old cabinet. Also then, for the first time, he seemed to experience a passionateness in his relation to fair outward objects, an inexplicable excitement in their presence, which disturbed him, and from which he half longed to be free. A touch of regret or desire mingled all night with the remembered presence of the red flowers, and their perfume in the darkness about him: and the longing for some undivined, entire possession of them was the beginning of a revelation to him, growing ever clearer, with the coming of the gracious summer guise of fields and trees and persons in each succeeding year, of a certain, at times seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful physical things, a kind of tyranny of the senses over him.

In later years he came upon philosophies which occupied him much in the estimate of the proportion of the sensuous and the ideal elements in human knowledge, the relative parts they bear in it; and, in his intellectual scheme, was led to assign very little to the abstract thought, and much to its sensible vehicle or occasion. Such metaphysical speculation did but reinforce what was instinctive in his way of receiving the world, and for him, everywhere, that sensible vehicle or occasion became, perhaps only too surely, the necessary concomitant of any perception of things, real enough to be of any weight or reckoning, in his house of thought. There were times when he could think of the necessity he was under of associating all thoughts to touch and sight, as a sympathetic link between himself and actual, feeling, living objects; a protest in favor of real men and women against mere grey, unreal abstractions; and he remembered gratefully how the Christian religion, hardly less than the religion of the ancient Greeks, translating so much of its spiritual verity into things that may be seen, condescends in part to sanction this infirmity, if so it be, of our human existence, wherein the world of sense is so much with us, and welcomed this thought as a kind of keeper and sentinel over his soul therein. But certainly he came more and more to be unable to care for or think of soul but as in an actual body, or of any world but that wherein are water and trees, and where men and women look so or so, and press actual hands. It was the trick even his pity learned, fastening those who suffered in any wise to his affections by a kind of sensible attachments. He would think of Julian, fallen into incurable sickness, as spoiled in the sweet blossom of his skin like pale amber, and his honey-like hair; of Cecil, early dead, as cut off from the lilies, from golden summer days, from women's voices; and then what comforted him a little was the thought of the turning of the child's flesh to violets in the turf above him. And thinking of the very poor, it was not the things which most men care most for that he yearned to give them; but fairer

roses, perhaps, and power to taste quite as they will, at their ease and not task-burdened, a certain desirable clear light in the new morning, through which sometimes he had noticed them, quite unconscious of it, on their way to their early toil.

So he yielded himself to these things, to be played upon by them like a musical instrument, and began to note with deepening watchfulness, but always with some puzzled, unutterable longing in his enjoyment, the phases of the seasons and of the growing or waning day, down even to the shadowy changes wrought on bare wall or ceiling —the light cast up from the snow, bringing out their darkest angles; the brown light in the cloud, which meant rain; that almost too austere clearness, in the protracted light of the lengthening day, before warm weather began, as if it lingered but to make a severer work-day, with the schoolbooks opened earlier and later; that beam of June sunshine, at last, as he lay awake before the time, a way of gold-dust across the darkness; all the humming, the freshness, the perfume of the garden seemed to lie upon it—and coming in one afternoon in September, along the red gravel walk, to look for a basket of yellow crab-apples left in the cool, old parlor, he remembered it the more, and how the colors struck upon him, because a wasp on one bitten apple stung him, and he felt the passion of sudden, severe pain. For this too brought its curious reflections; and, in relief from it, he would wonder over it—how it had then been with him—puzzled at the depth of the charm or spell over him, which lay, for a little while at least, in the mere absence of pain; once, especially, when an older boy taught him to make flowers of sealing-wax, and he had burnt his hand badly at the lighted taper, and been unable to sleep. He remembered that also afterwards, as a sort of typical thing—a white vision of heat about him, clinging closely, through the languid scent of the ointments, put upon the place to make it well.

Also, as he felt this pressure upon him of the sensible world, then, as often afterwards, there would come another sort of curious questioning how the last impressions of eye and ear might happen to him, how they would find him—the scent of the last flower, the soft yellowness of the last morning, the last recognition of some object of affection, hand or voice; it could not be but that the latest look of the eyes, before their final closing, would be strangely vivid; one would go with the hot tears, the cry, the touch of the wistful bystander, impressed how deeply on one! or would it be, perhaps, a mere frail retiring of all things, great or little, away from one, into a level distance?

For with this desire of physical beauty mingled itself early the fear of death—the fear of death intensified by the desire of beauty. Hitherto he had never gazed upon dead faces, as sometimes, afterwards, at the Morgue in Paris, or in that fair cemetery at Munich, where all the dead must go and lie in state before burial, behind glass windows, among the flowers and incense and holy candles—the aged clergy with their sacred ornaments, the young men in their dancing-shoes and spotless white linen—after which visits, those waxen, resistless faces would always live with him for many days, making the broadest sunshine sickly. The child had heard indeed of the death of his father, and how, in the Indian station, a fever had taken him, so that though not in action he had yet died as a soldier; and hearing of the "resurrection of the just," he could think of him as still abroad in the world, somehow, for his protection—a grand though perhaps rather terrible figure, in beautiful soldier's things, like the figure in the picture of Joshua's Vision in the Bible—and of that round which the mourners moved so softly, and afterwards with such solemn singing, as but a worn-out garment left at a deserted lodging. So it was, until on a summer day he walked with his mother through a fair churchyard. In a bright dress he rambled among the graves, in the gay weather, and so came, in one corner, upon an open grave for a child—a dark space on the brilliant grass—the black mould heaped up round it, weighing down the little jeweled branches of the dwarf rosebushes in flower. And therewith came, full-grown, never wholly to leave him, with the certainty that even children do sometimes die, the physical horror of death, with its wholly selfish recoil from the association of lower forms of life, and the suffocating weight above. No benign, grave figure in beautiful soldier's things any longer abroad in the world for his protection! only a few poor, piteous bones; and above them, possibly, a certain sort of figure he hoped not to see. For sitting one day in the garden below an open window, he heard people talking, and could not but listen, how, in a sleepless hour, a sick woman had seen one of the dead sitting beside her, come to call her hence; and from the broken talk evolved with much clearness the notion that not all those dead people had really departed to the churchyard, nor were quite so motionless as they looked,

but led a secret, half-fugitive life in their old homes, quite free by night, though sometimes visible in the day, dodging from room to room, with no great goodwill towards those who shared the place with them. All night the figure sat beside him in the reveries of his broken sleep, and was not quite gone in the morning—an odd, irreconcilable new member of the household, making the sweet familiar chambers unfriendly and suspect by its uncertain presence. He could have hated the dead he had pitied so, for being thus. Afterwards he came to think of those poor, home-returning ghosts, which all men have fancied to themselves —the *revenants*—pathetically, as crying, or beating with vain hands at the doors, as the wind came, their cries distinguishable in it as a wilder inner note. But, always making death more unfamiliar still, that old experience would ever, from time to time, return to him; even in the living he sometimes caught its likeness; at any time or place, in a moment, the faint atmosphere of the chamber of death would be breathed around him, and the image with the bound chin, the quaint smile, the straight stiff feet, shed itself across the air upon the bright carpet, amid the gayest company, or happiest communing with himself.

To most children the sombre questionings to which impressions like these attach themselves, if they come at all, are actually suggested by religious books, which therefore they often regard with much secret distaste, and dismiss, as far as possible, from their habitual thoughts as a too depressing element in life. To Florian such impressions, these misgivings as to the ultimate tendency of the years, of the relationship between life and death, had been suggested spontaneously in the natural course of his mental growth by a strong innate sense for the soberer tones in things, further strengthened by actual circumstances; and religious sentiment, that system of biblical ideas in which he had been brought up, presented itself to him as a thing that might soften and dignify, and light up as with a "lively hope," a melancholy already deeply settled in him. So he yielded himself easily to religious impressions, and with a kind of mystical appetite for sacred things, the more as they came to him through a saintly person who loved him tenderly, and believed that this early preoccupation with them already marked the child out for a saint. He began to love, for their own sakes, church lights, holy days, all that belonged to the comely order of the sanctuary, the secrets of its white linen, and holy vessels, and fonts of pure water; and its hieratic purity and simplicity became the type of something he desired to have about him in actual life. He pored over the pictures in religious books, and knew by heart the exact mode in which the wrestling angel grasped Jacob, how Jacob looked in his mysterious sleep, how the bells and pomegranates were attached to the hem of Aaron's vestment, sounding sweetly as he glided over the turf of the holy place. His way of conceiving religion came then to be in effect what it ever afterwards remained—a sacred history indeed, but still more a sacred ideal, a transcendent version or representation, under intense and more expressive light and shade, of human life and its familiar or exceptional incidents, birth, death, marriage, youth, age, tears, joy, rest, sleep, waking —a mirror, towards which men might turn away their eyes from vanity and dullness, and see themselves therein as angels, with their daily meat and drink, even, become a kind of sacred transaction —a complementary strain or burden, applied to our every-day existence, whereby the stray snatches of music in it re-set themselves, and fall into the scheme of some higher and more consistent harmony. A place adumbrated itself in his thoughts, wherein those sacred personalities, which are at once the reflex and the pattern of our nobler phases of life, housed themselves; and this region in his intellectual scheme all subsequent experience did but tend still further to realize and define. Some ideal, hieratic persons he would always need to occupy it and keep a warmth there. And he could hardly understand those who felt no such need at all, finding themselves quite happy without such heavenly companionship, and sacred double of their life, beside them.

Thus a constant substitution of the typical for the actual took place in his thoughts. Angels might be met by the way, under English elm or beech-tree; mere messengers seemed like angels, bound on celestial errands; a deep mysticity brooded over real meetings and partings; marriages were made in heaven; and deaths also, with hands of angels thereupon, to bear soul and body quietly asunder, each to its appointed rest. All the acts and accidents of daily life borrowed a sacred color and significance; the very colors of things became themselves weighty with meanings like the sacred stuffs of Moses' tabernacle, full of penitence or peace. Sentiment, congruous in the first instance only with those divine transactions, the deep, effusive unction of the House of Bethany, was assumed as the due attitude for the reception of our every-day existence; and

for a time he walked through the world in a sustained, not unpleasurable awe, generated by the habitual recognition, beside every circumstance and event of life, of its celestial correspondent.

Sensibility—the desire of physical beauty—a strange biblical awe, which made any reference to the unseen act on him like solemn music—these qualities the child took away with him, when, at about the age of twelve years, he left the old house, and was taken to live in another place. He had never left his home before, and, anticipating much from this change, had long dreamed over it, jealously counting the days till the time fixed for departure should come; had been a little careless about others even, in his strong desire for it—when Lewis fell sick, for instance, and they must wait still two days longer. At last the morning came, very fine; and all things—the very pavement with its dust, at the roadside—seemed to have a white, pearl-like lustre in them. They were to travel by a favorite road on which he had often walked a certain distance, and on one of those two prisoner days, when Lewis was sick, had walked farther than ever before, in his great desire to reach the new place. They had started and gone a little way when a pet bird was found to have been left behind, and must even now—so it presented itself to him—have already all the appealing fierceness and wild self-pity at heart of one left by others to perish of hunger in a closed house; and he returned to fetch it, himself in hardly less stormy distress. But as he passed in search of it from room to room, lying so pale, with a look of meekness in their denudation, and at last through that little stripped white room, the aspect of the place touched him like the face of one dead; and a clinging back towards it came over him, so intense that he knew it would last long, and spoiling all his pleasure in the realization of a thing so eagerly anticipated. And so, with the bird found, but himself in an agony of homesickness, thus capriciously sprung up within him, he was driven quickly away, far into the rural distance, so fondly speculated on, of that favorite country road. (1878)

Style

Since all progress of mind consists for the most part in differentiation, in the resolution of an obscure and complex object into its component aspects, it is surely the stupidest of losses to confuse things which right reason has put asunder, to lose the sense of achieved distinctions, the distinction between poetry and prose, for instance, or, to speak more exactly, between the laws and characteristic excellences of verse and prose composition. On the other hand, those who have dwelt most emphatically on the distinction between prose and verse, prose and poetry, may sometimes have been tempted to limit the proper functions of prose too narrowly; and this again is at least false economy, as being, in effect, the renunciation of a certain means or faculty, in a world where after all we must needs make the most of things. Critical efforts to limit art *a priori*, by anticipations regarding the natural incapacity of the material with which this or that artist works, as the sculptor with solid form, or the prose-writer with the ordinary language of men, are always liable to be discredited by the facts of artistic production; and while prose is actually found to be a colored thing with Bacon,[1] picturesque with Livy[2] and Carlyle,[3] musical with Cicero[4] and Newman,[5] mystical and intimate with Plato[6] and Michelet[7] and Sir Thomas Browne,[8] exalted or florid, it may be, with Milton[9] and Taylor,[10] it will be useless to protest that it can be nothing at all except something very tamely and narrowly confined to mainly practical ends—a kind of "good round-hand"; as useless as the protest that poetry might not touch prosaic subjects as with Wordsworth,[11] or an abstruse matter as with Browning,[12] or treat contemporary life nobly as with Tennyson.[13] In subordination to one essential beauty in all good literary style, in all literature

[1] See I, p. 377.
[2] Roman historian (59 B.C.-17 A.D.). [3] See p. 636.
[4] Roman orator and essayist (106-43 B.C.).
[5] See p. 687. [6] Greek philosopher (427-347 B.C.).
[7] French historian (1798-1874). [8] See I, p. 575.
[9] See I, p. 600.
[10] See I, p. 584.
[11] See p. 145. [12] See p. 495. [13] See p. 449.

as a fine art, as there are many beauties of poetry, so the beauties of prose are many and it is the business of criticism to estimate them as such; as it is good in the criticism of verse to look for those hard, logical and quasi-prosaic excellences which that too has, or needs. To find in the poem, amid the flowers, the allusions, the mixed perspectives, of *Lycidas*[14] for instance, the thought, the logical structure:—how wholesome! how delightful! as to identify in prose what we call the poetry, the imaginative power, not treating it as out of place and a kind of vagrant intruder, but by way of an estimate of its rights, that is, of its achieved powers, there.

Dryden,[15] with the characteristic instinct of his age, loved to emphasize the distinction between poetry and prose, the protest against their confusion with each other, coming with somewhat diminished effect from one whose poetry was so prosaic. In truth, his sense of prosaic excellence affected his verse rather than his prose, which is not only fervid, richly figured, poetic, as we say, but vitiated, all unconsciously, by many a scanning line. Setting up correctness, that humble merit of prose, as the central literary excellence, he is really a less correct writer than he may seem, still with an imperfect mastery of the relative pronoun. It might have been foreseen that, in the rotations of mind, the province of poetry in prose would find its assertor; and, a century after Dryden, amid very different intellectual needs, and with the need therefore of great modifications in literary form, the range of the poetic force in literature was effectively enlarged by Wordsworth. The true distinction between prose and poetry he regarded as the almost technical or accidental one of the absence or presence of metrical beauty, or, say! metrical restraint; and for him the opposition came to be between verse and prose of course; but, as the essential dichotomy[16] in this matter, between imaginative and unimaginative writing, parallel to De Quincey's distinction between "the literature of power and the literature of knowledge," in the former of which the composer gives us not fact, but his peculiar sense of fact, whether past or present.

Dismissing then, under sanction of Wordsworth, that harsher opposition of poetry to prose, as savoring in fact of the arbitrary psychology of the last century, and with it the prejudice that there can be but one only beauty of prose style, I propose here to point out certain qualities of all literature as a fine art, which, if they apply to the literature of fact, apply still more to the literature of the imaginative sense of fact, while they apply indifferently to verse and prose, so far as either is really imaginative—certain conditions of true art in both alike, which conditions may also contain in them the secret of the proper discrimination and guardianship of the peculiar excellences of either.

The line between fact and something quite different from external fact is, indeed, hard to draw. In Pascal,[17] for instance, in the persuasive writers generally, how difficult to define the point where, from time to time, argument which, if it is to be worth anything at all, must consist of facts or groups of facts, becomes a pleading—a theorem no longer, but essentially an appeal to the reader to catch the writer's spirit, to think with him, if one can or will—an expression no longer of fact but of his sense of it, his peculiar intuition of a world prospective, or discerned below the faulty conditions of the present, in either case changed somewhat from the actual world. In science, on the other hand, in history so far as it conforms to scientific rule, we have a literary domain where the imagination may be thought to be always an intruder. And as, in all science, the functions of literature reduce themselves eventually to the transcribing of fact, so all the excellences of literary form in regard to science are reducible to various kinds of painstaking; this good quality being involved in all "skilled work" whatever, in the drafting of an act of parliament, as in sewing. Yet here again, the writer's sense of fact, in history especially, and in all those complex subjects which do but lie on the borders of science, will still take the place of fact, in various degrees. Your historian, for instance, with absolutely truthful intention, amid the multitude of facts presented to him must needs select, and in selecting assert something of his own humor, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within. So Gibbon[18] molds his unwieldy material to a preconceived view. Livy, Tacitus,[19] Michelet, moving full of poignant sensibility amid the records of the past, each, after his own sense, modifies—who can tell where and to what degree?—and becomes something else than a transcriber; each, as he

[14] See I, p. 609.
[15] See I, p. 681.
[16] two-fold division.
[17] Blaise Pascal (1623-62), French philosopher.
[18] The reference here is to his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.
[19] Roman historian of the first century A.D.

thus modifies, passing into the domain of art proper. For just in proportion as the writer's aim, consciously or unconsciously, comes to be the transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist, his work *fine* art; and good art (as I hope ultimately to show) in proportion to the truth of his presentment of that sense; as in those humbler or plainer functions of literature also, truth—truth to bare fact, there—is the essence of such artistic quality as they may have. Truth! there can be no merit, no craft at all, without that. And further, all beauty is in the long run only *fineness* of truth, or what we call expression, the finer accommodation of speech to that vision within.

—The transcript of his sense of fact rather than the fact, as being preferable, pleasanter, more beautiful to the writer himself. In literature, as in every other product of human skill, in the moulding of a bell or a platter for instance, wherever this sense asserts itself, wherever the producer so modifies his work as, over and above its primary use or intention, to make it pleasing (to himself, of course, in the first instance) there, "fine" as opposed to merely serviceable art, exists. Literary art, that is, like all art which is in any way imitative or reproductive of fact—form, or color, or incident—is the representation of such fact as connected with soul, of a specific personality, in its preferences, its volition and power.

Such is the matter of imaginative or artistic literature—this transcript, not of mere fact, but of fact in its infinite variety, as modified by human preference in all its infinitely varied forms. It will be good literary art not because it is brilliant or sober, or rich, or impulsive, or severe, but just in proportion as its representation of that sense, that soul-fact, is true, verse being only one department of such literature, and imaginative prose, it may be thought, being the special art of the modern world. That imaginative prose should be the special and opportune art of the modern world results from two important facts about the latter: first, the chaotic variety and complexity of its interests, making the intellectual issue, the really master currents of the present time incalculable—a condition of mind little susceptible of the restraint proper to verse form, so that the most characteristic verse of the nineteenth century has been lawless verse; and secondly, an all-pervading naturalism, a curiosity about everything whatever as it really is, involving a certain humility of attitude, cognate to what must, after all, be the less ambitious form of literature. And prose thus asserting itself as the special and privileged artistic faculty of the present day, will be, however critics may try to narrow its scope, as varied in its excellence as humanity itself reflecting on the facts of its latest experience —an instrument of many stops, meditative, observant, descriptive, eloquent, analytic, plaintive, fervid. Its beauties will be not exclusively "pedestrian:" it will exert, in due measure, all the varied charms of poetry, down to the rhythm which, as in Cicero, or Michelet, or Newman, at their best, gives its musical value to every syllable.

The literary artist[20] is of necessity a scholar, and in what he proposes to do will have in mind, first of all, the scholar and the scholarly conscience—the male conscience in this matter, as we must think it, under a system of education which still to so large an extent limits real scholarship to men. In his self-criticism, he supposes always that sort of reader who will go (full of eyes) warily, considerately, though without consideration for him, over the ground which the female conscience traverses so lightly, so amiably. For the material in which he works is no more a creation of his own than the sculptor's marble. Product of a myriad various minds and contending tongues, compact of obscure and minute association, a language has its own abundant and often recondite laws, in the habitual and summary recognition of which scholarship consists. A writer, full of a matter he is before all things anxious to express, may think of those laws, the limitations of vocabulary, structure, and the like, as a restriction, but if a real artist, will find in them an opportunity. His punctilious observance of the proprieties of his medium will diffuse through all he writes a general air of sensibility, of refined usage. *Exclusiones debitae naturae*—the exclusions, or rejections, which nature demands—we know how large a part these play, according to Bacon, in the science of nature. In a somewhat changed sense, we might say that the art of the scholar is summed up in the observance of those rejections demanded by the nature of his medium, the material he must use. Alive to the

[20] "Mr. Saintsbury, in his *Specimens of English Prose, from Malory to Macaulay*, has succeeded in tracing, through successive English prose-writers, the tradition of that severer beauty in them, of which this admirable scholar of our literature is known to be a lover. *English Prose, from Mandeville to Thackeray* more recently 'chosen and edited' by a younger scholar, Mr. Arthur Galton, of New College, Oxford, a lover of our literature at once enthusiastic and discreet, aims at a more various illustration of the eloquent powers of English prose, and is a delightful companion."—Pater.

value of an atmosphere in which every term finds its utmost degree of expression, and with all the jealousy of a lover of words, he will resist a constant tendency on the part of the majority of those who use them to efface the distinctions of language, the facility of writers often reinforcing in this respect the work of the vulgar. He will feel the obligation not of the laws only, but of those affinities, avoidances, those mere preferences, of his language, which through the associations of literary history have become a part of its nature, prescribing the rejection of many a neology,[21] many a license, many a gipsy phrase which might present itself as actually expressive. His appeal, again, is to the scholar, who has great experience in literature, and will show no favor to short-cuts, or hackneyed illustration, or an affectation of learning designed for the unlearned. Hence a contention, a sense of self-restraint and renunciation, having for the susceptible reader the effect of a challenge for minute consideration; the attention of the writer, in every minutest detail, being a pledge that it is worth the reader's while to be attentive too, that the writer is dealing scrupulously with his instrument, and therefore, indirectly, with the reader himself also, that he has the science of the instrument he plays on, perhaps, after all, with a freedom which in such case will be the freedom of a master.

For meanwhile, braced only by those restraints, he is really vindicating his liberty in the making of a vocabulary, an entire system of composition, for himself, his own true manner; and when we speak of the manner of a true master we mean what is essential in his art. Pedantry being only the scholarship of *le cuistre* (we have no English equivalent), he is no pedant, and does but show his intelligence of the rules of language in his freedoms with it, addition or expansion, which like the spontaneities of manner in a well-bred person will still further illustrate good taste.—The right vocabulary! Translators have not invariably seen how all-important that is in the work of translation, driving for the most part at idiom or construction; whereas, if the original be first-rate, one's first care should be with its elementary particles, Plato, for instance, being often reproducible by an exact following, with no variation in structure, of word after word, as the pencil follows a drawing under tracing-paper, so only each word or syllable be not of false color, to change my illustration a little.

Well! that is because any writer worth translating at all has winnowed and searched through his vocabulary, is conscious of the words he would select in systematic reading of a dictionary, and still more of the words he would reject were the dictionary other than Johnson's;[22] and doing this with his peculiar sense of the world ever in view, in search of an instrument for the adequate expression of that, begets a vocabulary faithful to the coloring of his own spirit, and in the strictest sense original. That living authority which language needs lies, in truth, in its scholars, who recognizing always that every language possesses a genius, a very fastidious genius, of its own, expand at once and purify its very elements, which must needs change along with the changing thoughts of living people. Ninety years ago, for instance, great mental force, certainly, was needed by Wordsworth, to break through the consecrated poetic associations of a century, and speak the language that was his, that was to become in a measure the language of the next generation. But he did it with the tact of a scholar also. English, for a quarter of a century past, has been assimilating the phraseology of the great German metaphysical movement of eighty years ago; in part also the language of mystical theology: and none but pedants will regret a great consequent increase of its resources. For many years to come its enterprise may well lie in the naturalization of the vocabulary of science, so only it be under the eye of sensitive scholarship—in a liberal naturalization of the ideas of science too, for after all, the chief stimulus of good style is to possess a full, rich, complex matter to grapple with. The literary artist, therefore, will be well aware of physical science; science also attaining, in its turn, its true literary ideal. And then, as the scholar is nothing without the historic sense, he will be apt to restore not really obsolete or really worn-out words, but the finer edge of words still in use: *ascertain, communicate, discover*—words like these it has been part of our "business" to misuse. And still, as language was made for man, he will be no authority for correctnesses which, limiting freedom of utterance, were yet but accidents in their origin; as if one vowed not to say *"its,"* which ought to have been in Shakespeare, *"his"* and *"hers,"* for inanimate objects, being but a barbarous and really inexpressive survival. Yet we have known many things like this. Racy Saxon monosyllables, close to us as touch and sight, he will intermix readily with those long, savorsome, Latin words,

[21] newly-invented word.

[22] The dictionary of Dr. Samuel Johnson (See I, p. 918) is not nearly so large as some of the later ones.

rich in "second intention." In this late day certainly, no critical process can be conducted reasonably without eclecticism. Of such eclecticism we have a justifying example in one of the first poets of our time. How illustrative of monosyllablic effect, of sonorous Latin, of the phraseology of science, of metaphysic, of colloquialism even, are the writings of Tennyson; yet with what a fine, fastidious scholarship throughout!

A scholar writing for the scholarly, he will of course leave something to the willing intelligence of his reader. "To go preach to the first passer-by," says Montaigne,[23] "to become tutor to the ignorance of the first I meet, is a thing I abhor;" a thing, in fact, naturally distressing to the scholar, who will therefore ever be shy of offering uncomplimentary assistance to the reader's wit. To really strenuous minds there is a pleasurable stimulus in the challenge for a continuous effort on their part, to be rewarded by securer and more intimate grasp of the author's sense. Self-restraint, a skilful economy of means, *ascêsis*,[24] that too has a beauty of its own; and for the reader supposed, there will be an aesthetic satisfaction in that frugal closeness of style which makes the most of a word, in the exaction from every sentence of a precise relief, in the just spacing out of words to thought, in the logically filled space connected always with the delightful sense of difficulty overcome.

Different classes of persons, at different times, make, of course, very various demands upon literature. Still, scholars, I suppose, and not only scholars, but all disinterested lovers of books, will always look to it, as to all other fine art, for a refuge, a sort of cloistral refuge, from a certain vulgarity in the actual world. A perfect poem like *Lycidas*, a perfect fiction like *Esmond*,[25] the perfect handling of a theory like Newman's *Idea of a University*,[26] has for them something of the uses of a religious "retreat." Here, then, with a view to the central need of a select few, those "men of a finer thread" who have formed and maintain the literary ideal, everything, every component element will have undergone exact trial, and, above all, there will be no uncharacteristic or tarnished or vulgar decoration, permissible ornament being for the most part structural, or necessary. As the painter in his picture, so the artist in his book, aims at the production by honorable artifice of a peculiar atmosphere. "The artist," says Schiller,[27] "may be known rather by what he *omits*;" and in literature, too, the true artist may be best recognized by his tact of omission. For to the grave reader words too are grave; and the ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or color or reference, is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment, but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long "brain-wave" behind it of perhaps quite alien associations.

Just there, it may be, is the detrimental tendency of the sort of scholarly attentiveness of mind I am recommending. But the true artist allows for it. He will remember that, as the very word ornament indicates what is in itself non-essential, so the "one beauty" of all literary style is of its very essence, and independent, in prose and verse alike, of all removable decoration; that it may exist in its fullest luster, as in Flaubert's[28] *Madame Bovary*, for instance, or in Stendhal's[29] *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, in a composition utterly unadorned, with hardly a single suggestion of visibly beautiful things. Parallel, allusion, the allusive way generally, the flowers in the garden:—he knows the narcotic force of these upon the negligent intelligence to which any *diversion*, literally, is welcome, any vagrant intruder, because one can go wandering away with it from the immediate subject. Jealous, if he have a really quickening motive within, of all that does not hold directly to that, of the facile, the otiose, he will never depart from the strictly pedestrian process, unless he gains a ponderable something thereby. Even assured of its congruity, he will still question its serviceableness. Is it worth while, can we afford, to attend to just that, to just that figure or literary reference, just then?—Surplusage! he will dread that, as the runner on his muscles. For in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage, from the last finish of the gem-engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust, back to the earliest divination of the finished work to be, lying somewhere, according to Michelangelo's[30] fancy, in the rough-hewn block of stone.

And what applies to figure or flower must be understood of all other accidental or removable ornaments of writing whatever; and not of specific ornament only, but of all that latent color and imagery which language as such carries in it. A lover of words for their own sake, to whom nothing

[23] See I, p. 402. [24] exercise, training.
[25] a novel by Thackeray. [26] See p. 689.
[27] See p. 1153.
[28] French novelist (1821-1880).
[29] Pen name of Marie Henri Beyle, French novelist (1783-1842).
[30] Italian sculptor and painter (1475-1564).

about them is unimportant, a minute and constant observer of their physiognomy, he will be on the alert not only for obviously mixed metaphors of course, but for the metaphor that is mixed in all our speech, though a rapid use may involve no cognition of it. Currently recognizing the incident, the color, the physical elements or particles in words like *absorb, consider, extract,* to take the first that occur, he will avail himself of them, as further adding to the resources of expression. The elementary particles of language will be realized as color and light and shade through his scholarly living in the full sense of them. Still opposing the constant degradation of language by those who use it carelessly, he will not treat colored glass as if it were clear; and while half the world is using figure unconsciously, will be fully aware not only of all that latent figurative texture in speech, but of the vague, lazy, half-formed personification—a rhetoric, depressing, and worse than nothing, because it has no really rhetorical motive—which plays so large a part there, and, as in the case of more ostentatious ornament, scrupulously exact of it, from syllable to syllable, its precise value.

So far I have been speaking of certain conditions of the literary art arising out of the medium or material in or upon which it works, the essential qualities of language and its aptitudes for contingent ornamentation, matters which define scholarship as science and good taste respectively. They are both subservient to a more intimate quality of good style: more intimate, as coming nearer to the artist himself. The otiose, the facile, surplusage: why are these abhorrent to the true literary artist, except because, in literary as in all other art, structure is all-important, felt, or painfully missed, everywhere?—that architectural conception of work, which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigor, unfold and justify the first—a condition of literary art, which, in contradistinction to another quality of the artist himself, to be spoken of later, I shall call the necessity of *mind* in style.

An acute philosophical writer, the late Dean Mansel[31] (a writer whose works illustrate the literary beauty there may be in closeness, and with obvious repression or economy of a fine rhetorical gift) wrote a book, of fascinating precision in a very obscure subject, to show that all the technical laws of logic are but means of securing, in each and all of its apprehensions, the unity, the strict identity with itself, of the apprehending mind. All the laws of good writing aim at a similar unity or identity of the mind in all the processes by which the word is associated to its import. The term is right, and has its essential beauty, when it becomes, in a manner, what it signifies, as with the names of simple sensations. To give the phrase, the sentence, the structural member, the entire composition, song, or essay, a similar unity with its subject and with itself:—style is in the right way when it tends towards that. All depends upon the original unity, the vital wholeness and identity, of the initiatory apprehension or view. So much is true of all art, which therefore requires always its logic, its comprehensive reason—insight, foresight, retrospect, in simultaneous action—true, most of all, of the literary art, as being of all the arts most closely cognate to the abstract intelligence. Such logical coherency may be evidenced not merely in the lines of composition as a whole, but in the choice of a single word, while it by no means interferes with, but may even prescribe, much variety, in the building of the sentence for instance, or in the manner, argumentative, descriptive, discursive, of this or that part or member of the entire design. The blithe, crisp sentence, decisive as a child's expression of its needs, may alternate with the long-contending, victoriously intricate sentence; the sentence, born with the integrity of a single word, relieving the sort of sentence in which, if you look closely, you can see much contrivance, much adjustment, to bring a highly qualified matter into compass at one view. For the literary architecture, if it is to be rich and expressive, involves not only foresight of the end in the beginning, but also development or growth of design, in the process of execution, with many irregularities, surprises, and after-thoughts; the contingent as well as the necessary being subsumed under the unity of the whole. As truly, to the lack of such architectural design, of a single, almost visual, image, vigorously informing an entire, perhaps very intricate, composition, which shall be austere, ornate, argumentative, fanciful, yet true from first to last to that vision within, may be attributed those weaknesses of conscious or unconscious repetition of word, phrase, motive, or member of the whole matter, indicating, as Flaubert was aware, an original structure in thought not organically complete. With such foresight, the actual conclusion will most often get itself written

[31] Henry Longueville Mansel (1820-71), English philosopher.

out of hand, before, in the more obvious sense, the work is finished. With some strong and leading sense of the world, the tight hold of which secures true *composition* and not mere loose accretion, the literary artist, I suppose, goes on considerably, setting joint to joint, sustained by yet restraining the productive ardor, retracing the negligences of his first sketch, repeating his steps only that he may give the reader a sense of secure and restful progress, readjusting mere assonances even, that they may soothe the reader, or at least not interrupt him on his way; and then, somewhere before the end comes, is burdened, inspired, with his conclusion, and betimes delivered of it, leaving off, not in weariness and because he finds *himself* at an end, but in all the freshness of volition. His work now structurally complete, with all the accumulating effect of secondary shades of meaning, he finishes the whole up to the just proportion of that ante-penultimate conclusion, and all becomes expressive. The house he has built is rather a body he has informed. And so it happens, to its greater credit, that the better interest even of a narrative to be recounted, a story to be told, will often be in its second reading. And though there are instances of great writers who have been no artists, an unconscious tact sometimes directing work in which we may detect, very pleasurably, many of the effects of conscious art, yet one of the greatest pleasures of really good prose literature is in the critical tracing out of that conscious artistic structure, and the pervading sense of it as we read. Yet of poetic literature too; for, in truth, the kind of constructive intelligence here supposed is one of the forms of the imagination.

That is the special function of mind, in style. Mind and soul:—hard to ascertain philosophically, the distinction is real enough practically, for they often interfere, are sometimes in conflict, with each other. Blake,[32] in the last century, is an instance of preponderating soul, embarrassed, at a loss, in an era of ponderating mind. As a quality of style, at all events, soul is a fact, in certain writers—the way they have of absorbing language, of attracting it into the peculiar spirit they are of, with a subtlety which makes the actual result seem like some inexplicable inspiration. By mind, the literary artist reaches us, through static and objective indications of design in his work, legible to all. By soul, he reaches us, somewhat capriciously perhaps, one and not another, through vagrant sympathy and a kind of immediate contact. Mind we cannot choose but approve where we recognize it; soul may repel us, not because we misunderstand it. The way in which theological interests sometimes avail themselves of language is perhaps the best illustration of the force I mean to indicate generally in literature, by the word *soul*. Ardent religious persuasion may exist, may make its way, without finding any equivalent heat in language: or, again, it may enkindle words to various degrees, and when it really takes hold of them doubles its force. Religious history presents many remarkable instances in which, through no mere phrase-worship, an unconscious literary tact has, for the sensitive, laid open a privileged pathway from one to another. "The altar-fire," people say, "has touched those lips!" The Vulgate,[33] the English Bible,[34] the English Prayer-Book, the writings of Swedenborg,[35] the Tracts for the Times:[36]—there, we have instances of widely different and largely diffused phases of religious feeling in operation as soul in style. But something of the same kind acts with similar power in certain writers of quite other than theological literature, on behalf of some wholly personal and peculiar sense of theirs. Most easily illustrated by theological literature, this quality lends to profane writers a kind of religious influence. At their best, these writers become, as we say sometimes, 'prophets'; such character depending on the effect not merely of their matter, but of their matter as allied to, in "electric affinity" with, peculiar form, and working in all cases by an immediate sympathetic contact, on which account it is that it may be called soul, as opposed to mind, in style. And this too is a faculty of choosing and rejecting what is congruous or otherwise, with a drift towards unity—unity of atmosphere here, as there of design—soul securing color (or perfume, might we say?) as mind secures form, the latter being essentially finite, the former vague or infinite, as the influence of a living person is practically infinite. There are some to whom nothing has any real interest, or real meaning, except as operative in a given person; and it is they who best appreciate the quality of soul in literary art. They seem to know a *person*, in a book, and make way by intuition: yet, although they thus enjoy the completeness of a

[32] See p. 83

[33] The Latin translation of the Bible by St. Jerome at the end of the fourth century.

[34] See I, p. 406.

[35] Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), Swedish mystic and philosopher.

[36] A series of tracts written in the 1830's at Oxford on problems of the English Church.

personal information, it is still a characteristic of soul, in this sense of the word, that it does but suggest what can never be uttered, not as being different from, or more obscure than, what actually gets said, but as containing that plenary substance of which there is only one phase or facet in what is there expressed.

If all high things have their martyrs, Gustave Flaubert[37] might perhaps rank as the martyr of literary style. In his printed correspondence, a curious series of letters, written in his twenty-fifth year, records what seems to have been his one other passion—a series of letters which, with its fine casuistries, its firmly repressed anguish, its tone of harmonious gray, and the sense of disillusion in which the whole matter ends, might have been, a few slight changes supposed, one of his own fictions. Writing to Madame X. certainly he does display, by "taking thought" mainly, by constant and delicate pondering, as in his love for literature, a heart really moved, but still more, and as the pledge of that emotion, a loyalty to his work. Madame X., too, is a literary artist, and the best gifts he can send her are precepts of perfection in art, counsels for the effectual pursuit of that better love. In his love-letters it is the pains and pleasures of art he insists on, its solaces: he communicates secrets, reproves, encourages, with a view to that. Whether the lady was dissatisfied with such divided or indirect service, the reader is not enabled to see; but sees that, on Flaubert's part at least, a living person could be no rival of what was, from first to last, his leading passion, a somewhat solitary and exclusive one.

"I must scold you," he writes, "for one thing, which shocks, scandalizes me, the small concern, namely, you show for art just now. As regards glory be it so: there, I approve. But for art!—the one thing in life that is good and real—can you compare with it an earthly love?—prefer the adoration of a relative beauty to the *cultus* of the true beauty? Well! I tell you the truth. That is the one thing good in me: the one thing I have, to me estimable. For yourself, you blend with the beautiful a heap of alien things, the useful, the agreeable, what not?—

"The only way not to be unhappy is to shut yourself up in art, and count everything else as nothing. Pride takes the place of all beside when it is established on a large basis. Work! God wills it. That, it seems to me, is clear.—

"I am reading over again the *Aeneid*, certain verses of which I repeat to myself to satiety. There are phrases there which stay in one's head, by which I find myself beset, as with those musical airs which are forever returning, and cause you pain, you love them so much. I observe that I no longer laugh much, and am no longer depressed. I am ripe. You talk of my serenity, and envy me. It may well surprise you. Sick, irritated, the prey a thousand times a day of cruel pain, I continue my labor like a true working-man, who, with sleeves turned up, in the sweat of his brow, beats away at his anvil, never troubling himself whether it rains or blows, for hail or thunder. I was not like that formerly. The change has taken place naturally, though my will has counted for something in the matter.—

"Those who write in good style are sometimes accused of a neglect of ideas, and of the moral end, as if the end of the physician were something else than healing, of the painter than painting—as if the end of art were not, before all else, the beautiful."

What, then, did Flaubert understand by beauty, in the art he pursued with so much fervor, with so much self-command? Let us hear a sympathetic commentator:—

"Possessed of an absolute belief that there exists but one way of expressing one thing, one word to call it by, one adjective to qualify, one verb to animate it, he gave himself to superhuman labor for the discovery, in every phrase, of that word, that verb, that epithet. In this way, he believed in some mysterious harmony of expression, and when a true word seemed to him to lack euphony still went on seeking another, with invincible patience, certain that he had not yet got hold of the *unique* word. . . . A thousand preoccupations would beset him at the same moment, always with this desperate certitude fixed in his spirit: Among all the expressions in the world, all forms and turns of expression, there is but *one*—one form, one mode—to express what I want to say."

The one word for the one thing, the one thought, amid the multitude of words, terms, that might just do: the problem of style was there!—the unique word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, essay, or song, absolutely proper to the single mental presentation or vision within. In that perfect justice, over and above the many contingent and removable beauties with which beautiful style may charm us, but which it can exist without, independent of them yet dexterously availing itself of them, omnipresent in good work, in function

[37] French novelist (1821-1880).

at every point, from single epithets to the rhythm of a whole book, lay the specific, indispensable, very intellectual, beauty of literature, the possibility of which constitutes it a fine art.

One seems to detect the influence of a philosophic idea there, the idea of a natural economy, of some preëxistent adaptation, between a relative, somewhere in the world of thought, and its correlative, somewhere in the world of language—both alike, rather, somewhere in the mind of the artist, desiderative, expectant, inventive—meeting each other with the readiness of "soul and body reunited," in Blake's rapturous design; and, in fact, Flaubert was fond of giving his theory philosophical expression.—

"There are no beautiful thoughts," he would say, "without beautiful forms, and conversely. As it is impossible to extract from a physical body the qualities which really constitute it—color, extension, and the like—without reducing it to a hollow abstraction, in a word, without destroying it; just so it is impossible to detach the form from the idea, for the idea only exists by virtue of the form."

All the recognized flowers, the removable ornaments of literature (including harmony and ease in reading aloud, very carefully considered by him) counted certainly; for these too are part of the actual value of what one says. But still, after all, with Flaubert, the search, the unwearied research, was not for the smooth, or winsome, or forcible word, as such, as with false Ciceronians, but quite simply and honestly for the word's adjustment to its meaning. The first condition of this must be, of course, to know yourself, to have ascertained your own sense exactly. Then, if we suppose an artist, he says to the reader,—I want you to see precisely what I see. Into the mind sensitive to "form," a flood of random sounds, colors, incidents, is ever penetrating from the world without, to become, by sympathetic selection, a part of its very structure, and, in turn, the visible vesture and expression of that other world it sees so steadily within, nay, already with a partial conformity thereto, to be refined, enlarged, corrected, at a hundred points; and it is just there, just at those doubtful points that the function of style, as tact or taste, intervenes. The unique term will come more quickly to one than another, at one time than another, according also to the kind of matter in question. Quickness and slowness, ease and closeness alike, have nothing to do with the artistic character of the true word found at last. As there is a charm of ease, so there is also a special charm in the signs of discovery, of effort and contention towards a due end, as so often with Flaubert himself —in the style which has been pliant, as only obstinate, durable metal can be, to the inherent perplexities and recusancy of a certain difficult thought.

If Flaubert had not told us, perhaps we should never have guessed how tardy and painful his own procedure really was, and after reading his confession may think that his almost endless hesitation had much to do with diseased nerves. Often, perhaps, the felicity supposed will be the product of a happier, a more exuberant nature than Flaubert's. Aggravated, certainly, by a morbid physical condition, that anxiety in "seeking the phrase," which gathered all the other small *ennuis* of a really quiet existence into a kind of battle, was connected with his lifelong contention against facile poetry, facile art—art, facile and flimsy; and what constitutes the true artist is not the slowness or quickness of the process, but the absolute success of the result. As with those laborers in the parable, the prize is independent of the mere length of the actual day's work. "You talk," he writes, odd, trying lover, to Madame X.—

"You talk of the exclusiveness of my literary tastes. That might have enabled you to divine what kind of a person I am in the matter of love. I grow so hard to please as a literary artist, that I am driven to despair. I shall end by not writing another line."

"Happy," he cries, in a moment of discouragement at that patient labor, which for him, certainly, was the condition of a great success.—

"Happy those who have no doubts of themselves! who lengthen out, as the pen runs on, all that flows forth from their brains. As for me, I hesitate, I disappoint myself, turn around upon myself in despite: my taste is augmented in proportion as my natural vigor decreases, and I afflict my soul over some dubious word out of all proportion to the pleasure I get from a whole page of good writing. One would have to live two centuries to attain a true idea of any matter whatever. What Buffon said is a big blasphemy: genius is not long-continued patience. Still, there is some truth in the statement, and more than people think, especially as regards our own day. Art! art! art! bitter deception! phantom that glows with light, only to lead one on to destruction."

Again—

"I am growing so peevish about my writing. I

am like a man whose ear is true but who plays falsely on the violin: his fingers refuse to reproduce precisely those sounds of which he has the inward sense. Then the tears come rolling down from the poor scraper's eyes and the bow falls from his hand."

Coming slowly or quickly, when it comes, as it came with so much labor of mind, but also with so much luster, to Gustave Flaubert, this discovery of the word will be, like all artistic success and felicity, incapable of strict analysis: effect of an intuitive condition of mind, it must be recognized by like intuition on the part of the reader, and a sort of immediate sense. In every one of those masterly sentences of Flaubert there was, below all mere contrivance, shaping and afterthought, by some happy instantaneous concourse of the various faculties of the mind with each other, the exact apprehension of what was *needed* to carry the meaning. And that it fits with absolute justice will be a judgment of immediate sense in the appreciative reader. We all feel this in what may be called inspired translation. Well! all language involves translation from inward to outward. In literature, as in all forms of art, there are the absolute and the merely relative or accessory beauties; and precisely in that exact proportion of the term to its purpose is the absolute beauty of style, prose or verse. All the good qualities, the beauties, of verse also, are such, only as precise expression.

In the highest as in the lowliest literature, then, the one indispensable beauty is, after all, truth:—truth to bare fact in the latter, as to some personal sense of fact, diverted somewhat from men's ordinary sense of it, in the former; truth there as accuracy, truth here as expression, that finest and most intimate form of truth, the *vraie vérité*.[38] And what an eclectic principle this really is! employing for its one sole purpose—that absolute accordance of expression to idea—all other literary beauties and excellences whatever: how many kinds of style it covers, explains, justifies, and at the same time safeguards! Scott's facility, Flaubert's deeply pondered evocation of "the phrase," are equally good art. Say what you have to say, what you have a will to say, in the simplest, the most direct and exact manner possible, with no surplusage:—there, is the justification of the sentence so fortunately born, "entire, smooth, and round," that it needs no punctuation, and also (that is the point!) of the most elaborate period, if it be right in its elaboration. Here is the office of ornament: here also the purpose of restraint in ornament. As the exponent of truth, that austerity (the beauty, the function, of which in literature Flaubert understood so well) becomes not the correctness or purism of the mere scholar, but a security against the otiose, a jealous exclusion of what does not really tell towards the pursuit of relief, of life and vigor in the portraiture of one's sense. License again, the making free with rule, if it be indeed, as people fancy, a habit of genius, flinging aside or transforming all that opposes the liberty of beautiful production, will be but faith to one's own meaning. The seeming baldness of *Le Rouge et Le Noir* is nothing in itself; the wild ornament of *Les Misérables*[39] is nothing in itself; and the restraint of Flaubert, amid a real natural opulence, only redoubled beauty—the phrase so large and so precise at the same time, hard as bronze, in service to the more perfect adaptation of words to their matter. Afterthoughts, retouchings, finish, will be of profit only so far as they too really serve to bring out the original, initiative, generative, sense in them.

In this way, according to the well-known saying, "The style is the man," complex or simple, in his individuality, his plenary sense of what he really has to say, his sense of the world; all cautions regarding style arising out of so many natural scruples as to the medium through which alone he can expose that inward sense of things, the purity of this medium, its laws or tricks or refraction: nothing is to be left there which might give conveyance to any matter save that. Style in all its varieties, reserved or opulent, terse, abundant, musical, stimulant, academic, so long as each is really characteristic or expressive, finds thus its justification, the sumptuous good taste of Cicero being as truly the man himself, and not another, justified, yet insured inalienably to him, thereby, as would have been his portrait by Raffaelle,[40] in full consular splendor, on his ivory chair.

A relegation, you may say perhaps—a relegation of style to the subjectivity, the mere caprice, of the individual, which must soon transform it into mannerism. Not so! since there is, under the conditions supposed, for those elements of the man, for every lineament of the vision within, the one word, the one acceptable word, recognizable by the sensitive, by others "who have intelligence" in the matter, as absolutely as ever anything can be in the evanescent and delicate region of human lan-

[38] true truth.

[39] a novel by Victor Hugo (1802-1885).

[40] Italian painter (1483-1520).

guage. The style, the manner, would be the man, not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic caprices, involuntary or affected, but in absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him. But let us hear our French guide again.—

"Styles," says Flaubert's commentator, "*Styles,* as so many peculiar molds, each of which bears the mark of a particular writer, who is to pour into it the whole content of his ideas, were no part of his theory. What he believed in was *Style*: that is to say, a certain absolute and unique manner of expressing a thing, in all its intensity and color. For him the *form* was the work itself. As in living creatures, the blood, nourishing the body, determines its very contour and external aspect, just so, to his mind, the *matter*, the basis, in a work of art, imposed necessarily the unique, the just expression, the measure, the rhythm—the *form* in all its characteristics."

If the style be the man, in all the color and intensity of a veritable apprehension, it will be in a real sense "impersonal."

I said, thinking of books like Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, that prose literature was the characteristic art of the nineteenth century, as others, thinking of its triumphs since the youth of Bach, have assigned that place to music. Music and prose literature are, in one sense, the opposite terms of art; the art of literature presenting to the imagination, through the intelligence, a range of interests, as free and various as those which music presents to it through sense. And, certainly the tendency of what has been here said is to bring literature too under those conditions, by conformity to which music takes rank as the typically perfect art. If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then, literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import, will be but fulfilling the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere, of all good art.

Good art, but not necessarily great art; the distinction between great art and good art depending immediately, as regards literature at all events, not on its form, but on the matter. Thackeray's *Esmond*, surely, is greater art than *Vanity Fair*, by the greater dignity of its interests. 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 color 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. (1888)

Robert Louis Stevenson

(1850-1894)

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on November 13, 1850. Both his grandfather and his father were distinguished engineers who had much to do with the establishment of the system of lighthouses on the Scottish coasts. Stevenson, an only child, received the best educational opportunities available in Edinburgh. But from the beginning he was very delicate, so that his formal schooling was necessarily irregular. Early in his childhood he manifested interest in reading and was especially influenced by such imaginative works as the *Arabian Nights* (see p. 1123). It was not long before he was wishing that he also might write something that others would desire to read.

He has told us the way in which he set himself to learn the art of writing. With his notebook continually at hand, he described everything of interest which he saw and felt. He would read and absorb the style of a great English writer and would then imitate it until he had at least partially mastered it. Thus he passed through many different styles, always broadening his own powers, until he was ready to abandon all outside help and find his own manner. As a result, his prose was developed with extraordinary care and contains the excellences of a number of the best English writers.

Stevenson trained himself for the profession associated with his family, and went so far as to write technical papers about lighthouse engineering. But his heart was not in the work and he abandoned it to study law. After taking his degree and being admitted to the bar, he also gave up this career. Most of the rest of his life he spent in pursuit of health, for he was already doomed to a long fight with tuberculosis.

Even before the completion of his legal studies, Stevenson had attracted the attention of several important literary men. Sidney Colvin was to be a lifelong friend and leading interpreter of Stevenson to the world. Sir Leslie Stephen was the editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, which was to publish a large number of his works. Through Stephen he met W. E. Henley (see p. 821) while the latter was recovering from his operation in the hospital in Edinburgh. The new friendship thus formed was to be important to both men, and later they were to collaborate on three plays. During the years beginning with 1873, his friendships were to include most of the important literary men of his day. Stevenson was one of the most lovable of men and found in these friends a constant source of contentment.

From his twenty-fifth year Stevenson was almost continually traveling, and it is natural that his earliest literary essays should be accounts of his travels, *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey* (1879). Beside these, he published extensively in magazines, writing short stories, essays, and fantasies.

In 1876 he had met Mrs. Osborne, to whom he had become engaged before her return to her home in California. After some two years he became alarmed about her health and hurried across to see her. He was short of funds and made the trip in the cheapest fashion possible, so that he was very ill on reaching his destination. The experiences of the journey, however, gave him much material for his writing. After a considerable sojourn at Monterey and a period of real financial distress, he was married, and the Stevensons spent their honeymoon at an abandoned mining camp north of San Francisco. This experience is responsible for his *Silverado Squatters* (1883).

After their return to Scotland, where his wife immediately took a strong hold on the affections of his family, the Stevensons spent most of the years from 1880 to 1887 in a vain search for health in various parts of Europe. Meantime some of his most important books were appearing: in 1881 his notable collection of essays, *Virginibus Puerisque* (including *An Apology for Idlers*), and in 1882 *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* and his first collection of stories, *New Arabian Nights*. More important for his practical future was the appearance in 1883 of *Treasure Island*, which brought him fame and an adequate financial return. This was followed in 1885 by his novels *Prince Otto* and *The Dynamiter*, and by his inimitable collection of children's poems, *A Child's Garden of Verses*. In 1886 he issued two popular novels, *Kidnapped*, and the sensational psychological study, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. He also brought together in *The Merry Men* (1887) a collection of the short stories which had been appearing through the years, and in *Memories and Portraits* (1887) a similar collection of essays. Among these latter was *A Gossip on Romance*, which he had first published in 1882.

With 1887 Stevenson's life in Europe came to a close. His health made a complete break with the Old World necessary. During a winter at Saranac Lake in northern New York he regained considerable strength and wrote several of his important essays, among them *Pulvis et Umbra*. Stevenson's reception in America had been most enthusiastic, and he found American publishers eager to pay well for his writings. But after several attempts at finding a place suitable to his health he decided to go to the South Seas. For this purpose he chartered a yacht at San Francisco and started on a long and leisurely cruise in which he spent more than a year, mostly in Polynesia. Eventually he made a home in Samoa, where he was to end his days.

In the Islands he recovered a considerable degree of vigor and thus secured about four years of almost normal literary activity. He took an acute interest in the life about him and won the affection of many of the natives. These years are especially filled with lengthy and interesting letters to his friends back home. He finished many works which he had already begun and was in the middle of one of his most promising books, *Weir of Hermiston*, at the time of his death, December 3, 1894.

Stevenson belongs to that small group of writers who have succeeded in gaining the love as well as the admiration of his readers. He impressed all who came in contact with him, so that association with him became one of the memorable experiences of his friends' lives. His long valetudinarian journeys, illuminated as they are by his travel essays, his letters, and the reminiscences of his friends, have constituted a modern Odyssey, not less important for the purpose of evaluating him than his own essays, poems, short stories, and novels.

And yet judged purely as an author he showed remarkable versatility. The only field he attempted with mediocre success was the drama. Wherever else he touched, he produced at least one work whose immortality seems secure. *The Merry Men*, *A Lodging for the Night*, and *The Sire de Maletroit's Door* are short story classics; *Treasure Island*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and *Kidnapped* have few peers among romantic novels. In his poetry, Stevenson was not so significant, for he seems to have taken it as a recreation and not to have devoted to it the serious workmanship he gave to his prose. Nevertheless, he produced one of the most successful collections of children's verse in the language.

Many of Stevenson's readers will agree that his ability appears most unmistakable in his essays. His apprenticeship had been long and the development of his prose style fully conscious. Hence, when he actually came to write his essays he had already overcome the preliminary problems of structure and wrote with a charm that could come only from the free use of his medium. The result is a seeming simplicity, but we know from trustworthy accounts that many passages were written ten or fifteen times before they satisfied his rigorous taste. In spite of the fact that some critics feel that Stevenson was overpurposeful and sometimes artificial in stylistic effect, it may fairly be said that at least

two generations of readers have responded to the charm of *An Apology for Idlers*, have gained an insight at first hand into the essentials of the romantic novel through his *A Gossip on Romance*, and have been swept forward by that eloquent and breathtaking view of the sciences and of man's place and duty, *Pulvis et Umbra*.

A Gossip on Romance

The satisfaction of his successful handling of the romantic materials of *Treasure Island* (1882) must still have been fresh within him when Stevenson wrote this essay, a public "defense" of the kind of writing he had chosen to master. Appearing first in *Longman's Magazine*, November 1882, *A Gossip on Romance* was later included in *Memories and Portraits* (1887). Stevenson returned to the theme in *The Lantern-Bearers*.

In anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or of continuous thought. The words, if the book be eloquent, should run thenceforward in our ears like the noise of breakers, and the story—if it be a story—repeat itself in a thousand colored pictures to the eye. It was for this last pleasure that we read so closely, and loved our books so dearly, in the bright, troubled period of boyhood. Eloquence and thought, character and conversation, were but obstacles to brush aside as we dug blithely after a certain sort of incident, like a pig for truffles. For my part, I liked a story to begin with an old wayside inn where, "towards the close of the year 17—," several gentlemen in three-cocked hats were playing bowls. A friend of mine preferred the Malabar coast in a storm, with a ship beating to westward, and a scowling fellow of herculean proportions striding along the beach; he, to be sure, was a pirate. This was further afield than my home-keeping fancy loved to travel, and designed altogether for a larger canvas than the tales that I affected. Give me a highwayman and I was full to the brim; a Jacobite[1] would do, but the highwayman was my favorite dish. I can still hear that merry clatter of the hoofs along the moonlit lane; night and the coming of day are still related in my mind with the doings of John Rann or Jerry Abershaw;[2] and the words "postchaise," the "great North road," "ostler," and "nag," still sound in my ears like poetry. One and all, at least, and each with his particular fancy, we read story-books in childhood, not for eloquence or character or thought, but for some quality of the brute incident. That quality was not mere bloodshed or wonder. Although each of these was welcome in its place, the charm for the sake of which we read depended on something different from either. My elders used to read novels aloud; and I can still remember four different passages which I heard, before I was ten, with the same keen and lasting pleasure. One I discovered long afterwards to be the admirable opening of *What will he Do with It?*[3] It was no wonder that I was pleased with that. The other three still remain unidentified. One is a little vague; it was about a dark, tall house at night, and people groping on the stairs by the light that escaped from the open door of a sickroom. In another, a lover left a ball, and went walking in a cool, dewy park, whence he could watch the lighted windows and the figures of the dancers as they moved. This was the most sentimental impression I think I had yet received, for a child is somewhat deaf to the sentimental. In the last, a poet, who had been tragically wrangling with his wife, walked forth on the sea-beach on a tempestuous night and witnessed the horrors of a wreck.[4] Different as they are, all these early favorites have a common note—they have all a touch of the romantic.

Drama is the poetry of conduct, romance the poetry of circumstance. The pleasure that we take in life is of two sorts—the active and the passive. Now we are conscious of a great command over our destiny; anon we are lifted up by circumstance, as by a breaking wave, and dashed we know not how into the future. Now we are pleased by our conduct, anon merely pleased by our surroundings

[1] an adherent of the Stuart pretenders to the English throne in the eighteenth century.

[2] famous highwaymen.

[3] a novel by Bulwer-Lytton (1801-1872).

[4] from Kingsley's novel *Two Years Ago*.

It would be hard to say which of these modes of satisfaction is the more effective, but the latter is surely the more constant. Conduct is three parts of life, they say; but I think they put it high. There is a vast deal in life and letters both which is not immoral, but simply a-moral; which either does not regard the human will at all, or deals with it in obvious and healthy relations; where the interest turns, not upon what a man shall choose to do, but on how he manages to do it; not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life. With such material as this it is impossible to build a play, for the serious theatre exists solely on moral grounds, and is a standing proof of the dissemination of the human conscience. But it is possible to build upon this ground the most joyous of verses, and the most lively, beautiful, and buoyant tales.

One thing in life calls for another; there is a fitness in events and places. The sight of a pleasant arbor puts it in our mind to sit there. One place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and long rambles in the dew. The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it. And many of the happiest hours of life fleet by us in this vain attendance on the genius of the place and moment. It is thus that tracts of young fir, and low rocks that reach into deep soundings, particularly torture and delight me. Something must have happened in such places, and perhaps ages back, to members of my race; and when I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots again seem to abide their destiny, suggestive and impenetrable, "miching mallecho."[5] The inn at Burford Bridge, with its arbors and green garden and silent, eddying river—though it is known already as the place where Keats wrote some of his *Endymion* and Nelson[6] parted from his Emma—still seems to wait the coming of the appropriate legend. Within these ivied walls, behind these old green shutters, some further business smolders, waiting for its hour. The old Hawes Inn at the Queen's Ferry makes a similar call upon my fancy. There it stands, apart from the town, beside the pier, in a climate of its own, half inland, half marine—in front, the ferry bubbling with the tide and the guardship swinging to her anchor; behind, the old garden with the trees. Americans seek it already for the sake of Lovel and Oldbuck, who dined there at the beginning of *The Antiquary*.[7] But you need not tell me—that is not all; there is some story, unrecorded or not yet complete, which must express the meaning of that inn more fully. So it is with names and faces; so it is with incidents that are idle and inconclusive in themselves, and yet seem like the beginning of some quaint romance, which the all-careless author leaves untold. How many of these romances have we not seen determined at their birth; how many people have met us with a look of meaning in their eye, and sunk at once into trivial acquaintances; to how many places have we not drawn near, with express intimations—"here my destiny awaits me"—and we have but dined there and passed on! I have lived both at the Hawes and Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place; but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure and suspense, nothing befell me in either worth remark. The man of the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip upon the green shutters of the inn at Burford.

Now this is one of the natural appetites with which any lively literature has to count. The desire for knowledge, I had almost added the desire for meat, is not more deeply seated than this demand for fit and striking incident. The dullest of clowns tells, or tries to tell, himself a story, as the feeblest of children uses invention in his play; and even as the imaginative grown person, joining in the game, at once enriches it with many delightful circumstances, the great creative writer shows us the realization and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream. The right

[5] sneaking mischief (*Hamlet:* III, ii, 147).

[6] Admiral Horatio Nelson and Emma, Lady Hamilton, whom he loved.

[7] a novel by Scott.

kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow; and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in a tale answer one to another like notes in music. The threads of a story come from time to time together, and make a picture in the web; the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration. Crusoe recoiling from the footprint, Achilles shouting over against the Trojans, Ulysses bending the great bow, Christian running with his fingers in his ears[8]—these are each culminating moments in the legend, and each has been printed on the mind's eye forever. Other things we may forget; we may forget the words, although they are beautiful; we may forget the author's comment, although perhaps it was ingenious and true; but these epoch-making scenes, which put the last mark of truth upon a story and fill up at one blow our capacity for sympathetic pleasure, we so adopt into the very bosom of our mind that neither time nor tide can efface or weaken the impression. This, then, is the plastic part of literature: to embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye. This is the highest and hardest thing to do in words; the thing which, once accomplished, equally delights the schoolboy and the sage, and makes, in its own right, the quality of epics. Compared with this, all other purposes in literature, except the purely lyrical or the purely philosophic, are bastard in nature, facile of execution, and feeble in result. It is one thing to write about the inn at Burford, or to describe scenery with the word-painters; it is quite another to seize on the heart of the suggestion and make a country famous with a legend. It is one thing to remark and to dissect, with the most cutting logic, the complications of life and of the human spirit; it is quite another to give them body and blood in the story of Ajax or of Hamlet. The first is literature, but the second is something besides, for it is likewise art.

English people of the present day are apt, I know not why, to look somewhat down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate. It is thought clever to write a novel with no story at all, or at least with a very dull one. Reduced even to the lowest terms, a certain interest can be communicated by the art of narrative, a sense of human kinship stirred; and a kind of monotonous fitness, comparable to the words and air of "Sandy's Mull," preserved among the infinitesimal occurrences recorded. Some people work in this manner, with even a strong touch. Mr. Trollope's[9] inimitable clergymen arise to the mind in this connection. But even Mr. Trollope does not confine himself to chronicling small beer. Mr. Crawley's collision with the bishop's wife, Mr. Melnotte dallying in the deserted banquet-room,[10] are typical incidents, epically conceived, fitly embodying a crisis. Or again look at Thackeray. If Rawdon Crawley's blow were not delivered, *Vanity Fair* would cease to be a work of art. That scene is the chief ganglion of the tale; and the discharge of energy from Rawdon's fist is the reward and consolation of the reader. The end of *Esmond*[11] is a yet wider excursion from the author's customary fields; the scene at Castlewood is pure Dumas; the great and wily English borrower has here borrowed from the great unblushing French thief; as usual, he has borrowed admirably well, and the breaking of the sword rounds off the best of all his books with a manly, martial note. But perhaps nothing can more strongly illustrate the necessity for marking incident than to compare the living fame of *Robinson Crusoe* with the discredit of *Clarissa Harlowe*.[12] *Clarissa* is a book of a far more startling import worked out, on a great canvas, with inimitable courage and unflagging art. It contains wit, character, passion, plot, conversations full of spirit and insight, letters sparkling with unstrained humanity; and if the death of the heroine be somewhat frigid and artificial, the last days of the hero strike the only note of what we now call Byronism, between the Elizabethans and Byron himself. And yet a little story of a shipwrecked sailor, with not a tenth part of the style nor a thousandth part of the wisdom, exploring none of the arcana of humanity and deprived of the perennial interest of love, goes on from edition to edition, while *Clarissa* lies upon the shelves unread. A friend of mine, a Welsh blacksmith, was twenty-five years old and could neither read nor write, when he heard a chapter of *Robinson* read aloud in a farm kitchen. Up to that moment he had sat content, huddled in his ignorance, but he left that farm another man. There were day-dreams, it appeared, divine day-dreams, written and printed and bound, and

[8] These references are to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

[9] Anthony Trollope (1815-1882).

[10] Reference is to chapter 62 of *The Way We Live Now*.

[11] Thackeray's *Henry Esmond*.

[12] Richardson's *Clarissa*.

to be bought for money and enjoyed at pleasure. Down he sat that day, painfully learned to read Welsh, and returned to borrow the book. It had been lost, nor could he find another copy but one that was in English. Down he sat once more, learned English, and at length, and with entire delight, read *Robinson*. It is like the story of a love-chase. If he had heard a letter from *Clarissa*, would he have been fired with the same chivalrous ardor? I wonder. Yet *Clarissa* has every quality that can be shown in prose, one alone excepted—pictorial or picture-making romance. While *Robinson* depends, for the most part and with the overwhelming majority of its readers, on the charm of circumstance.

In the highest achievements of the art of words, the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and romantic interest, rise and fall together by a common and organic law. Situation is animated with passion, passion clothed upon with situation. Neither exists for itself, but each inheres indissolubly with the other. This is high art; and not only the highest art possible in words, but the highest art of all, since it combines the greatest mass and diversity of the elements of truth and pleasure. Such are epics, and the few prose tales that have the epic weight. But as from a school of works, aping the creative, incident and romance are ruthlessly discarded, so may character and drama be omitted or subordinated to romance. There is one book, for example, more generally loved than Shakespeare, that captivates in childhood, and still delights in age—I mean the *Arabian Nights*—where you shall look in vain for moral or for intellectual interest. No human face or voice greets us among that wooden crowd of kings and genies, sorcerers and beggarmen. Adventure, in the most naked terms, furnishes forth the entertainment, and is found enough. Dumas approaches perhaps nearest of any modern to these Arabian authors, in the purely material charm of some of his romances. The early part of *Monte Cristo*, down to the finding of the treasure, is a piece of perfect story-telling; the man never breathed who shared these moving incidents without a tremor; and yet Faria is a thing of packthread and Dantès little more than a name. The sequel is one long-drawn error, gloomy, bloody, unnatural and dull; but as for these early chapters, I do not believe there is another volume extant where you can breathe the same unmingled atmosphere of romance. It is very thin and light, to be sure, as on a high mountain; but it is brisk and clear and sunny in proportion. I saw the other day, with envy, an old and very clever lady setting forth on a second or third voyage into *Monte Cristo*. Here are stories which powerfully affect the reader, which can be reperused at any age, and where the characters are no more than puppets. The bony fist of the showman visibly propels them; their springs are an open secret; their faces are of wood; their bellies filled with bran; and yet we thrillingly partake of their adventures. And the point may be illustrated still further. The last interview between Lucy and Richard Feverel is pure drama; more than that, it is the strongest scene, since Shakespeare, in the English tongue. Their first meeting by the river, on the other hand, is pure romance; it has nothing to do with character; it might happen to any other boy and maiden, and be none the less delightful for the change. And yet I think he would be a bold man who should choose between these passages. Thus in the same book we may have two scenes, each capital in its order: in the one, human passion, deep calling unto deep, shall utter its genuine voice; in the second, according circumstances, like instruments in tune, shall build up a trivial but desirable incident, such as we love to prefigure for ourselves; and in the end, in spite of the critics, we may hesitate to give the preference to either. The one may ask more genius—I do not say it does; but at least the other dwells as clearly in the memory.

True romantic art, again, makes a romance of all things. It reaches into the highest abstraction of the ideal; it does not refuse the most pedestrian realism. *Robinson Crusoe* is as realistic as it is romantic; both qualities are pushed to an extreme, and neither suffers. Nor does romance depend upon the material importance of the incidents. To deal with strong and deadly elements, banditti, pirates, war and murder, is to conjure with great names, and, in the event of failure, to double the disgrace. The arrival of Haydn and Consuelo at the Canon's villa[12] is a very trifling incident; yet we may read a dozen boisterous stories from beginning to end, and not receive so fresh and stirring an impression of adventure. It was the scene of Crusoe at the wreck, if I remember rightly, that so bewitched my blacksmith. Nor is the fact surprising. Every single article the castaway recovers from the hulk is "a joy for ever" to the man who reads of them. They are the things that should be found, and bare enumeration stirs the blood. I found a glimmer of the same interest the other day in a new book, *The Sailor's Sweetheart*, by Mr. Clark Russell. The whole business of the brig *Morning Star* is very rightly felt and spiritedly written; but the

[12] George Sand's *Consuelo*

clothes, the books, and the money satisfy the reader's mind like things to eat. We are dealing here with the old cut-and-dry, legitimate interest of treasure trove. But even treasure trove can be made dull. There are few people who have not groaned under the plethora of goods that fell to the lot of the Swiss Family Robinson, that dreary family. They found article after article, from milk kine to pieces of ordnance, a whole consignment; but no informing taste had presided over the selection,— there was no smack or relish in the invoice, and these riches left the fancy cold. The box of goods in Verne's *Mysterious Island* is another case in point: there was no gusto and no glamor about that; it might have come from a shop. But the two hundred and seventy-eight Australian sovereigns on board the *Morning Star* fell upon me like a surprise that I had expected; whole vistas of secondary stories, besides the one in hand, radiated forth from that discovery, as they radiate from a striking particular in life; and I was made for the moment as happy as a reader has a right to be.

To come at all at the nature of this quality of romance, we must bear in mind the peculiarity of our attitude to any art. No art produces illusion; in the theatre we never forget that we are in the theatre; and while we read a story, we sit wavering between two minds, now merely clapping our hands at the merit of the performance, now condescending to take an active part in fancy with the characters. This last is the triumph of romantic story-telling: when the reader consciously plays at being the hero, the scene is a good scene. Now in character studies the pleasure that we take is critical; we watch, we approve, we smile at incongruities, we are moved to sudden heats of sympathy for courage, suffering, or virtue. But the characters are still themselves, they are not us; the more clearly they are depicted, the more widely do they stand away from us, the more imperiously do they thrust us back into our place as a spectator. I cannot identify myself with Rawdon Crawley or with Eugène de Rastignac,[14] for I have scarce a hope or fear in common with them. It is not character but incident that woos us out of our reserve. Something happens as we desire to have it happen to ourselves; some situation, that we have long dallied with in fancy, is realized in the story with enticing and appropriate details. Then we forget the characters; then we push the hero aside; then we plunge into the tale in our own person and bathe in fresh experience; and then, and then only, do we say we have been reading a romance. It is not only pleasurable things that we imagine in our day-dreams; there are lights in which we are willing to contemplate even the idea of our own death,—ways in which it seems as if it would amuse us to be cheated, wounded, or calumniated. It is thus possible to construct a story, even of tragic import, in which every incident, detail, and trick of circumstance shall be welcome to the reader's thoughts. Fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child; it is there that he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life; and when the game so chimes with his fancy that he can join in it with all his heart, when it pleases him at every turn, when he loves to recall it and dwells upon its recollection with entire delight, fiction is called romance.

Walter Scott is out and away the king of the romantics. *The Lady of the Lake* has no indisputable claim to be a poem beyond the inherent fitness and desirability of the tale. It is just such a story as a man would make up for himself, walking, in the best health and temper, through just such scenes as it is laid in. Hence it is that a charm dwells undefinable among these slovenly verses, as the unseen cuckoo fills the mountains with his note; hence, even after we have flung the book aside, the scenery and adventures remain present to the mind, a new and green possession, not unworthy of that beautiful name, *The Lady of the Lake,* or that direct, romantic opening—one of the most spirited and poetical in literature—"The stag at eve had drunk his fill." The same strength and the same weaknesses adorn and disfigure the novels. In that ill-written, ragged book, *The Pirate,* the figure of Cleveland—cast up by the sea on the resounding foreland of Dunrossness—moving, with the blood on his hands and the Spanish words on his tongue, among the simple islanders—singing a serenade under the window of his Shetland mistress—is conceived in the very highest manner of romantic invention. The words of his song, "Through groves of palm," sung in such a scene and by such a lover, clench, as in a nutshell, the emphatic contrast upon which the tale is built. In *Guy Mannering,* again, every incident is delightful to the imagination; and the scene when Harry Bertram lands at Ellangowan is a model instance of romantic method.

"'I remember the tune well,' he says, 'though I cannot guess what should at present so strongly recall it to my memory.' He took his flageolet from his pocket and played a simple melody. Apparently the tune awoke the corresponding associations of a damsel. . . . She immediately took up the song—

[14] in Balzac's *Père Goriot.*

"'Are these the links of Forth,' she said;
'Or are they the crooks of Dee,
Or the bonny woods of Warroch Head
That I so fain would see?'

"'By heaven!' said Bertram, 'it is the very ballad.'"

On this quotation two remarks fall to be made. First, as an instance of modern feeling for romance, this famous touch of the flageolet and the old song is selected by Miss Braddon for omission. Miss Braddon's idea of a story, like Mrs. Todgers's idea of a wooden leg, were something strange to have expounded. As a matter of personal experience, Meg's appearance to old Mr. Bertram on the road, the ruins of Dernecleugh, the scene of the flageolet, and the Dominie's recognition of Harry, are the four strong notes that continue to ring in the mind after the book is laid aside. The second point is still more curious. The reader will observe a mark of excision in the passage as quoted by me. Well, here is how it runs in the original: "A damsel who, close behind a fine spring about half-way down the descent, and which had once supplied the castle with water, was engaged in bleaching linen." A man who gave in such copy would be discharged from the staff of a daily paper. Scott has forgotten to prepare the reader for the presence of the "damsel"; he has forgotten to mention the spring and its relation to the ruin; and now, face to face with his omission, instead of trying back and starting fair, crams all this matter, tail foremost, into a single shambling sentence. It is not merely bad English, or bad style; it is abominably bad narrative besides.

Certainly the contrast is remarkable; and it is one that throws a strong light upon the subject of this paper. For here we have a man of the finest creative instinct touching with perfect certainty and charm the romantic junctures of his story; and we find him utterly careless, almost, it would seem, incapable, in the technical matter of style, and not only frequently weak, but frequently wrong in points of drama. In character parts, indeed, and particularly in the Scotch, he was delicate, strong, and truthful; but the trite, obliterated features of too many of his heroes have already wearied two generations of readers. At times his characters will speak with something far beyond propriety with a true heroic note; but on the next page they will be wading wearily forward with an ungrammatical and undramatic rigmarole of words. The man who could conceive and write the character of Elspeth of the Craigburnfoot,[15] as Scott has conceived and written it, had not only splendid romantic, but splendid tragic gifts. How comes it, then, that he could so often fob us off with languid, inarticulate twaddle?

It seems to me that the explanation is to be found in the very quality of his surprising merits. As his books are play to the reader, so were they play to him. He conjured up the romantic with delight, but he had hardly patience to describe it. He was a great day-dreamer, a seer of fit and beautiful and humorous visions, but hardly a great artist; hardly, in the manful sense, an artist at all. He pleased himself, and so he pleases us. Of the pleasures of his art he tasted fully; but of its toils and vigils and distresses never man knew less. A great romantic—an idle child. (1882)

Pulvis et Umbra

Stevenson wrote this courageous essay in the spring of 1888, when he was a patient at Saranac Lake in New York State. It was first published in *Scribner's Magazine* for April of that year and later reprinted in *Across the Plains* (1892). The title is taken from Horace's *Carmen Seculare*: "Pulvis et umbra sumus" (we are dust and a shade).

We look for some reward of our endeavors and are disappointed; not success, not happiness, not even peace of conscience, crowns our ineffectual efforts to do well. Our frailties are invincible, our virtues barren; the battle goes sore against us to the going down of the sun. The canting[1] moralist tells us of right and wrong; and we look abroad, even on the face of our small earth, and find them

[15] in Scott's *The Antiquary*.

[1] *i.e.*, insincere.

change with every climate, and no country where some action is not honored for a virtue and none where it is not branded for a vice; and we look in our experience, and find no vital congruity in the wisest rules, but at the best a municipal fitness. It is not strange if we are tempted to despair of good. We ask too much. Our religions and moralities have been trimmed to flatter us, till they are all emasculate and sentimentalized, and only please and weaken. Truth is of a rougher strain. In the harsh face of life, faith can read a bracing gospel. The human race is a thing more ancient than the Ten Commandments; and the bones and revolutions of the Kosmos, in whose joints we are but moss and fungus, more ancient still.

I

Of the Kosmos in the last resort, science reports many doubtful things and all of them appalling. There seems no substance to this solid globe on which we stamp: nothing but symbols and ratios.[2] Symbols and ratios carry us and bring us forth and beat us down; gravity that swings the incommensurable suns and worlds through space, is but a figment varying inversely as the squares of distances; and the suns and worlds themselves, imponderable figures of abstraction, NH_3 and H_2O.[3] Consideration dares not dwell upon this view; that way madness lies; science carries us into zones of speculation, where there is no habitable city for the mind of man.

But take the Kosmos with a grosser faith, as our senses give it us. We behold space sown with rotatory islands, suns and worlds and the shards and wrecks of systems: some, like the sun, still blazing; some rotting, like the earth; others, like the moon, stable in desolation. All of these we take to be made of something we call matter: a thing which no analysis can help us to conceive; to whose incredible properties no familiarities can reconcile our minds. This stuff, when not purified by the lustration of fire, rots uncleanly into something we call life; seized through all its atoms with a pediculous[4] malady; swelling in tumors that become independent, sometimes even (by an abhorrent prodigy) locomotory; one splitting into millions, millions cohering into one, as the malady proceeds through varying stages. This vital putrescence of the dust, used as we are to it, yet strikes us with occasional disgust, and the profusion of worms in a piece of ancient turf, or the air of a marsh darkened with insects, will sometimes check our breathing so that we aspire for cleaner places. But none is clean: the moving sand is infected with lice; the pure spring, where it bursts out of the mountain, is a mere issue of worms; even in the hard rock the crystal is forming.

In two main shapes this eruption covers the countenance of the earth: the animal and the vegetable: one in some degree the inversion of the other: the second rooted to the spot; the first coming detached out of its natal mud, and scurrying abroad with the myriad feet of insects or towering into the heavens on the wings of birds: a thing so incomprehensible that, if it be well considered, the heart stops. To what passes with the anchored vermin,[5] we have little clue; doubtless they have their joys and sorrows, their delights and killing agonies: it appears not how. But of the locomotory, to which we ourselves belong, we can tell more. These share with us a thousand miracles: the miracles of sight, of hearing, of the projection of sound, things that bridge space; the miracles of memory and reason, by which the present is conceived, and when it is gone, its image kept living in the brains of man and brute; the miracle of reproduction, with its imperious desires and staggering consequences. And to put the last touch upon this mountain mass of the revolting and the inconceivable, all these prey upon each other, lives tearing other lives in pieces, cramming them inside themselves, and by that summary process, growing fat: the vegetarian, the whale, perhaps the tree, not less than the lion of the desert; for the vegetarian is only the eater of the dumb.

Meanwhile our rotatory island loaded with predatory life, and more drenched with blood, both animal and vegetable, than ever mutinied ship, scuds through space with unimaginable speed, and turns alternate cheeks to the reverberation of a blazing world, ninety million miles away.

II

What a monstrous specter is this man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown upon with hair like grass, fitted with eyes that move and glitter in his face; a thing to set children

[2] when the universe is considered from the mathematical or chemical point of view.

[3] the chemical formulas for ammonia and water.

[4] louse-like.

[5] the vegetable world.

screaming;—and yet looked at nearlier, known as his fellows know him, how surprising are his attributes! Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent, savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow lives: who should have blamed him had he been of a piece with his destiny and a being merely barbarous? And we look and behold him instead filled with imperfect virtues: infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down, amidst his momentary life, to debate of right and wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to do battle for an egg or die for an idea; singling out his friends and his mate with cordial affection; bringing forth in pain, rearing with long-suffering solicitude, his young. To touch the heart of his mystery, we find in him one thought, strange to the point of lunacy: the thought of duty; the thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbor, to his God; an ideal of decency, to which he would rise if it were possible; a limit of shame below which, if it be possible, he will not stoop. The design in most men is one of conformity; here and there, in picked natures, it transcends itself and soars on the other side, arming martyrs with independence; but in all, in their degrees, it is a bosom thought:—Not in man alone, for we trace it in dogs and cats whom we know fairly well, and doubtless some similar point of honor sways the elephant, the oyster, and the louse, of whom we know so little:—But in man, at least, it sways with so complete an empire that merely selfish things come second, even with the selfish: that appetites are starved, fears are conquered, pains supported; that almost the dullest shrinks from the reproof of a glance, although it were a child's; and all but the most cowardly stand amid the risks of war; and the more noble, having strongly conceived an act as due to their ideal, affront and embrace death. Strange enough if, with their singular origin and perverted practice, they think they are to be rewarded in some future life: stranger still, if they are persuaded of the contrary, and think this blow, which they solicit, will strike them senseless for eternity. I shall be reminded what a tragedy of misconception and misconduct man at large presents: of organized injustice, cowardly violence, and treacherous crime; and of the damning imperfections of the best. They cannot be too darkly drawn. Man is indeed marked for failure in his efforts to do right. But where the best consistently miscarry, how tenfold more remarkable that all should continue to strive; and surely we should find it both touching and inspiriting, that in a field from which success is banished, our race should not cease to labor.

If the first view of this creature, stalking in his rotatory isle, be a thing to shake the courage of the stoutest, on this nearer sight, he startles us with an admiring wonder. It matters not where we look, under what climate we observe him, in what stage of society, in what depth of ignorance, burthened with what erroneous morality; by camp-fires in Assiniboia,[6] the snow powdering his shoulders, the wind plucking his blanket, as he sits, passing the ceremonial calumet and uttering his grave opinions like a Roman senator; in ships at sea, a man inured to hardship and vile pleasures, his brightest hope a fiddle in a tavern and a bedizened trull who sells herself to rob him, and he for all that simple, innocent, cheerful, kindly like a child, constant to toil, brave to drown, for others; in the slums of cities, moving among indifferent millions to mechanical employments, without hope of change in the future, with scarce a pleasure in the present, and yet true to his virtues, honest up to his lights, kind to his neighbors, tempted perhaps in vain by the bright gin-palace, perhaps long-suffering with the drunken wife that ruins him; in India (a woman this time) kneeling with broken cries and streaming tears, as she drowns her child in the sacred river; in the brothel, the discard of society, living mainly on strong drink, fed with affronts, a fool, a thief, the comrade of thieves, and even here keeping the point of honor and the touch of pity, often repaying the world's scorn with service, often standing firm upon a scruple, and at a certain cost, rejecting riches:—everywhere some virtue cherished or affected, everywhere some decency of thought and carriage, everywhere the ensign of man's ineffectual goodness:—ah! if I could show you this! If I could show you these men and women, all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging, in the brothel or on the scaffold, to some rag of honor, the poor jewel of their souls! They may seek to escape, and yet they cannot; it is not alone their privilege and glory, but their doom; they are condemned to some nobility; all their lives long, the desire of good is at their heels, the implacable hunter.

Of all earth's meteors, here at least is the most

[6] a former province in northern Canada

strange and consoling: that this ennobled lemur, this hair-crowned bubble of the dust, this inheritor of a few years and sorrows, should yet deny himself his rare delights, and add to his frequent pains, and live for an ideal, however misconceived. Nor can we stop with man. A new doctrine,[7] received with screams a little while ago by canting moralists, and still not properly worked into the body of our thoughts, lights us a step farther into the heart of this rough but noble universe. For nowadays the pride of man denies in vain his kinship with the original dust. He stands no longer like a thing apart. Close at his heels we see the dog, prince of another genus: and in him too, we see dumbly testified the same cultus of an unattainable ideal, the same constancy in failure. Does it stop with the dog? We look at our feet where the ground is blackened with the swarming ant: a creature so small, so far from us in the hierarchy of brutes, that we can scarce trace and scarce comprehend his doings; and here also, in his ordered polities and rigorous justice, we see confessed the law of duty and the fact of individual sin. Does it stop, then, with the ant? Rather this desire of well-doing and this doom of frailty run through all the grades of life: rather is this earth, from the frosty top of Everest to the next margin of the internal fire, one stage of ineffectual virtues and one temple of pious tears and perseverance. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together. It is the common and the god-like law of life. The browsers, the biters, the barkers, the hairy coats of field and forest, the squirrel in the oak, the thousand-footed creeper in the dust, as they share with us the gift of life, share with us the love of an ideal: strive like us—like us are tempted to grow weary of the struggle—to do well; like us receive at times unmerited refreshment, visitings of support, returns of courage; and are condemned like us to be crucified between that double law of the members and the will. Are they like us, I wonder, in the timid hope of some reward, some sugar with the drug? do they, too, stand aghast at unrewarded virtues, at the sufferings of those whom, in our partiality, we take to be just, and the prosperity of such as, in our blindness, we call wicked? It may be, and yet God knows what they should look for. Even while they look, even while they repent, the foot of man treads them by thousands in the dust, the yelping hounds burst upon their trail, the bullet speeds, the knives are heating in the den of the vivisectionist; or the dew falls, and the generation of a day is blotted out. For these are creatures, compared with whom our weakness is strength, our ignorance wisdom, our brief span eternity.

And as we dwell, we living things, in our isle of terror and under the imminent hand of death, God forbid it should be man the erected, the reasoner, the wise in his own eyes—God forbid it should be man that wearies in well-doing, that despairs of unrewarded effort, or utters the language of complaint. Let it be enough for faith, that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy: surely not all in vain. (1888)

Joseph Conrad

(1857-1924)

It is traditionally cited as one of the minor miracles of literary history that Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski—born of Polish parents in the Ukraine, almost totally ignorant of English until he was twenty, and never able to speak it without a strong foreign accent—should become one of the masters of modern English prose fiction. But the miracle can be explained. For Józef Korzeniowski approached his adopted language with a brave new wonder, a blissful ignorance of clichés, and an instinct for fresh phrases that no trueborn Englishman could possess. And when in his thirties he turned to writing under the name Joseph Conrad, he had a rich treasury of exciting experience on which to draw.

Conrad spent part of his boyhood in Northern Russia, where his father had been

[7] evolution, expounded in Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

exiled for revolutionary activities. His voyage as a merchant sailor on a French vessel at seventeen was the beginning of twenty adventurous years at sea. Twelve years later, after serving aboard several British ships, he became a British citizen and got his certificate as a master. When he came ashore for good in 1894, he had with him the manuscript of an unfinished novel which he had been poring over for five years at sea. It was published in 1895 under the title *Almayer's Folly*.

Conrad himself admitted that he wrote with a "special piety" toward the two decades of his life when the oceans were all his world and the merchant service his only home. "I have tried with an almost filial regard to render the vibration of life in the great world of waters, in the hearts of the simple men who have for ages traversed its solitudes, and also that something sentient which seems to dwell in ships—the creatures of their hands and the objects of their care." It is only natural that he is most widely known for stories in which the sea plays a principal role—novels such as *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Typhoon* (1903); short stories such as *Youth* (1902) and *The Secret Sharer* (1912). But he was equally skillful in conjuring up the oppressive atmosphere of the jungle, as in his novel *Victory* (1915), *Heart of Darkness* (1902), a long short story which evolved from a six-month inland voyage in the Belgian Congo, and *The Lagoon* (1898). *Nostromo* (1904) is also rated among his best novels.

Although his fiction is seldom free from moral implications (*Lord Jim* is a sermon on honor and cowardice, *Youth* a hymn of praise to the resiliency of young manhood) Conrad was primarily interested in reproducing perfectly the brilliant images which crowded onto the screen of his memory. "My task . . . is by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*. That—and no more, and it is everything." "It was all against Conrad's oversensitized receptivity," wrote his friend H. G. Wells, "that a boat could ever be just a boat. He wanted to see it with a definite vividness of his own." This concern for vividness led him to an incessant preoccupation with style. He was taunted by what he called "an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences." He was constantly involved in the riddle of how to tell a tale. Chronic experiment with narrative technique led him into the endless digressions and the Chinese boxes of story-within-story-within-story that are the hallmarks of a Conrad novel.

Today many readers agree with Wells that Conrad's restless search for perfection, "this incessant endeavour to keep prose bristling up and have it 'vivid' all the time, defeats its end." For this reason they find Conrad at his best, not in the novels, but in such well-paced short stories as *The Lagoon*. There are other readers who believe Conrad the finest English novelist of his era.

The Lagoon

The white man, leaning with both arms over the roof of the little house in the stern of the boat, said to the steersman—

"We will pass the night in Arsat's clearing. It is late."

The Malay only grunted, and went on looking fixedly at the river. The white man rested his chin on his crossed arms and gazed at the wake of the boat. At the end of the straight avenue of forests cut by the intense glitter of the river, the sun appeared unclouded and dazzling, poised low over the water that shone smoothly like a band of metal. The forests, sombre and dull, stood motionless and silent on each side of the broad stream. At the foot of big, towering trees, trunkless nipa palms rose from the mud of the bank, in bunches of leaves enormous and heavy, that hung unstirring over the brown swirl of eddies. In the stillness of the air every tree, every leaf, every bough, every tendril of creeper and every petal of minute blossoms seemed to have been bewitched into an immobility perfect and final. Nothing moved on the river but the eight paddles that rose flashing regularly, dipped together with a single splash; while the steersman swept right and left with a periodic and sudden flourish of his blade describing a glinting semicircle above his head.

The churned-up water frothed alongside with a confused murmur. And the white man's canoe, advancing up stream in the short-lived disturbance of its own making, seemed to enter the portals of a land from which the very memory of motion had for ever departed.

The white man, turning his back upon the setting sun, looked along the empty and broad expanse of the sea-reach. For the last three miles of its course the wandering, hesitating river, as if enticed irresistibly by the freedom of an open horizon, flows straight into the sea, flows straight to the east—to the east that harbours both light and darkness. Astern of the boat the repeated call of some bird, a cry discordant and feeble, skipped along over the smooth water and lost itself, before it could reach the other shore, in the breathless silence of the world.

The steersman dug his paddle into the stream, and held hard with stiffened arms, his body thrown forward. The water gurgled aloud; and suddenly the long straight reach seemed to pivot on its centre, the forests swung in a semicircle, and the slanting beams of sunset touched the broadside of the canoe with a fiery glow, throwing the slender and distorted shadows of its crew upon the streaked glitter of the river. The white man turned to look ahead. The course of the boat had been altered at right-angles to the stream, and the carved dragon-head of its prow was pointing now at a gap in the fringing bushes of the bank. It glided through, brushing the over-hanging twigs, and disappeared from the river like some slim and amphibious creature leaving the water for its lair in the forests.

The narrow creek was like a ditch: tortuous, fabulously deep; filled with gloom under the thin strip of pure and shining blue of the heaven. Immense trees soared up, invisible behind the festooned draperies of creepers. Here and there, near the glistening blackness of the water, a twisted root of some tall tree showed amongst the tracery of small ferns, black and dull, writhing and motionless, like an arrested snake. The short words of the paddlers reverberated loudly between the thick and sombre walls of vegetation. Darkness oozed out from between the trees, through the tangled maze of the creepers, from behind the great fantastic and unstirring leaves; the darkness, mysterious and invincible; the darkness scented and poisonous of impenetrable forests.

The men poled in the shoaling water. The creek broadened, opening out into a wide sweep of a stagnant lagoon. The forests receded from the marshy bank, leaving a level strip of bright green, reedy grass to frame the reflected blueness of the sky. A fleecy pink cloud drifted high above, trailing the delicate colouring of its image under the floating leaves and the silvery blossoms of the lotus. A little house, perched on high piles, appeared black in the distance. Near it, two tall nibong palms, that seemed to have come out of the forests in the background, leaned slightly over the ragged roof, with a suggestion of sad tenderness and care in the droop of their leafy and soaring heads.

The steersman, pointing with his paddle, said, "Arsat is there. I see his canoe fast between the piles."

The polers ran along the sides of the boat glancing over their shoulders at the end of the day's journey. They would have preferred to spend the night somewhere else than on this lagoon of weird aspect and ghostly reputation. Moreover, they disliked Arsat, first as a stranger, and also because he who repairs a ruined house and dwells in it, proclaims that he is not afraid to live amongst the spirits that haunt the places abandoned by mankind. Such a man can disturb the course of fate by glances or words; while his familiar ghosts are not easy to propitiate by casual wayfarers upon whom they long to wreak the malice of their human master. White men care not for such things, being unbelievers and in league with the Father of Evil, who leads them unharmed through the invisible dangers of this world. To the warnings of the righteous they oppose an offensive pretence of disbelief. What is there to be done?

So they thought, throwing their weight on the end of their long poles. The big canoe glided on swiftly, noiselessly, and smoothly, towards Arsat's clearing, till, in a great rattling of poles thrown down, and the loud murmurs of "Allah be praised!" it came with a gentle knock against the crooked piles below the house.

The boatmen with uplifted faces shouted discordantly, "Arsat! O Arsat!" Nobody came. The white men began to climb the rude ladder giving access to the bamboo platform before the house. The juragan of the boat said sulkily, "We will cook in the sampan, and sleep on the water."

"Pass my blankets and the basket," said the white man curtly.

He knelt on the edge of the platform to receive the bundle. Then the boat shoved off, and the white man, standing up, confronted Arsat, who had come out through the low door of his hut.

He was a man young, powerful, with broad chest and muscular arms. He had nothing on but his sarong. His head was bare. His big, soft eyes stared eagerly at the white man, but his voice and demeanour were composed as he asked, without any words of greeting—

"Have you medicine, Tuan?"

"No," said the visitor in a startled tone. "No. Why? Is there sickness in the house?"

"Enter and see," replied Arsat, in the same calm manner, and turning short round, passed again through the small doorway. The white man, dropping his bundles, followed.

In the dim light of the dwelling he made out on a couch of bamboos a woman stretched on her back under a broad sheet of red cotton cloth. She lay still, as if dead; but her big eyes, wide open, glittered in the gloom, staring upwards at the slender rafters, motionless and unseeing. She was in a high fever, and evidently unconscious. Her cheeks were sunk slightly, her lips were partly open, and on the young face there was the ominous and fixed expression—the absorbed, contemplating expression of the unconscious who are going to die. The two men stood looking down at her in silence.

"Has she been long ill?" asked the traveller.

"I have not slept for five nights," answered the Malay, in a deliberate tone. "At first she heard voices calling her from the water and struggled against me who held her. But since the sun of today rose she hears nothing—she hears not me. She sees nothing. She sees not me—me!"

He remained silent for a minute, then asked softly—

"Tuan, will she die?"

"I fear so," said the white man sorrowfully. He had known Arsat years ago, in a far country in times of trouble and danger, when no friendship is to be despised. And since his Malay friend had come unexpectedly to dwell in the hut on the lagoon with a strange woman, he had slept many times there, in his journeys up and down the river. He liked the man who knew how to keep faith in council and how to fight without fear by the side of his white friend. He liked him—not so much perhaps as a man likes his favorite dog—but still he liked him well enough to help and ask no questions, to think sometimes vaguely and hazily in the midst of his own pursuits, about the lonely man and the long-haired woman with audacious face and triumphant eyes, who lived together hidden by the forests—alone and feared.

The white man came out of the hut in time to see the enormous conflagration of sunset put out by the swift and stealthy shadows that, rising like a black and impalpable vapour above the tree-tops, spread over the heaven, extinguishing the crimson glow of floating clouds and the red brilliance of departing daylight. In a few moments all the stars came out above the intense blackness of the earth and the great lagoon gleaming suddenly with reflected lights resembled an oval patch of night sky flung down into the hopeless and abysmal night of the wilderness. The white man had some supper out of the basket, then collecting a few sticks that lay about the platform, made up a small fire, not for warmth, but for the sake of the smoke, which would keep off the mosquitos. He wrapped himself in his blankets and sat with his back against the reed wall of the house, smoking thoughtfully.

Arsat came through the doorway with noiseless steps and squatted down by the fire. The white man moved his outstretched legs a little.

"She breathes," said Arsat in a low voice, anticipating the expected question. "She breathes and burns as if with a great fire. She speaks not; she hears not—and burns!"

He paused for a moment, then asked in a quiet, incurious tone—

"Tuan . . . will she die?"

The white man moved his shoulders uneasily and muttered in a hesitating manner—

"If such is her fate."

"No, Tuan," said Arsat calmly. "If such is my fate. I hear, I see, I wait. I remember . . . Tuan, do you remember the old days? Do you remember my brother?"

"Yes," said the white man. The Malay rose suddenly and went in. The other, sitting still outside, could hear the voice in the hut. Arsat said: "Hear me! Speak!" His words were succeeded by a complete silence. "O Diamelen!" he cried suddenly. After that cry there was a deep sigh. Arsat came out and sank down again in his old place.

They sat in silence before the fire. There was no sound within the house, there was no sound near them; but far away on the lagoon they could hear the voices of the boatmen ringing fitful and distinct on the calm water. The fire in the bows of the sampan shone faintly in the distance with a hazy red glow. Then it died out. The voices ceased. The land and the water slept invisible, unstirring and mute. It was as though there had

been nothing left in the world but the glitter of stars streaming, ceaseless and vain, through the black stillness of the night.

The white man gazed straight before him into the darkness with wide-open eyes. The fear and fascination, the inspiration and the wonder of death—of death near, unavoidable, and unseen, soothed the unrest of his race and stirred the most indistinct, the most intimate of his thoughts. The ever-ready suspicion of evil, the gnawing suspicion that lurks in our hearts, flowed out into the stillness round him—into the stillness profound and dumb, and made it appear untrustworthy and infamous, like the placid and impenetrable mask of an unjustifiable violence. In that fleeting and powerful disturbance of his being the earth enfolded in the starlight peace became a shadowy country of inhuman strife, a battle-field of phantoms terrible and charming, august or ignoble, struggling ardently for the possession of our helpless hearts. An unquiet and mysterious country of inextinguishable desires and fears.

A plaintive murmur rose in the night; a murmur saddening and startling, as if the great solitudes of surrounding woods had tried to whisper into his ear the wisdom of their immense and lofty indifference. Sounds hesitating and vague floated in the air round him, shaped themselves slowly into words; and at last flowed on gently in a murmuring stream of soft and monotonous sentences. He stirred like a man waking up and changed his position slightly. Arsat, motionless and shadowy, sitting with bowed head under the stars, was speaking in a low and dreamy tone—

". . . for where can we lay down the heaviness of our trouble but in a friend's heart? A man must speak of war and of love. You, Tuan, know what war is, and you have seen me in time of danger seek death as other men seek life! A writing may be lost; a lie may be written; but what the eye has seen is truth and remains in the mind!"

"I remember," said the white man quietly. Arsat went on with mournful composure—

"Therefore I shall speak to you of love. Speak in the night. Speak before both night and love are gone—and the eye of day looks upon my sorrow and my shame; upon my blackened face; upon my burnt-up heart."

A sigh, short and faint, marked an almost imperceptible pause, and then his words flowed on, without a stir, without a gesture.

"After the time of trouble and war was over and you went away from my country in the pursuit of your desires, which we, men of the islands, cannot understand, I and my brother became again, as we had been before, the sword-bearers of the Ruler. You know we were men of family, belonging to a ruling race, and more fit than any to carry on our right shoulder the emblem of power. And in the time of prosperity Si Dendring showed us favour, as we, in time of sorrow, had showed to him the faithfulness of our courage. It was a time of peace. A time of deer-hunts and cock-fights; of idle talks and foolish squabbles between men whose bellies are full and weapons are rusty. But the sower watched the young rice-shoots grow up without fear, and the traders came and went, departed lean and returned fat into the river of peace. They brought news, too. Brought lies and truth mixed together, so that no man knew when to rejoice and when to be sorry. We heard from them about you also. They had seen you here and had seen you there. And I was glad to hear, for I remembered the stirring times, and I always remembered you, Tuan, till the time came when my eyes could see nothing in the past, because they had looked upon the one who is dying there—in the house."

He stopped to exclaim in an intense whisper, "O Mara bahia! O Calamity!" then went on speaking a little louder.

"There's no worse enemy and no better friend than a brother, Tuan, for one brother knows another, and in perfect knowledge is strength for good or evil. I loved my brother. I went to him and told him that I could see nothing but one face, hear nothing but one voice. He told me: 'Open your heart so that she can see what is in it —and wait. Patience is wisdom. Inchi Midah may die or our Ruler may throw off his fear of a woman!' . . . I waited! . . . You remember the lady with the veiled face, Tuan, and the fear of our Ruler before her cunning and temper. And if she wanted her servant, what could I do? But I fed the hunger of my heart on short glances and stealthy words. I loitered on the path to the bath-houses in the daytime, and when the sun had fallen behind the forest I crept along the jasmine hedges of the women's courtyard. Unseeing, we spoke to one another through the scent of flowers, through the veil of leaves, through the blades of long grass that stood still before our lips; so great was our prudence, so faint was the murmur of our great longing. The time passed swiftly . . . and there were whispers amongst women—and our enemies watched—my brother was gloomy,

and I began to think of killing and of a fierce death. . . . We are of a people who take what they want—like you whites. There is a time when a man should forget loyalty and respect. Might and authority are given to rulers, but to all men is given love and strength and courage. My brother said, 'You shall take her from their midst. We are two who are like one.' And I answered, 'Let it be soon, for I find no warmth in sunlight that does not shine upon her.' Our time came when the Ruler and all the great people went to the mouth of the river to fish by torchlight. There were hundreds of boats, and on the white sand, between the water and the forests, dwellings of leaves were built for the households of the Rajahs. The smoke of cooking-fires was like a blue mist of the evening, and many voices rang in it joyfully. While they were making the boats ready to beat up the fish, my brother came to me and said, 'To-night!' I looked to my weapons, and when the time came our canoe took its place in the circle of boats carrying the torches. The lights blazed on the water, but behind the boats there was darkness. When the shouting began and the excitement made them like mad we dropped out. The water swallowed our fire, and we floated back to the shore that was dark with only here and there the glimmer of embers. We could hear the talk of slave-girls amongst the sheds. Then we found a place deserted and silent. We waited there. She came. She came running along the shore, rapid and leaving no trace, like a leaf driven by the wind into the sea. My brother said gloomily, 'Go and take her; carry her into our boat.' I lifted her in my arms. She panted. Her heart was beating against my breast. I said, 'I take you from those people. You came to the cry of my heart, but my arms take you into my boat against the will of the great!' 'It is right,' said my brother. 'We are men who take what we want and can hold it against many. We should have taken her in daylight.' I said, 'Let us be off'; for since she was in my boat I began to think of our Ruler's many men. 'Yes. Let us be off,' said my brother. 'We are cast out and this boat is our country now—and the sea is our refuge.' He lingered with his foot on the shore, and I entreated him to hasten, for I remembered the strokes of her heart against my breast and thought that two men cannot withstand a hundred. We left, paddling downstream close to the bank; and as we passed by the creek where they were fishing, the great shouting had ceased, but the murmur of voices was loud like the humming of insects flying at noonday. The boats floated, clustered together, in the red light of torches, under a black roof of smoke; and men talked of their sport. Men that boasted, and praised, and jeered—men that would have been our friends in the morning, but on that night were already our enemies. We paddled swiftly past. We had no more friends in the country of our birth. She sat in the middle of the canoe with covered face; silent as she is now; unseeing as she is now—and I had no regret at what I was leaving because I could hear her breathing close to me—as I can hear her now."

He paused, listened with his ear turned to the doorway, then shook his head and went on.

"My brother wanted to shout the cry of challenge—one cry only—to let the people know we were freeborn robbers who trusted our arms and the great sea. And again I begged him in the name of our love to be silent. Could I not hear her breathing close to me? I knew the pursuit would come quick enough. My brother loved me. He dipped his paddle without a splash. He only said, 'There is half a man in you now—the other half is in that woman. I can wait. When you are a whole man again, you will come back with me here to shout defiance. We are sons of the same mother.' I made no answer. All my strength and all my spirit were in my hands that held the paddle—for I longed to be with her in a safe place beyond the reach of men's anger and of women's spite. My love was so great, that I thought it could guide me to a country where death was unknown, if I could only escape from Inchi Midah's fury and from our Ruler's sword. We paddled with haste, breathing through our teeth. The blades bit deep into the smooth water. We passed out of the river; we flew in clear channels amongst the shallows. We skirted the black coast; we skirted the sand beaches where the sea speaks in whispers to the land; and the gleam of white sand flashed back past our boat, so swiftly she ran upon the water. We spoke not. Only once I said, 'Sleep, Diamelen, for soon you may want all your strength.' I heard the sweetness of her voice, but I never turned my head. The sun rose and still we went on. Water fell from my face like rain from a cloud. We flew in the light and heat. I never looked back, but I knew that my brother's eyes, behind me, were looking steadily ahead, for the boat went as straight as a bushman's dart, when it leaves the end of the sumpitan. There was no better paddler, no better steersman than my

brother. Many times, together, we had won races in that canoe. But we never had put out our strength as we did then—then, when for the last time we paddled together! There was no braver or stronger man in our country than my brother. I could not spare the strength to turn my head and look at him, but every moment I heard the hiss of his breath getting louder behind me. Still he did not speak. The sun was high. The heat clung to my back like a flame of fire. My ribs were ready to burst, but I could no longer get enough air into my chest. And then I felt I must cry out with my last breath, 'Let us rest!' . . . 'Good!' he answered; and his voice was firm. He was strong. He was brave. He knew not fear and no fatigue . . . My brother!"

A murmur powerful and gentle, a murmur vast and faint; the murmur of trembling leaves, of stirring boughs, ran through the tangled depths of the forests, ran over the starry smoothness of the lagoon, and the water between the piles lapped the slimy timber once with a sudden splash. A breath of warm air touched the two men's faces and passed on with a mournful sound—a breath loud and short like an uneasy sigh of the dreaming earth.

Arsat went on in an even, low voice.

"We ran our canoe on the white beach of a little bay close to a long tongue of land that seemed to bar our road; a long wooded cape going far into the sea. My brother knew that place. Beyond the cape a river has its entrance, and through the jungle of that land there is a narrow path. We made a fire and cooked rice. Then we lay down to sleep on the soft sand in the shade of our canoe, while she watched. No sooner had I closed my eyes than I heard her cry of alarm. We leaped up. The sun was halfway down the sky already, and coming in sight in the opening of the bay we saw a prau manned by many paddlers. We knew it at once; it was of our Rajah's praus. They were watching the shore, and saw us. They beat the gong, and turned the head of the prau into the bay. I felt my heart become weak within my breast. Diamelen sat on the sand and covered her face. There was no escape by sea. My brother laughed. He had the gun you had given him, Tuan, before you went away, but there was only a handful of powder. He spoke to me quickly: 'Run with her along the path. I shall keep them back, for they have no firearms, and landing in the face of a man with a gun is certain death for some. Run with her. On the other side of that wood there is a fisherman's house—and a canoe. When I have fired all the shots I will follow. I am a great runner, and before they can come up we shall be gone. I will hold out as long as I can, for she is but a woman—that can neither run nor fight, but she has your heart in her weak hands.' He dropped behind the canoe. The prau was coming. She and I ran, and as we rushed along the path I heard shots. My brother fired—once—twice—and the booming of the gong ceased.. There was silence behind us. That neck of land is narrow. Before I heard my brother fire the third shot I saw the shelving shore, and I saw the water again; the mouth of a broad river. We crossed a grassy glade. We ran down to the water. I saw a low hut above the black mud, and a small canoe hauled up. I heard another shot behind me. I thought, 'That is his last charge.' We rushed down to the canoe; a man came running from the hut, but I leaped on him, and we rolled together in the mud. Then I got up, and he lay still at my feet. I don't know whether I had killed him or not. I and Diamelen pushed the canoe afloat. I heard yells behind me, and I saw my brother run across the glade. Many men were bounding after him, I took her in my arms and threw her into the boat, then leaped in myself. When I looked back I saw that my brother had fallen. He fell and was up again, but the men were closing round him. He shouted, 'I am coming!' The men were close to him. I looked. Many men. Then I looked at her. Tuan, I pushed the canoe! I pushed it into deep water. She was kneeling forward looking at me, and I said, 'Take your paddle,' while I struck the water with mine. Tuan, I heard him cry. I heard him cry my name twice; and I heard voices shouting, 'Kill! Strike!' I never turned back. I heard him calling my name again with a great shriek, as when life is going out together with the voice—and I never turned my head. My own name! . . . My brother! Three times he called—but I was not afraid of life. Was she not there in that canoe? And could I not with her find a country where death is forgotten—where death is unknown!"

The white man sat up. Arsat rose and stood, an indistinct and silent figure above the dying embers of the fire. Over the lagoon a mist drifting and low had crept, erasing slowly the glittering images of the stars. And now a great expanse of white vapour covered the land: it flowed cold and gray in the darkness, eddied in noiseless whirls round the tree-trunks and about the platform of the house, which seemed to float upon a restless and

impalpable illusion of a sea. Only far away the tops of the trees stood outlined on the twinkle of heaven, like a sombre and forbidding shore—a coast deceptive, pitiless and black.

Arsat's voice vibrated loudly in the profound peace.

"I had her there! I had her! To get her I would have faced all mankind. But I had her—and—"

His words went out ringing into the empty distances. He paused, and seemed to listen to them dying away very far—beyond help and beyond recall. Then he said quietly—

"Tuan, I loved my brother."

A breath of wind made him shiver. High above his head, high above the silent sea of mist the drooping leaves of the palms rattled together with a mournful and expiring sound. The white man stretched his legs. His chin rested on his chest, and he murmured sadly without lifting his head—

"We all love our brothers."

Arsat burst out with an intense whispering violence—

"What did I care who died? I wanted peace in my own heart."

He seemed to hear a stir in the house—listened —then stepped in noiselessly. The white man stood up. A breeze was coming in fitful puffs. The stars shone paler as if they had retreated into the frozen depths of immense space. After a chill gust of wind there were a few seconds of perfect calm and absolute silence. Then from behind the black and wavy line of the forests a column of golden light shot up into the heavens and spread over the semi-circle of the eastern horizon. The sun had risen. The mist lifted, broke into drifting patches, vanished into thin flying wreaths; and the unveiled lagoon lay, polished and black, in the heavy shadows at the foot of the wall of trees. A white eagle rose over it with a slanting and ponderous flight, reached the clear sunshine and appeared dazzlingly brilliant for a moment, then soaring higher, became a dark and motionless speck before it vanished into the blue as if it had left the earth for ever. The white man, standing gazing upwards before the doorway, heard in the hut a confused and broken murmur of distracted words ending with a loud groan. Suddenly Arsat stumbled out with outstretched hands, shivered, and stood still for some time with fixed eyes. Then he said—

"She burns no more."

Before his face the sun showed its edge above the tree-tops, rising steadily. The breeze freshened; a great brilliance burst upon the lagoon, sparkled on the rippling water. The forests came out of the clear shadows of the morning, became distinct, as if they had rushed nearer—to stop short in a great stir of leaves, of nodding boughs, of swaying branches. In the merciless sunshine the whisper of unconscious life grew louder, speaking in an incomprehensible voice round the dumb darkness of that human sorrow. Arsat's eyes wandered slowly, then stared at the rising sun.

"I can see nothing," he said half aloud to himself.

"There is nothing," said the white man, moving to the edge of the platform and waving his hand to his boat. A shout came faintly over the lagoon and the sampan began to glide towards the abode of the friend of ghosts.

"If you want to come with me, I will wait all the morning," said the white man, looking away upon the water.

"No, Tuan," said Arsat softly. "I shall not eat or sleep in this house, but I must first see my road. Now I can see nothing—see nothing! There is no light and no peace in the world; but there is death —death for many. We are sons of the same mother —and I left him in the midst of enemies; but I am going back now."

He drew a long breath and went on in a dreamy tone:

"In a little while I shall see clear enough to strike—to strike. But she has died, and . . . now . . . darkness."

He flung his arms wide open, let them fall along his body, then stood still with unmoved face and stony eyes, staring at the sun. The white man got down into his canoe. The polers ran smartly along the sides of the boat, looking over their shoulders at the beginning of a weary journey. High in the stern, his head muffled up in white rags, the juragan sat moody, letting his paddle trail in the water. The white man, leaning with both arms over the grass roof of the little cabin, looked back at the shining ripple of the boat's wake. Before the sampan passed out of the lagoon into the creek he lifted his eyes. Arsat had not moved. He stood lonely in the searching sunshine; and he looked beyond the great light of a cloudless day into the darkness of a world of illusions.

(1898)

DRAMA

Oscar Wilde

(1856-1900)

[For an account of Wilde's life see p. 828.]

The Importance of Being Earnest

The renaissance of English drama at the end of the nineteenth century was marked by the production of a number of serious problem plays in the realistic manner of the great Norwegian pioneer Henrik Ibsen. But Oscar Wilde's triumphs belong to a comic tradition which had a history of more than two centuries in England before his time. The comedy of manners had fallen on evil days during the barren century that followed the masterpieces of Sheridan (see I, p. 985) just as it had yielded to sentimentality and rant for three-quarters of a century after Congreve. Between *The School for Scandal* (1777) and Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) there is no English comedy of manners worthy of the name. *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) was Wilde's greatest achievement in the field. Until the dénouement, where the play suddenly explodes with an arsenal of farcical fireworks, it is high comedy at its highest, peppering human follies with shaft on shaft of deft, civilized wit. The adjective *artificial*, which Charles Lamb affixed to the type, applies equally well here. The plot is supremely implausible; the characters talk with a brilliance that makes the author's most calculated *bon mots* in real life seem pallid by comparison; the brittle lines, when analyzed, fall readily into comic patterns—the paradox, the pun, the swift anticlimax, the deadest cliché turned upside down to make an epigram. But the play was not written for the study. And underneath the synthetic surface is a layer of genuine satire which Wilde wanted us to detect when he subtitled the play with a characteristic paradox: "A Trivial Comedy for Serious People."

The Importance of Being Earnest was first produced at St. James's Theatre in London on February 14, 1895, and has undergone many successful revivals. That the play is not "dated" in the London of the "Yellow Nineties" was eloquently proved by John Gielgud's brilliant New York production of 1947.

Characters

JOHN WORTHING, J.P. — LANE (*Manservant*)
ALGERNON MONCRIEFF — LADY BRACKNELL
REV. CANON CHASUBLE, D.D. — HON. GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX
MERRIMAN (*Butler*) — CECILY CARDEW
MISS PRISM (*Governess*)

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I. Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street, W.
ACT II. The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.
ACT III. Drawing-room of the Manor House, Woolton.

Time—The Present.
Place—London.

ACT I

SCENE:—*Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.*

LANE *is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased,* ALGERNON *enters.*

ALGER. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

LANE. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGER. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—anyone can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGER. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Hands them on a salver.*]

ALGER. [*inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa*]. Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

LANE. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

ALGER. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

LANE. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGER. Good heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE. I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

ALGER. [*languidly*]. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGER. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

Enter LANE.

LANE. Mr. Ernest Worthing.

Enter JACK. LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGER. [*stiffly*]. I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK [*sitting down on the sofa*]. In the country.

ALGER. What on earth do you do there?

JACK [*pulling off his gloves*]. When one is in

town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGER. And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [*airily*]. Oh, neighbors, neighbors.

ALGER. Got nice neighbors in your part of Shropshire?

JACK. Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGER. How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich.*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

ALGER. Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK. How perfectly delightful!

ALGER. Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK. May I ask why?

ALGER. My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK. I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGER. I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

JACK. How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGER. I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

JACK. I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

ALGER. Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—[JACK *puts out his hand to take a sandwich.* ALGERNON *at once interferes.*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it.*]

JACK. Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGER. That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*Takes plate from below.*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

JACK [*advancing to table and helping himself*]. And very good bread and butter it is, too.

ALGER. Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

JACK. Why on earth do you say that?

ALGER. Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGER. It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

JACK. Your consent!

ALGER. My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rings bell.*]

JACK. Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

Enter LANE.

ALGER. Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

LANE. Yes, sir. [LANE *goes out.*

JACK. Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

ALGER. Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

JACK. There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

Enter LANE *with the cigarette case on a salver.* ALGERNON *takes it at once.* LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it.*] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK. Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him.*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGER. Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

JACK. I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

ALGER. Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone by that name.

JACK. Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGER. Your aunt!

JACK. Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGER. [*retreating to back of sofa*]. But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading.*] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK [*moving to sofa and kneeling upon it*]. My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows* ALGY *round the room.*]

ALGER. Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK. It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGER. You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket.*]

JACK. Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGER. Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK. My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGER. Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

JACK. Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

ALGER. I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

JACK. Well, produce my cigarette case first.

ALGER. Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*]

JACK. My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGER. Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK. That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGER. I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburyed all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK. My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets

into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGER. The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

JACK. That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

ALGER. Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK. What on earth do you mean?

ALGER. You have invented a very useful young brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's tonight, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

JACK. I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere tonight.

ALGER. I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

JACK. You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

ALGER. I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, tonight. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist, I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

JACK. I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

ALGER. Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

JACK. That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

ALGER. Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none.

JACK [*sententiously*]. That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

ALGER. Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

JACK. For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

ALGER. My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything now-a-days. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you tonight at Willis's?

JACK. I suppose so, if you want to.

ALGER. Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

Enter LANE.

LANE. Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax. [ALGERNON *goes forward to meet them. Enter* LADY BRACKNELL *and* GWENDOLEN.]

LADY B. Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGER. I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [*Sees* JACK *and bows to him with icy coldness.*]

ALGER. [*to* GWENDOLEN]. Dear me, you are smart!

GWEND. I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr. Worthing?

JACK. You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWEND. Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments and I intend to develop in *many directions.* [GWENDOLEN *and* JACK *sit down together in the corner.*]

LADY B. I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

ALGER. Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [*Goes over to tea-table.*]

LADY B. Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

GWEND. Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

ALGER. [*picking up empty plate in horror*]. Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

LANE [*gravely*]. There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

ALGER. No cucumbers!

LANE. No, sir. Not even for ready money.

ALGER. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [*Goes out.*

ALGER. I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

LADY B. It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

ALGER. I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

LADY B. It certainly has changed its color. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [ALGERNON *crosses and hands tea.*] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you tonight, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

ALGER. I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you tonight after all.

LADY B. [*frowning*]. I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

ALGER. It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [*Exchanges glances with* JACK.] They seem to think I should be with him.

LADY B. It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

ALGER. Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

LADY B. Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

ALGER. I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. Of course, the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music, people don't talk. But I'll run over the program I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

LADY B. Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following* ALGERNON.] I'm sure the program will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

GWEND. Certainly, mamma. [LADY BRACKNELL *and* ALGERNON *go into the music-room,* GWENDOLEN *remains behind.*]

JACK. Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWEND. Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

JACK. I do mean something else.

GWEND. I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK. And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence. . . .

GWEND. I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into

a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK [*nervously*]. Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

GWEND. Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [JACK *looks at her in amazement.*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits I am told; and my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK. You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWEND. Passionately!

JACK. Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWEND. My own Ernest!

JACK. But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

GWEND. But your name is Ernest.

JACK. Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me, then?

GWEND. [*glibly*]. Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

JACK. Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

GWEND. It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

JACK. Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

GWEND. Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

JACK. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWEND. Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK [*astounded*]. Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWEND. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK. Well . . . may I propose to you now?

GWEND. I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK. Gwendolen!

GWEND. Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK. You know what I have got to say to you.

GWEND. Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK. Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes down on his knees.*]

GWEND. Of course, I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK. My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

GWEND. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite, blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

Enter LADY BRACKNELL.

LADY B. Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

GWEND. Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him.*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

LADY B. Finished what, may I ask?

GWEND. I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma. [*They rise together.*]

LADY B. Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to someone, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise; pleasant or un-

pleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

GWEND. [*reproachfully*]. Mamma!

LADY B. In the carriage, Gwendolen! [GWENDOLEN *goes to the door. She and* JACK *blow kisses to each other behind Lady Bracknell's back.* LADY BRACKNELL *looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.*] Gwendolen, the carriage!

GWEND. Yes, mamma. [*Goes out, looking back at* JACK.]

LADY B. [*sitting down*]. You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. [*Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.*]

JACK. Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY B. [*pencil and note-book in hand*]. I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK. Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY B. I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK. Twenty-nine.

LADY B. A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to be married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK [*after some hesitation*]. I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

JACK. Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY B. [*makes a note in her book*]. In land, or in investments?

JACK. In investments, chiefly.

LADY B. That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's life-time, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK. I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY B. A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK. Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY B. Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK. Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY B. Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK. 149.

LADY B. [*shaking her head*]. The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK. Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY B. [*sternly*]. Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK. Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

LADY B. Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK. I have lost both my parents.

LADY B. Both? . . . That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

JACK. I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me. . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY B. Found!

JACK. The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old

gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY B. Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK [*gravely*]. In a hand-bag.

LADY B. A hand-bag?

JACK [*very seriously*]. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag, in fact.

LADY B. In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

JACK. In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

LADY B. The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

JACK. Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY B. The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate, bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK. May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to insure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY B. I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

JACK. Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing! [LADY BRACKNELL *sweeps out in majestic indignation.*]

JACK. Good morning! [ALGERNON, *from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March.* JACK *looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door.*] For heaven's sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are! [*The music stops, and* ALGERNON *enters cheerily.*]

ALGER. Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

JACK. Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair. . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

ALGER. My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGER. It isn't!

JACK. Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

ALGER. That is exactly what things were originally made for.

JACK. Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself. . . . [*A pause.*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGER. All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK. Is that clever?

ALGER. It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

JACK. I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever now-a-days. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGER. We have.

JACK. I should extremely like to meet them What do they talk about?

ALGER. The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

JACK. What fools!

ALGER. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK [*in a very patronizing manner*]. My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice sweet refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGER. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGER. What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK. Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGER. Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK. You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGER. Of course it isn't!

JACK. Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

ALGER. But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK. Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has a capital appetite, goes for long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGER. I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK. I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

ALGER. Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK. Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

ALGER. Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

JACK [*irritably*]. Oh! it always is nearly seven.

ALGER. Well, I'm hungry.

JACK. I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

ALGER. What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theater?

JACK. Oh, no! I loathe listening.

ALGER. Well, let us go to the Club?

JACK. Oh, no! I hate talking.

ALGER. Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

JACK. Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

ALGER. Well, what shall we do?

JACK. Nothing!

ALGER. It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

Enter LANE.

LANE. Miss Fairfax.

Enter GWENDOLEN. LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. Gwendolen, upon my word!

GWEND. Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

ALGER. Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

GWEND. Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that. [ALGERNON *retires to the fireplace.*]

JACK. My own darling.

GWEND. Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents now-a-days pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

JACK. Dear Gwendolen!

GWEND. The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibers of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me.

Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

JACK. The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire. [ALGERNON, *who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then picks up the Railway Guide.*]

GWEND. There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That, of course, will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

JACK. My own one!

GWEND. How long do you remain in town?

JACK. Till Monday.

GWEND. Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

ALGER. Thanks, I've turned round already.

GWEND. You may also ring the bell.

JACK. You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

GWEND. Certainly.

JACK [*to* LANE, *who now enters*]. I will see Miss Fairfax out.

LANE. Yes, sir. [JACK *and* GWENDOLEN *go off.* LANE *presents several letters on a salver to* ALGERNON. *It is to be surmised that they are bills, as* ALGERNON, *after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.*]

ALGER. A glass of sherry, Lane.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGER. Tomorrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGER. I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket and all the Bunbury suits. . . .

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry.*]

ALGER. I hope tomorrow will be a fine day, Lane.

LANE. It never is, sir.

ALGER. Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

LANE. I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

Enter JACK. LANE *goes off.*

JACK. There's a sensible, intellectual girl! The only girl I ever cared for in my life. [ALGERNON *is laughing immoderately.*] What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGER. Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that's all.

JACK. If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

ALGER. I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

JACK. Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

ALGER. Nobody ever does. [JACK *looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room.* ALGERNON *lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE:—*Garden at the Manor House. A flight of gray stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.*

MISS PRISM *discovered seated at the table.* CECILY *is at the back watering flowers.*

PRISM [*calling*]. Cecily Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

CECIL. [*coming over very slowly*]. But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

PRISM. Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for 'town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

CECIL. Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

PRISM [*drawing herself up*]. Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanor is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

CECIL. I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

PRISM. Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother.

CECIL. I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly

would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [CECILY *begins to write in her diary.*]

PRISM [*shaking her head*]. I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed, I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favor of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

CECIL. I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down I should probably forget all about them.

PRISM. Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

CECIL. Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us.

PRISM. Do not speak slightingly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

CECIL. Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

PRISM. The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

CECIL. I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

PRISM. Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECIL. [*smiling*]. But I see dear Dr. Chasuble coming up through the garden.

PRISM [*rising and advancing*]. Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

Enter CANON CHASUBLE.

CHAS. And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECIL. Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the park, Dr. Chasuble.

PRISM. Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECIL. No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

CHAS. I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECIL. Oh, I am afraid I am.

CHAS. That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [MISS PRISM *glares.*] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

PRISM. We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

CHAS. Ah, yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man his brother seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

PRISM. Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor.

CHAS. [*bowing*]. A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?

PRISM. I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

CHAS. With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

PRISM. That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side. [*Goes down the garden with* DR. CHASUBLE.]

CECIL. [*picks up books and throws them back on table*]. Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

Enter MERRIMAN *with a card on a salver.*

MERRI. Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

CECIL. [*takes the card and reads it*]. "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany, W." Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

MERRI. Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

CECIL. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here.

I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

MERRI. Yes, Miss. [MERRIMAN *goes off.*

CECIL. I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else. [*Enter* ALGERNON, *very gay and debonair.*] He does!

ALGER. [*raising his hat*]. You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

CECIL. You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [ALGERNON *is rather taken aback.*] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

ALGER. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECIL. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

ALGER. [*looks at her in amazement*]. Oh! of course I have been rather reckless.

CECIL. I am glad to hear it.

ALGER. In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

CECIL. I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

ALGER. It is much pleasanter being here with you.

CECIL. I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

ALGER. That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

CECIL. Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

ALGER. No; the appointment is in London.

CECIL. Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

ALGER. About my what?

CECIL. Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

ALGER. I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

CECIL. I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

ALGER. Australia! I'd sooner die.

CECIL. Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

ALGER. Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

CECIL. Yes, but are you good enough for it?

ALGER. I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

CECIL. I'm afraid I've no time, this afternoon.

ALGER. Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

CECIL. It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

ALGER. I will. I feel better already.

CECIL. You are looking a little worse.

ALGER. That is because I am hungry.

CECIL. How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

ALGER. Thank you. Might I have a button-hole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a button-hole first.

CECIL. A Maréchal Niel? [*Picks up scissors.*]

ALGER. No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECIL. Why? [*Cuts a flower.*]

ALGER. Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

CECIL. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGER. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [CECILY *puts the rose in his button-hole.*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECIL. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

ALGER. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECIL. Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

They pass into the house. MISS PRISM *and* DR. CHASUBLE *return.*

PRISM. You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

CHAS. [*with a scholar's shudder*]. Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

PRISM [*sententiously*]. That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHAS. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

PRISM. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHAS. And often, I've been told, not even to her.

PRISM. That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [DR. CHASUBLE *starts.*] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHAS. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

Enter JACK *slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hat-band and black gloves.*

PRISM. Mr. Worthing!

CHAS. Mr. Worthing?

PRISM. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*shakes Miss Prism's hand in a tragic manner*]. I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHAS. Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK. My brother.

PRISM. More shameful debts and extravagance?

CHAS. Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*shaking his head*]. Dead!

CHAS. Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK. Quite dead.

PRISM. What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

CHAS. Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK. Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

CHAS. Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

JACK. No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

CHAS. Was the cause of death mentioned?

JACK. A severe chill, it seems.

PRISM. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHAS. [*raising his hand*]. Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

JACK. No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHAS. In Paris! [*Shakes his head.*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [JACK *presses his hand convulsively.*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [*All sigh.*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

JACK. Ah! that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [DR. CHASUBLE *looks astounded.*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

PRISM. It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

CHAS. But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK. Oh, yes.

PRISM [*bitterly*]. People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK. But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHAS. But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK. I don't remember anything about it.

CHAS. But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

JACK. I certainly intend to have. Of course, I

don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

CHAS. Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

JACK. Immersion!

CHAS. You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK. Oh, I might trot around about five if that would suit you.

CHAS. Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man.

JACK. Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

CHAS. Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch.*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials are often blessings in disguise.

PRISM. This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

Enter CECILY *from the house.*

CECIL. Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have on! Do go and change them.

PRISM. Cecily!

CHAS. My child! my child! [CECILY *goes towards* JACK; *he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.*]

CECIL. What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had a toothache, and I have such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

JACK. Who?

CECIL. Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK. What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

CECIL. Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [*Runs back into the house.*]

CHAS. These are very joyful tidings.

PRISM. After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK. My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

Enter ALGERNON *and* CECILY *hand in hand. They come slowly up to* JACK.

JACK. Good heavens! [*Motions* ALGERNON *away.*]

ALGER. Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future. [JACK *glares at him and does not take his hand.*]

CECIL. Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK. Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECIL. Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr. Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

JACK. Oh, he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

CECIL. Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

JACK. Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

ALGER. Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

CECIL. Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.

JACK. Never forgive me?

CECIL. Never, never, never!

JACK. Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [*Shakes hands with* ALGERNON *and glares.*]

CHAS. It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

PRISM. Cecily, you will come with us.

CECIL. Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

CHAS. You have done a beautiful action today, dear child.

PRISM. We must not be premature in our judgments.

CECIL. I feel very happy. [*They all go off.*

JACK. You young scoundrel Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

JACK. What?

MERRI. Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

JACK. His luggage?

MERRI. Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

ALGER. I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRI. Yes, sir. [*Goes back into the house.*]

ALGER. What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

JACK. Yes, you have.

ALGER. I haven't heard anyone call me.

JACK. Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

ALGER. My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

JACK. I can quite understand that.

ALGER. Well, Cecily is a darling.

JACK. You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGER. Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK. You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

ALGER. I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

JACK. Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGER. Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

JACK. Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

ALGER. If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

JACK. Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you. [*Goes into the house.*]

ALGER. I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily and that is everything. [*Enter* CECILY *at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.*] But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

CECIL. Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGER. He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

CECIL. Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGER. He's going to send me away.

CECIL. Then we have got to part?

ALGER. I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

CECIL. It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGER. Thank you.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. The dog-cart is at the door, sir. [ALGERNON *looks appealingly at* CECILY.]

CECIL. It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

MERRI. Yes, miss. [*Exit* MERRIMAN.

ALGER. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECIL. I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me I will copy your remarks into my diary. [*Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.*]

ALGER. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

CECIL. Oh no. [*Puts her hand over it.*] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form

I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached "absolute perfection." You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

ALGER. [*somewhat taken aback.*] Ahem! Ahem!

CECIL. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough. [*Writes as* ALGERNON *speaks.*]

ALGER. [*speaking very rapidly.*] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

CECIL. I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

ALGER. Cecily!

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

ALGER. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRI. [*looks at* CECILY, *who makes no sign*]. Yes, sir. [MERRIMAN *retires.*]

CECIL. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

ALGER. Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECIL. You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGER. For the last three months?

CECIL. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGER. But how did we become engaged?

CECIL. Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGER. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECIL. On the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGER. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECIL. Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [*Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.*]

ALGER. My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

CECIL. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGER. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily.

CECIL. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces box.*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

ALGER. But was our engagement ever broken off?

CECIL. Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary.*] "Today I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."

ALGER. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

CECIL. It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

ALGER. [*crossing to her, and kneeling*]. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

CECIL. You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

ALGER. Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECIL. I am so glad.

ALGER. You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECIL. I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGER. Yes, of course. [*Nervously.*]

CECIL. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it

had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest. [ALGERNON *rises,* CECILY *also.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGER. But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECIL. But what name?

ALGER. Oh, any name you like—Algernon—for instance. . . .

CECIL. But I don't like the name of Algernon.

ALGER. Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . . [*Moving to her.*] . . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECIL. [*rising*]. I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGER. Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up hat.*] Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the church?

CECIL. Oh, yes, Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

ALGER. I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

CECIL. Oh!

ALGER. I shan't be away more than half an hour.

CECIL. Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you today for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

ALGER. I'll be back in no time. [*Kisses her and rushes down the garden.*]

CECIL. What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECIL. Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

MERRI. Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECIL. Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRI. Yes, miss. [*Goes out.*

CECIL. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly woman who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. Miss Fairfax.

Enter GWENDOLEN.

[*Exit* MERRIMAN.

CECIL. [*advancing to meet her*]. Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWEND. Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands.*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

CECIL. How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

GWEND. [*still standing up*]. I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECIL. With pleasure!

GWEND. And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

CECIL. If you wish.

GWEND. Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

CECIL. I hope so. [*A pause. They both sit down together.*]

GWEND. Perhaps this might be a favorable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

CECIL. I don't think so.

GWEND. Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely

short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECIL. Oh! not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

GWEND. [*after examining* CECILY *carefully through a lorgnette*]. You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECIL. Oh no, I live here.

GWEND. [*severely*]. Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

CECIL. Oh, no. I have no mother, nor in fact, any relations.

GWEND. Indeed?

CECIL. My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

GWEND. Your guardian?

CECIL. Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

GWEND. Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her.*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly—

CECIL. Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

GWEND. Well, to speak with perfect candor, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honor. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

CECIL. I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

GWEND. Yes.

CECIL. Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

GWEND. [*sitting down again*]. Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

CECIL. I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

GWEND. Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECIL. Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be his.

GWEND. [*enquiringly*]. I beg your pardon?

CECIL. [*rather shy and confidingly*]. Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWEND. [*quite politely, rising*]. My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

CECIL. [*very politely, rising*]. I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary.*]

GWEND. [*examines diary through lorgnette carefully*]. It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5:30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own.*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid *I* have the prior claim.

CECIL. It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWEND. [*meditatively*]. If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECIL. [*thoughtfully and sadly*]. Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWEND. Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral

duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECIL. Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWEND. [*satirically*]. I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

Enter MERRIMAN *followed by the footman. He carries a salver, tablecloth, and plate-stand.* CECILY *is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.*

MERRI. Shall I lay tea here as usual, miss?

CECIL. [*sternly, in a calm voice*]. Yes, as usual. [MERRIMAN *begins to clear table and lay cloth. A long pause,* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *glare at each other.*]

GWEND. Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

CECIL. Oh, yes, a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

GWEND. Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

CECIL. [*sweetly*]. I suppose that is why you live in town? [GWENDOLEN *bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.*]

GWEND. [*looking around*]. Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

CECIL. So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

GWEND. I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

CECIL. Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

GWEND. Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

CECIL. Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWEND. [*with elaborate politeness*]. Thank you. [*Aside.*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECIL. [*sweetly*]. Sugar?

GWEND. [*superciliously*]. No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [CECILY *looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.*]

CECIL. [*severely*]. Cake or bread and butter?

GWEND. [*in a bored manner*]. Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowa-days.

CECIL. [*cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray*]. Hand that to Miss Fairfax. [MERRIMAN *does so, and goes out with footman.* GWENDOLEN *drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.*]

GWEND. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

CECIL. [*rising*]. To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

GWEND. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

CECIL. It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighborhood.

Enter JACK.

GWEND. [*catching sight of him*] Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK. Gwendolen! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

GWEND. [*drawing back*]. A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to* CECILY.]

JACK [*laughing*]. To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

GWEND. Thank you. You may. [*Offers her cheek.*]

CECIL. [*very sweetly*]. I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

GWEND. I beg your pardon?

CECIL. This is Uncle Jack.

GWEND. [*receding*]. Jack! Oh!

Enter ALGERNON.

CECIL. Here is Ernest.

ALGER. [*goes straight over to* CECILY *without noticing anyone else*]. My own love! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

CECIL. [*drawing back*]. A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGER. [*looking around*]. To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

CECIL. Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

ALGER. [*laughing*]. Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

CECIL. Thank you. [*Presenting her cheek to be kissed.*] You may. [ALGERNON *kisses her.*]

GWEND. I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

CECIL. [*breaking away from* ALGERNON]. Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! [*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.*]

CECIL. Are you called Algernon?

ALGER. I cannot deny it.

CECIL. Oh!

GWEND. Is your name really John?

JACK [*standing rather proudly*]. I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECIL. [*to* GWENDOLEN]. A gross deception has been practiced on both of us.

GWEND. My poor wounded Cecily!

CECIL. My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

GWEND. [*slowly and seriously*]. You will call me sister, will you not? [*They embrace.* JACK *and* ALGERNON *groan and walk up and down.*]

CECIL. [*rather brightly*]. There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

GWEND. An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK [*slowly and hesitatingly*]. Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECIL. [*surprised*]. No brother at all?

JACK [*cheerily*]. None!

GWEND. [*severely*]. Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK [*pleasantly*]. Never. Not even of any kind.

GWEND. I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

CECIL. It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

GWEND. Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

CECIL. No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[*They retire into the house with scornful looks.*]

JACK. This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

ALGER. Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

JACK. Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

ALGER. That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

JACK. Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

ALGER. Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't the romotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

JACK. Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing, too.

ALGER. Your brother is a little off color, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing, either.

JACK. As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

ALGER. I can see no possible defense at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

JACK. I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

ALGER. Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

JACK. There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

ALGER. I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

JACK. Well, that is no business of yours.

ALGER. If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins.*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stockbrokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK. How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins, when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGER. Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK. I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGER. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising.*]

JACK [*rising*]. Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from* ALGERNON.]

ALGER. [*offering tea-cake*]. I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

JACK. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGER. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGER. That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin-dish from* JACK.]

JACK. Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

ALGER. You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK. My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5:30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

ALGER. Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

JACK. Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGER. Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

JACK. Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

ALGER. It usedn't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

JACK. [*picking up the muffin-dish*]. Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

ALGER. Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*Takes them.*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK. But I hate tea-cake.

ALGER. Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

JACK. Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?

ALGER. I haven't quite finished my tea yet, and there is still one muffin left. [JACK *groans, and sinks into a chair.* ALGERNON *still continues eating.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE:—*Morning-room at the Manor House.*

GWENDOLEN *and* CECILY *are at the window, looking out into the garden.*

GWEND. The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have

done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECIL. They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

GWEND. [*after a pause*]. They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

CECIL. But I haven't got a cough.

GWEND. They're looking at us. What effrontery!

CECIL. They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

GWEND. Let us preserve a dignified silence.

CECIL. Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

Enter JACK, *followed by* ALGERNON. *They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British opera.*

GWEND. This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

CECIL. A most distasteful one.

GWEND. But we will not be the first to speak.

CECIL. Certainly not.

GWEND. Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECIL. Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

ALGER. In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

CECIL. [*to* GWENDOLEN]. That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

GWEND. Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

CECIL. I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

GWEND. True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

JACK. Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

GWEND. I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German skepticism. [*Moving to* CECILY]. Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

CECIL. I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

GWEND. Then you think we should forgive them?

CECIL. Yes. I mean no.

GWEND. True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

CECIL. Could we not both speak at the same time?

GWEND. An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

CECIL. Certainly. [GWENDOLEN *beats time with uplifted finger.*]

GWEND. *and* CECIL. [*speaking together*]. Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

JACK *and* ALGER. [*speaking together*]. Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

GWEND. [*to* JACK]. For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

JACK. I am.

CECIL. [*to* ALGERNON]. To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

ALGER. I am.

GWEND. How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

JACK. We are. [*Clasps hands with* ALGERNON.]

CECIL. They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

GWEND. [*to* JACK]. Darling!

ALGER. [*to* CECILY]. Darling! [*They fall into each other's arms.*]

Enter MERRIMAN. *When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation.*

MERRI. Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

JACK. Good heavens!

Enter LADY BRACKNELL. *The couples separate in alarm. Exit* MERRIMAN.

LADY B. Gwendolen! What does this mean?

GWEND. Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, Mamma.

LADY B. Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to* JACK.] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the im-

pression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to undeceive him. Indeed I have never undeceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

JACK. I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

LADY B. You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

ALGER. Yes, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

ALGER. [*stammering*]. Oh, no! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

LADY B. Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

ALGER. [*airily*]. Oh, I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

LADY B. What did he die of?

ALGER. Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

LADY B. Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

ALGER. My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

LADY B. He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

JACK. That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward. [LADY BRACKNELL *bows coldly to* CECILY.]

ALGER. I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. I beg your pardon?

CECIL. Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. [*with a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down*]. I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary enquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus. [JACK *looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself.*]

JACK [*in a clear, cold voice*]. Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporran, Fifeshire, N.B.

LADY B. That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

JACK. I have carefully preserved the Court Guide of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. [*grimly*]. I have known strange errors in that publication.

JACK. Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

LADY B. Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

JACK [*very irritably*]. How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and English variety.

LADY B. Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favor of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch*]. Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

JACK. Oh, about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Good-by, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

LADY B. [*sitting down again*]. A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve

with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To* CECILY]. Come over here, dear. [CECILY *goes across.*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvelous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her husband did not know her.

JACK [*aside*]. And after six months nobody knew her.

LADY B. [*glares at* JACK *for a few moments. Then bends, with a practiced smile, to* CECILY.] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [CECILY *turns completely round.*] No, the side view is what I want. [CECILY *presents her profile.*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

ALGER. Yes, Aunt Augusta!

LADY B. There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

ALGER. Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

LADY B. Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To* CECILY.] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

ALGER. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. Cecily, you may kiss me!

CECIL. [*kisses her*]. Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

CECIL. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

ALGER. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

CECIL. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. To speak frankly, I am not in favor of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

JACK. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

LADY B. Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

JACK. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful. [ALGERNON *and* CECILY *look at him in indignant amazement.*]

LADY B. Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

JACK. I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretense of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89; a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

LADY B. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

JACK. That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

LADY B. [*to* CECILY]. Come here, sweet child. [CECILY *goes over.*] How old are you, dear?

CECIL. Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

LADY B. You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In meditative manner.*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think

your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

JACK. Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

LADY B. That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

CECIL. Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

ALGER. Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

CECIL. Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

ALGER. Then what is to be done, Cecily?

CECIL. I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

LADY B. My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

JACK. But, my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

LADY B. [*rising and drawing herself up*]. You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

JACK. Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

LADY B. That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*Pulls out her watch.*] Come, dear; [GWENDOLEN *rises*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

Enter DR. CHASUBLE.

CHAS. Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

LADY B. The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

CHAS. [*looking rather puzzled, and pointing to* JACK *and* ALGERNON]. Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

LADY B. At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptized. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

CHAS. Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

JACK. I don't think that as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

CHAS. I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savor of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

LADY B. [*starting*]. Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

CHAS. Yes, Lady Bracknell, I am on my way to join her.

LADY B. Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

CHAS. [*somewhat indignantly*]. She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

LADY B. It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHAS. [*severely*]. I am a celibate, madam.

JACK [*interposing*]. Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

LADY B. In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

CHAS. [*looking off*]. She approaches; she is nigh.

Enter MISS PRISM *hurriedly.*

PRISM. I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters. [*Catches sight of* LADY BRACKNELL, *who has fixed her with a stony glare.* MISS PRISM *grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.*]

LADY B. [*in a severe, judicial voice*]. Prism! [MISS PRISM *bows her head in shame.*] Come here, Prism! [MISS PRISM *approaches in a humble manner.*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation. The Canon starts back in horror.* ALGERNON *and* JACK *pretend to be anxious to shield* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [MISS PRISM *starts in involuntary indignation.*] But the baby was not there! [*Everyone looks at* MISS PRISM.] Prism, where is that baby? [*A pause.*]

PRISM. Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious hand-bag, in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

JACK [*who has been listening attentively*]. But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

PRISM. Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

JACK. Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

PRISM. I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

JACK. What railway station?

PRISM [*quite crushed*]. Victoria. The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair.*]

JACK. I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

GWEND. If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit* JACK *in great excitement.*]

CHAS. What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

LADY B. I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing. [*Noises heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everybody looks up.*]

CECIL. Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

CHAS. Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

LADY B. This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

CHAS. [*looking up*]. It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled.*]

LADY B. I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

GWEND. This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

Enter JACK *with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand.*

JACK [*rushing over to* MISS PRISM]. Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

PRISM [*calmly*]. It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

JACK [*in a pathetic voice*]. Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag. I was the baby you placed in it.

PRISM [*amazed*]. You?

JACK [*embracing her*]. Yes . . . Mother!

PRISM [*recoiling in indignant astonishment*]. Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

JACK. Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a

stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again.*]

PRISM [*still more indignant*]. Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to* LADY BRACKNELL.] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

JACK [*after a pause*]. Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

LADY B. I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

JACK. Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily, how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of* ALGERNON.] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother; Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

ALGER. Well, not till today, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands.*]

GWEND. [*to* JACK]. My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

JACK. Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

GWEND. I never change, except in my affections.

CECIL. What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

JACK. Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

LADY B. Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

JACK. Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

LADY B. Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

JACK [*irritably*]. Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

LADY B. [*meditatively*]. I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit, but only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

JACK. Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

ALGER. My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

JACK. His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

LADY B. The General was essentially a man of peace except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

JACK. The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out.*] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley, what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly.*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

LADY B. Yes, I remember that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

GWEND. Ernest! My own Ernest. I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK. Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWEND. I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

JACK. My own one!

CHAS. [*to* MISS PRISM]. Lætitia! [*Embraces her.*]

PRISM [*enthusiastically*]. Frederick! At last!

ALGER. Cecily! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

JACK. Gwendolen! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

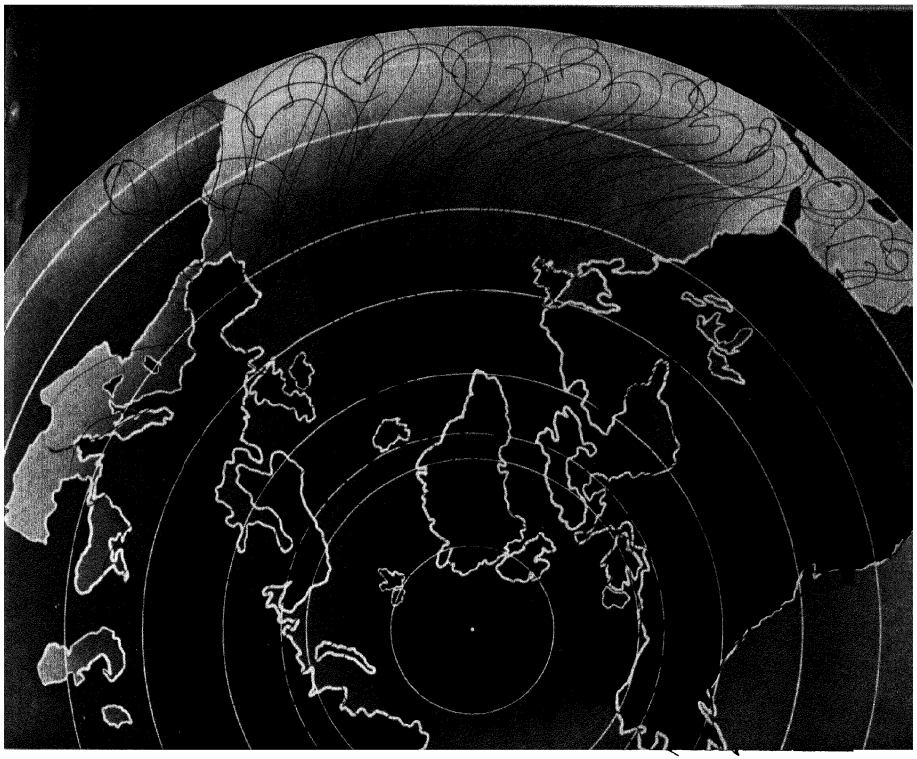
LADY B. My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK. On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

TABLEAU

CURTAIN

(1895)



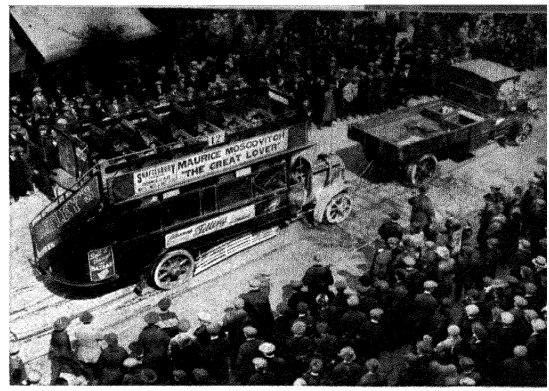
This map of the earth as viewed from the North Pole shows some changes in geographical and political perspective brought about by the airplane. Air-route maps with their global implications will probably become more familiar than those showing eastern and western hemispheres.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE FIRST HALF of our century has been a fantasy of marvels and horrors. It would require whole volumes to summarize the political, social, and intellectual upheavals that have altered the world since Victoria's death in 1901. Many of the marvels prophesied by the nineteenth-century popularizers of science have come to pass, but they have borne strange fruit. For this is the century that began with the airplane and may be devastated by the atomic bomb—a progression that symbolizes the savage contrasts of modernity.

Ours is the age when astronomers have presented the concept of an expanding universe and political thinkers face a shrinking world. Machinery multiplies production; yet tariff walls, cartels, and unemployment cut off trade. Radio can girdle the globe in an instant with words and pictures; yet large areas of the earth remain sealed off from one another by national boundaries and censorship. Although universal literacy has almost been reached in the industrial countries, the high hopes that literacy and education once presented have not yet been achieved. To the books, magazines, and newspapers of a former age have been added the motion picture, radio, phonograph, television—gifts that can be used to drug the human mind as much as to ennoble it. Medicine has developed cures for most of the historic plagues—and sixty million human beings have perished of war in a single generation. In 1918 and again in 1940, Britain trembled on the edge of destruction. No man is confident that a third and more terrible outburst of destructiveness has been permanently averted.

The Victorian way of life began to dissolve in the opening decades of our century. England as a nation was even wealthier than before, but a certain restlessness spread through the population as more and more Englishmen came to regard the government as ultimately responsible for the economic welfare of all its people. In 1906 the resuscitated Liberal Party, led by Herbert Asquith and the Welshman Lloyd George gained a notable victory, aided by the growing political strength of Labour. Three years later a "people's budget," which aimed at expanding social services and increasing taxes on large incomes, met bitter opposition in the House of Lords but became law. By 1910 the House of Commons asserted its total ascendancy in Parliament by denying the Lords the power to do more than delay any measure for three sessions. This action, probably the most drastic governmental change since the Reform Bill of 1832 (see p. 420), proclaimed the increasing militancy of the lower economic ranks. Parliament acceded to many of their demands by strengthening laws for workmen's compensation, legalizing boycotts and picketing during strikes, establish-



A scene in London during the general strike of 1926. In the spring of 1926 a miners' strike was followed by a sympathy strike of all workers in basic industries. The general strike ended in a week when the government interfered and volunteers substituted for the striking workers. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

ing old-age pensions, and providing labor exchanges and minimum-wage acts as well as unemployment insurance and national health insurance laws. In short, the forces behind the government had instituted an English "New Deal."

Conflicts of another kind also shook the country. Hosts of women took part in violent demonstrations for suffrage. Difficulties between Ulster and Southern Ireland reached the verge of civil war in 1914. Then the far vaster outburst of violence in Europe diverted the attention of all Englishmen to their first life-and-death struggle against German arms. Five years later a victorious but exhausted England helped dictate the Peace Treaty of Versailles (1919).

The aftermath of this first catastrophe showed a changed England. During the war the electorate had trebled with the abolition of property qualifications and the granting of women's suffrage. Patriotism had reached its highest pitch since Waterloo; the sacrifices and labor of the common man had changed the emphasis from class to national unity. The Liberal Party, traditional spokesman for the middle class, collapsed and was replaced by Labour, whose ranks now included middle-class supporters.

From 1918 until 1920 England enjoyed unprecedented economic prosperity, and then the bubble burst. The next ten years are the story of a chronic depression, with shifts in government between Labour and Conservatives, and another industrial boom in 1935. But by this time the eyes of Englishmen had turned to dangers outside their borders—the rise of Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini; the aggressions of Japan; the dress-rehearsals for war, in Spain and China.

In an attempt to assure "peace in our time," Neville Chamberlain appeased the Axis powers, but in September, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, and England was committed to war. In 1940 Germany launched her "Blitz-

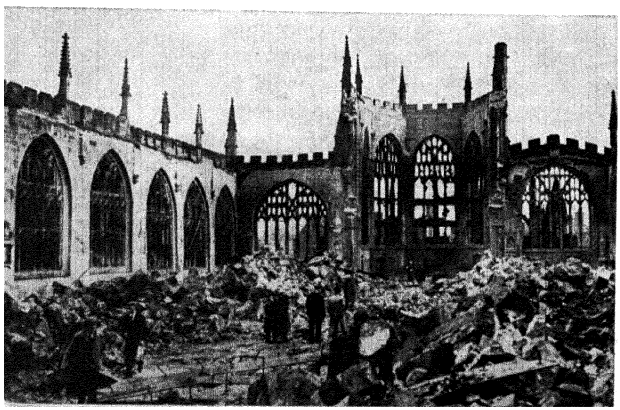
krieg" on Britain and the battle for survival had begun. Three years of defeat followed, during which Winston Churchill's inspiring oratory rallied Britain to unprecedented sacrifice and heroism.

When World War II ended in 1945, Englishmen faced a wholly new world. With the freeing of India abroad and a "cradle to grave" security program at home, instituted by the victorious Labour Party, Britain had become transformed. The empire-builder was arranging independence for her colonies; the citadel of free enterprise was nationalizing her chief industries; the engineer of international power politics was committed to a United Nations which subordinated sovereign interests to international welfare.

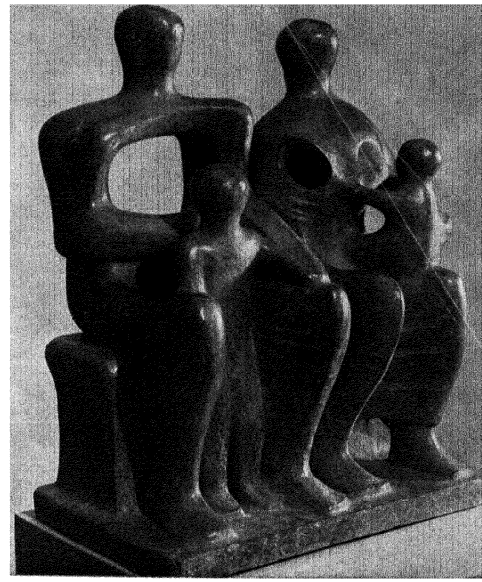
Out of these fifty years of crucial change even the most sharp-sighted social historian is hard put to trace a clear pattern. How much more difficult is the task for the chronicler of literature, for ours is an overwhelming complex of talents, conflicts, and trends.

New Techniques and New Subjects

Though "modernism" in art has not been adequately defined, we recognize it the instant we encounter a Picasso painting, a Schönberg quartet, or a Gertrude Stein story. And if we trace "modernism" in literature to its main sources, we find more than a concern with technique. Writers sought new subjects as well as new methods; everything in human experience, even man's unconscious, was to be explored. It would be impossible even to list the names of the numerous movements in the avalanche of literary experimentation, some of which (imagism, dadaism, verslibrism, vorticism, surrealism, existentialism, etc.) spread to many countries though they were often greeted with scorn and ridicule. Though "modernism" in writing has not yet won general acceptance, even conservative critics admit the sig-



The bombed ruins of Coventry Cathedral, one of the glories of English ecclesiastical architecture. The appalling German air raids of November 14 and 15, 1940, leveled the town of Coventry. At that time England alone among the democracies was battling the Nazi machine.



"Family Group," by Henry Moore. Although his work is still the subject of controversy, Moore is acknowledged as one of the leaders of contemporary sculpture. His art, like the expressionistic writings of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, is highly experimental. Note the sculptor's new departures in hollowing out the traditional solidity of the sculptural form and in simplifying the faces into masses with the mere suggestion of features. The dominant impression is of the whole rather than of detail, of power rather than delicacy.

nificance of many gifted writers who labored to expand the horizons of craft and theme. Indeed, T. S. Eliot (1888——), a leading experimenter, is now recognized as a major writer of our century.

Of undeniable influence have been the works of D. H. Lawrence (see p. 996) and the Dubliner James Joyce (see p. 1031). A tormented rebellious soul, who became a legend in his own lifetime, Lawrence rejected the life that was directed by a conscious, restrained intelligence. He chose rather to exploit the dark tides of emotion and subconscious desire, the study of which had been one of the great contributions of the Viennese physician Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The same preoccupation with the subconscious marks the later work of Joyce, whose *Ulysses* was a touchstone of literary radicals in the between-wars generation. Charged with being unintelligible, Joyce nevertheless deeply impressed American and British writing; he seemed to add new dimensions to language as well as to the novel form.

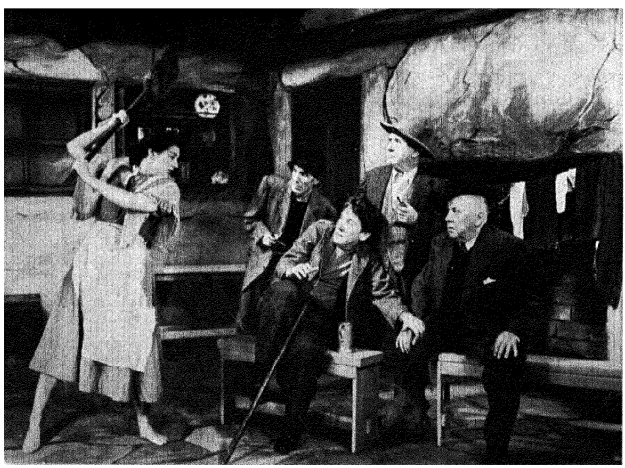
Literature as Social Protest

Lawrence, in some of his novels, particularly *Sons and Lovers*, set in a mining town, cried out against society with an impassioned rebelliousness. In the drama George Bernard Shaw (1856——), carrying far forward the social protest of Samuel Butler and the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, attacked sham and convention with overwhelming brilliance and withering ridicule

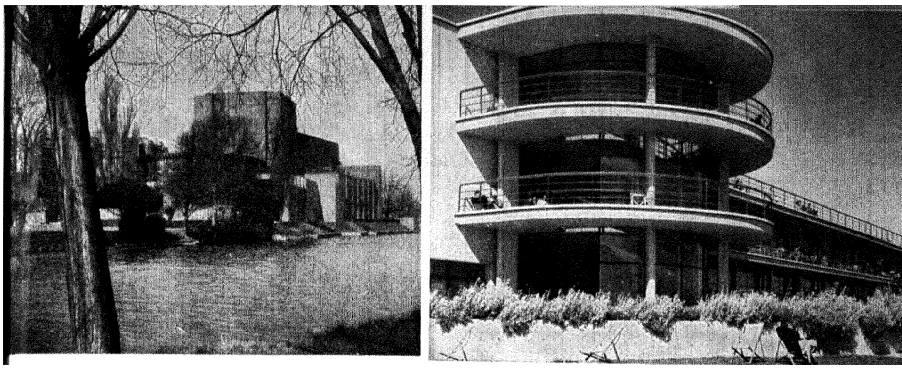
in such plays as *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1902), *Man and Superman* (1905), *Major Barbara* (1905), *Pygmalion* (1914), etc. An entire movement in himself, Shaw is the supreme dramatist of ideas in English literature. John Galsworthy (1867-1933) in his plays and novels set forth his humanitarian sympathies with critical sobriety. A note of violent bitterness stirred through the verse of Wilfred Owen (see p. 965), whose poems cry out accusingly in behalf of the thousands of British youth killed off in their prime by the first World War that was to save civilization. The tragic nostalgia of an entire generation maimed in spirit by the same war pervades *Journey's End* (1929), a play by R. C. Sherriff. Social protest of a more positive order rings through the early writing of Wystan Hugh Auden (see p. 967) and Stephen Spender (see p. 970), who for a time saw in communism the way out for a society presumably unable to resolve its problems. The solution proposed in *The Corn Is Green* by Emlyn Williams (see p. 1083) lies not in movements; in a sense the playwright's approach typifies the gradualism with which Britain has proceeded in its social reforms.

The Irish Renaissance

But half measures made no appeal to Ireland. In the 1890's a group of writers led by the playwright Lady Gregory and the poet William Butler Yeats (see p. 954) deliberately set out to arouse and unify the Irish with a sense of their unique Celtic tradition and national destiny. A movement of great scope arose, embracing the dreams of Gaelic revivalists, folklorists, realists, poets, and playwrights. In politics the Irish Renaissance led to the violent Easter Rebellion (1916) followed by bloody struggles until Eire



A scene from the 1946 New York production of The Playboy of the Western World. *One of the glories of the Irish Renaissance, the play was almost hounded off the stage by the Irish public, who felt that it slandered the Irish character.*

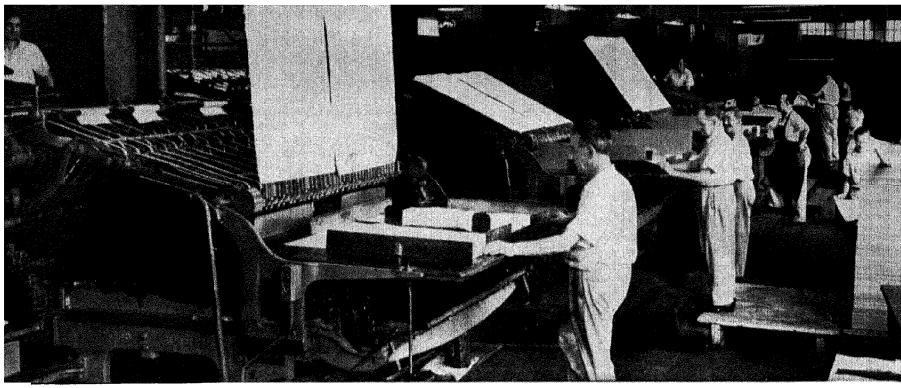


Modernism in architecture. Left: the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon—a twentieth-century architectural monument to the Elizabethan poet. Right: a typical example of functional modern architecture in Britain. (B. T. Batsford, Ltd.)

virtually separated from Britain in the 1920's. In literature the movement gave rise to the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and to works by dramatists of integrity and power, chief of whom was John Millington Synge (see p. 1056). Met with riots by a strongly nationalist public, his *Playboy of the Western World* came to be regarded as equal to his earlier one-act masterpiece *Riders to the Sea*. Far more political are the plays of Sean O'Casey, whose *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) deal with the Easter Rebellion. O'Casey's subsequent proletarian emphasis carried to an extreme a later aspect of Yeats, founder of the Renaissance, whose personality encompassed a variety of directions. Celtic revivalist and political leader, Yeats was at the same time a mystic, and a symbolist whose verse ranges from pure romantic melody to the subtlest intellectual lyricism.

Tradition and Change

Compared with the avowed experimentalists, Robert Bridges (see p. 953), John Masefield (see p. 963), and Ralph Hodgson (see p. 959) are traditional poets; yet they wrote with freshness and in accents wholly their own. For the great tradition of English literature has by no means been exhausted. Despite the *avant-garde* passion for new forms and themes, most well-known contemporaries have stayed close to the mainstream, especially the novelists established early in the century. H. G. Wells (1866-1946), author of some eighty volumes which give a panorama of the intellectual and social concerns of his age, was not interested in the novel as an art form. Impressed by "the race between education and catastrophe," he undertook to speed the first and avert the second. Like Wells, Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) wrote too much, revised too little, and combined novel writing with journal-



This modern press prints 128 pages with each impression on both sides of the sheet in the same operation. It prints about 1800 sheets an hour and delivers them to automatic machines which cut, fold, and bind them. One can readily see the effect of such machines as these in terms of mass production of books, literature—and perhaps taste.

ism; his best work, *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), written with brisk and assured realism, centers on the "five towns" of industrial England. Middle-class aristocrats were the concern of John Galsworthy, whose saga of the Forsyte family extends from late Victorian days to the uneasy aftermath of World War I. Expert drawing-room comedies and studies in naturalism distinguish the serious writing of W. Somerset Maugham (1874—) from his best-seller output. In striking contrast stands the work of E. M. Forster (see p. 980), a highly selective artist gifted with philosophic and imaginative irony, whose *A Passage to India* is already regarded as a classic. On the same level of seriousness in art is the fiction of Katherine Mansfield (see p. 1041) and Virginia Woolf (see p. 1044), the most original of several gifted women writers. Of the between-wars novelists in many ways the most representative was Aldous Huxley. His career (see p. 1050) from "skepticism battening on the vitals of animal faith" through disillusion and finally toward idealism and mysticism symbolizes an age hungry for sustaining certainties as it wrestles with problems unknown in earlier centuries.

Our necessarily brief discussion omits many writers of interest and competence. A list of names would be valueless; and yet four productions can scarcely be excluded from any sketch, however brief: the personal essays of the robust G. K. Chesterton (see p. 973) and the elfish Max Beerbohm (see p. 977); the imaginative drama of James M. Barrie (1860-1937), author of *Peter Pan*; and the "new" biography of Lytton Strachey (see p. 1007). Doubtless there are other writers equally entitled to mention; but we must leave the making of definitive judgments to later critics: time will have equipped them with the perspective denied to those who appraise the work of contemporaries.

POETRY

Robert Bridges

(1844-1930)

The roster of England's poets laureate ranges all the way from giants like Dryden and Wordsworth to forgotten pygmies like Laurence Eusden and Henry James Pye. Robert Bridges, who was made laureate on the death of Alfred Austin in 1913, was a poet of medium stature. He was a poet with a genuine lyric gift which was either developed or stifled—depending on the critical viewpoint—by ceaseless experiment in rhythm and diction.

After education at Eton and Oxford, Bridges studied and practiced medicine for a while. But he abandoned his first profession to devote more time to his real lifework, the tireless quest for beauty. He published his first volume of poems in 1873 and followed it with a sonnet sequence, *The Growth of Love,* in 1876. His six-volume *Poetical Works* (1898-1905) included, in addition to three decades of short lyrics, eight plays on classical subjects. The Oxford Press edition of his poetry appeared in 1912 on the eve of his appointment as laureate. *October and other Poems* (1920) was followed by *New Verse* (1925). And in 1929, at the age of 85, he capped his career with *The Testament of Beauty,* a long poem in "loose Alexandrines" which presents the philosophy of a lifetime of artistic pursuit.

Throughout his life Bridges was a scholar and a critic as well as a poet. He was the author of studies of Milton and Keats as well as general critical works on poetry. A co-founder of the Society for Pure English (S.P.E.), he wrote and edited several of the tracts in which that organization has tried to guide English usage.

Bridges was too much interested in what he called "the inexhaustible satisfaction' of form" to be a popular poet. He is more of a poet's poet, for the apprentice can study his theory side by side with his practice. Some recent critics have found him an experimenter who looked backward rather than forward, one whose purism in language led him back past Wordsworth to the synthetic diction of the eighteenth century and whose efforts to adapt classical quantitative measures to English poetry are merely quaint curiosities. It is likely that Bridges will be remembered for a handful of spontaneous lyrics of love and nature and as the astute critic who saw through publication the poems of his more talented friend, Gerard Manley Hopkins (see p. 818).

Nightingales

Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom
Ye learn your song:
Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!
Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As light is withdrawn

From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs of May,
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

(1894)

On a Dead Child

Perfect little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou;—alas! no longer
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride;—ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make stronger.

To me, as I move thee now in the last duty,
Dost thou with a turn or gesture anon respond;
Startling my fancy fond
With a chance attitude of the head, a freak of beauty.

Thy hand clasps, as 'twas wont, my finger, and holds it:
But the grasp is the clasp of Death, heart-breaking and stiff;
Yet feels to my hand as if
'Twas still thy will, thy pleasure and trust that enfolds it.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,—
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! doth the change content thee?
Death, whither hath he taken thee?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee and awaken thee?

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,
Unwilling, alone we embark,
And the things we have seen and have known and have heard of, fail us.

(1890)

William Butler Yeats

(1865-1939)

William Butler Yeats was born near Dublin. When he was a small boy, his parents moved to London, and his schooldays were divided between England and his native Ireland. To please his father, a well-known artist, he studied painting for three years. But his heart was in literature, and at nineteen his first poems appeared in the Dublin magazines. His first collection of poems, *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems* (1889), was followed by his first notable verse drama, *The Countess Kathleen,* which was damned as blasphemous on its appearance in 1892. During the next decade and a half Yeats published prolifically in several fields: lyric poetry—*The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) and *In the Seven Woods* (1913); plays—*The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *The Shadowy Waters* (1900), and *Deirdre* (1907)—all in verse—and *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) in prose; stories and sketches; and a volume of philosophical essays. By 1908, when his *Collected Plays and Poems* appeared in eight volumes, he was firmly entrenched as Ireland's foremost poet and as a worthy second to Synge among the playwrights.

The poetry of this early period, the work for which Yeats is still best known to many readers, is peopled with shadowy images from the lost world of pagan Ireland. Unlike Hardy, whose interest in the folklore of Wessex was counterbalanced by the skepticism of a newer age, Yeats wrote as an unabashed believer in magic and fairies, a man who since youth had been subject to strange "trances" and who was later to marry a medium. In writing about the familiar scenes of the Irish countryside he was haunted by the ghosts of Celtic legend. So complete is his absorption in his dream world, so beautiful are his languorous melodies that the reader is readily seduced into accepting his often obscure images on poetic faith.

In his later volumes—*The Green Helmet* (1910), *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *The Tower* (1928), and *The Winding Stair* (1929)—critics have found appreciably different qualities: a deeper concern with the problems of the modern world; a strain of disillusionment about his dream of an Ireland recreated in the image of its romantic past; a distinct trace of bawdiness—all expressed in a medium which is more economical and direct than the language of his early verse. During his last two decades Yeats became deeply involved in an occult astrological theory about the gyrations of time which makes some of his poems all but meaningless to the uninitiated.

George Moore called Yeats "a sort of monk of literature." It would be easy from such an epithet to infer that he was a lone enthusiast, brooding in the mantle of his own imagination, far removed from the literary currents of his time. Actually no contemporary author has been more intimately associated with the literature, not only of his own generation, but of succeeding generations throughout a long life. Even as a young man he was a leading figure in literary circles in England, Ireland, and France, exchanging ideas with Oscar Wilde, George Moore, William Ernest Henley, Ernest Dowson, and the French symbolist Mallarmé. In the nineties and the first decade of the new century he was the most influential figure in the Irish Renaissance. As co-founder of the Irish National Theatre (later the Abbey Theatre) he not only wrote numerous plays of his own but encouraged and advised his fellow playwrights, including Lady Gregory, John Millington Synge, whom he brought back to Ireland from a Paris garret, and Sean O'Casey. He was also associated at various times with James Joyce, with Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot—two American expatriates—and finally with the spokesman of a new era in poetry, W. H. Auden.

The Nobel Prize in 1924 was a climax to a long career during which the "poet of the shadows" had become a respected senator of the Irish Free State and the acknowledged Dean of modern Irish literature.

The Stolen Child

Where dips the rocky highland
Of Sleuth Wood[1] in the lake,
There lies a leafy island
Where flapping herons wake
The drowsy water rats;
There we've hid our faery vats,
Full of berries,
And of reddest stolen cherries.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping
than you can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
The dim gray sands with light,
Far off by furthest Rosses[2]
We foot it all the night,
Weaving olden dances,
Mingling hands and mingling glances
Till the moon has taken flight;
To and fro we leap
And chase the frothy bubbles,
While the world is full of troubles
And is anxious in its sleep.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping
than you can understand.

[1] in northwestern Ireland.

[2] on the coast of Sligo, a favorite haunt of the fairies.

Where the wandering water gushes
From the hills above Glen-Car,
In pools among the rushes
That scarce could bathe a star,
We seek for slumbering trout
And whispering in their ears
Give them unquiet dreams;
Leaning softly out
From ferns that drop their tears
Over the young streams.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping
than you can understand.

Away with us he's going,
The solemn-eyed;
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettle on the hob
Sing peace into his breast,
Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal-chest.
For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping
than he can understand.

(1889)

Down by the Salley Gardens

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by a river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

(1889)

The Rose of the World

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.

We and the laboring world are passing by:
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place,
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,
Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,
Weary and kind, one lingered by His seat;
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet.

(1893)

When You Are Old

When you are old and gray and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read; and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true.
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced among the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

(1893)

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace
comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where
the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a
purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by
the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pave-
ments gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

(1893)

The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart

All things uncomely and broken, all things worn
out and old,
The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak of a
lumbering cart,
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing the
wintry mould,
Are wronging your image that blossoms a rose in
the deeps of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too
great to be told;
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green
knoll apart,
With the earth and the sky and the water, re-
made, like a casket of gold
For my dreams of your image that blossoms a
rose in the deeps of my heart.

(1899)

The Song of Wandering Aengus

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire a-flame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And some one called me by my name:
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

(1899)

The Wild Swans at Coole

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine and fifty swans.

The nineteenth Autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water
Mysterious, beautiful;

Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes, when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?
(1919)

An Irish Airman Foresees His Death

I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above;
Those that I fight I do not hate
Those that I guard I do not love;
My country is Kiltartan Cross,
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,
My likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before.
No law, nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public man, nor cheering crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.
(1919)

Sailing to Byzantium

Professor William York Tindall (*Forces in Modern British Literature,* pp. 202-3) writes this about one of Yeats' best-known and least understood lyrics.

Public and private at once, "Sailing to Byzantium," like all great works of art, says what cannot be said another way. Sense cannot be separated from sensation nor sensation from rhythm, feeling, and tone. But while the whole remains inexplicable, the parts may be explained and their functions determined. "The mackerel-crowded seas" summarizes the world's condition, struggle, limited survival, and time. Part of its power comes from the unconscious symbolism, part from inevitable statement, and part from contrast with neighboring abstractions, "those dying generations" and the trite, mysterious trinity of "fish, flesh, and fowl." The single word "commend" is by position and tone the central magic of the stanza. Caught in that noble rhythm, the dissonance of time yields in the last couplet to anticipations of timelessness. But even here the tone is complex, and one becomes aware that compulsory timelessness is but an old man's substitute for time. The idea of this voyage, having come from Yeats's unconscious, had smoldered so long in his consciousness, forming many poems, that now, glowing, it emerged final, easy, and triumphant.

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song;
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

An aged man is but a paltry thing.
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,[1]
And be the singing masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.
(1928)

Leda and the Swan

This poem is based on the classic myth of the rape of Leda by Zeus disguised as a swan. The daughter of this union was Helen of Troy. Clytemnestra, Leda's daughter by Tyndarus, King of Sparta, was married

[1] move in a circular or spiral motion.

to Agamemnon, commander of the Greek host against Troy; and when he returned from the long war, she and her lover, Aegisthus, murdered him.

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.
Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

(written 1923)

Ralph Hodgson

(1871-)

In 1907 Ralph Hodgson published a thin volume of poems entitled *The Last Blackbird and Other Lines.* In 1913 appeared a number of other volumes, modestly dressed in paper covers: *The Bull*—which was awarded the treasured Polignac Prize in the following year—*Eve and Other Poems, The Mystery and Other Poems,* and *The Song of Honour.* In 1917, when these lyrics and others were gathered between boards as *Poems,* the number totaled only twenty-five. Then the clear trickle stopped flowing.

In a decade of the scantiest production Hodgson earned himself a place in the front ranks of Georgian poets. Critics were almost unanimous in praising the retiring perfectionist who wrote only when he pleased and published only what he liked. They pointed to his simple, lucid style, his genial whimsy (in the days when the word implied no sneer), his sincere, intimate love of nature. A few of his lyrics have survived the winnowings of the anthologists and bid fair to outlast the songs of more prolific and pretentious Georgians.

Indifferent to publicity, Hodgson has consistently resisted efforts to ferret out the facts of his private life. Editors have found out that he was born in Yorkshire, has been at times a draughtsman on a London paper, a magazine editor, and a lecturer on English literature at Sendai University in Japan (1924). He likes Wordsworth, Shelley, and billiards, and he has an international reputation as a breeder and exhibitor of bull terriers. In the Spring of 1946 he was forced briefly into the limelight when the National Institute of Arts and Letters gave him their annual award of a thousand dollars for "distinguished achievement" by a "foreign artist, composer, or writer living in this country." Many lovers of his poems were surprised to learn then that Ralph Hodgson had been living for some time in Minerva, Ohio.

Time, You Old Gipsy Man

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your jennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,
Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing.
Oh, and sweet girls will
Festoon you with may,
Time, you old gipsy,
Why hasten away?

Last week in Babylon,
Last night in Rome,

Morning, and in the crush
Under Paul's dome;
Under Paul's dial
You tighten your rein—
Only a moment,
And off once again;
Off to some city
Now blind in the womb,
Off to another
Ere that's in the tomb.

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

(1917)

Eve

Eve, with her basket, was
Deep in the bells and grass,
Wading in bells and grass
Up to her knees,
Picking a dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,
Down in the bells and grass
Under the trees.

Mute as a mouse in a
Corner the cobra lay,
Curled round a bough of the
Cinnamon tall . . .
Now to get even and
Humble proud heaven and
Now was the moment or
Never at all.

"Eva!" Each syllable
Light as a flower fell,
"Eva!" he whispered the
Wondering maid,
Soft as a bubble sung
Out of a linnet's lung,
Soft and most silverly
"Eva!" he said.

Picture that orchard sprite,
Eve, with her body white,
Supple and smooth to her
Slim finger tips,
Wondering, listening,
Listening, wondering,
Eve with a berry
Half-way to her lips.

Oh had our simple Eve
Seen through the make-believe!
Had she but known the
Pretender he was!
Out of the boughs he came,
Whispering still her name,
Tumbling in twenty rings
Into the grass.

Here was the strangest pair
In the world anywhere,
Eve in the bells and grass
Kneeling, and he
Telling his story low . . .
Singing birds saw them go
Down the dark path to
The Blasphemous Tree.

Oh what a clatter when
Titmouse and Jenny Wren
Saw him successful and
Taking his leave!
How the birds rated him,
How they all hated him!
How they all pitied
Poor motherless Eve!

Picture her crying
Outside in the lane,
Eve, with no dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,
Haunting the gate of the
Orchard in vain . . .
Picture the lewd delight
Under the hill to-night—
"Eva!" the toast goes round,
"Eva!" again.

(1913)

The Bull

See an old unhappy bull,
Sick in soul and body both,
Slouching in the undergrowth
Of the forest beautiful,
Banished from the herd he led,
Bulls and cows a thousand head.

Cranes and gaudy parrots go
Up and down the burning sky;
Tree-top cats purr drowsily

In the dim-day green below;
And troops of monkeys, nutting, some,
All disputing, go and come;

And things abominable sit
Picking offal buck or swine,
On the mess and over it
Burnished flies and beetles shine,
And spiders big as bladders lie
Under hemlocks ten foot high;

And a dotted serpent curled
Round and round and round a tree,
Yellowing its greenery,
Keeps a watch on all the world,
All the world and this old bull
In the forest beautiful.

Bravely by his fall he came;
One he led, a bull of blood
Newly come to lustihood,
Fought and put his prince to shame,
Snuffed and pawed the prostrate head
Tameless even while it bled.

There they left him, every one,
Left him there without a lick,
Left him for the birds to pick,
Left him there for carrion,
Vilely from their bosom cast
Wisdom, worth and love at last.

When the lion left his lair
And roared his beauty through the hills,
And the vultures pecked their quills
And flew into the middle air,
Then this prince no more to reign
Came to life and lived again.

He snuffed the herd in far retreat,
He saw the blood upon the ground,
And snuffed the burning airs around
Still with beevish odors sweet,
While the blood ran down his head
And his mouth ran slaver red.

Pity him, this fallen chief,
All his splendor, all his strength,
All his body's breadth and length
Dwindled down with shame and grief,
Half the bull he was before,
Bones and leather, nothing more.

See him standing dewlap-deep
In the rushes at the lake,
Surly, stupid, half asleep,
Waiting for his heart to break
And the birds to join the flies
Feasting at his bloodshot eyes,—

Standing with his head hung down
In a stupor, dreaming things:
Green savannas, jungles brown,
Battlefields and bellowings,
Bulls undone and lions dead
And vultures flapping overhead.

Dreaming things: of days he spent
With his mother gaunt and lean
In the valley warm and green,
Full of baby wonderment,
Blinking out of silly eyes
At a hundred mysteries;

Dreaming over once again
How he wandered with a throng
Of bulls and cows a thousand strong,
Wandered on from plain to plain,
Up the hill and down the dale,
Always at his mother's tail;

How he lagged behind the herd,
Lagged and tottered, weak of limb,
And she turned and ran to him
Blaring at the loathly bird
Stationed always in the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies,

Dreaming maybe of a day
When her drained and drying paps
Turned him to the sweets and saps,
Richer fountains by the way,
And she left the bull she bore
And he looked to her no more;

And his little frame grew stout,
And his little legs grew strong,
And the way was not so long;
And his little horns came out,
And he played at butting trees
And boulder-stones and tortoises,

Joined a game of knobby skulls
With the youngsters of his year,
All the other little bulls,
Learning both to bruise and bear,

Learning how to stand a shock
Like a little bull of rock.

Dreaming of a day less dim,
Dreaming of a time less far,
When the faint but certain star
Of destiny burned clear for him,
And a fierce and wild unrest
Broke the quiet of his breast,

And the gristles of his youth
Hardened in his comely pow,
And he came to fighting growth,
Beat his bull and won his cow,
And flew his tail and trampled off
Past the tallest, vain enough,

And curved about in splendor full
And curved again and snuffed the airs
As who should say, Come out who dares!
And all beheld a bull, a Bull,
And knew that here was surely one
That backed for no bull, fearing none.

And the leader of the herd
Looked and saw, and beat the ground,
And shook the forest with his sound,
Bellowed at the loathly bird
Stationed always in the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

Dreaming, this old bull forlorn
Surely dreaming of the hour
When he came to sultan power,
And they owned him master-horn,
Chiefest bull of all among
Bulls and cows a thousand strong.

And in all the tramping herd
Not a bull that barred his way,
Not a cow that said him nay,
Not a bull or cow that erred
In the furnace of his look
Dared a second, worse rebuke;

Not in all the forest wide,
Jungle, thicket, pasture, fen,
Not another dared him then,
Dared him and again defied;
Not a sovereign buck or boar
Came a second time for more.

Not a serpent that survived
Once the terrors of his hoof
Risked a second time reproof,
Came a second time and lived,
Not a serpent in its skin
Came again for discipline;

Not a leopard bright as flame,
Flashing fingerhooks of steel,
That a wooden tree might feel,
Met his fury once and came
For a second reprimand,
Not a leopard in the land.

Not a lion of them all,
Not a lion of the hills,
Hero of a thousand kills,
Dared a second fight and fall,
Dared that ram terrific twice,
Paid a second time the price.

Pity him this dupe of dream,
Leader of the herd again
Only in his daft old brain,
Once again the bull supreme
And bull enough to bear the part
Only in his tameless heart.

Pity him that he must wake;
Even now the swarm of flies
Blackening his bloodshot eyes
Bursts and blusters round the lake,
Scattered from the feast half-fed,
By great shadows overhead.

And the dreamer turns away
From his visionary herds
And his splendid yesterday,
Turns to meet the loathly birds
Flocking round him from the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

(1913)

John Masefield

(1874-)

The Poet Laureate of England, as he himself has told us, was converted to poetry on a Sunday afternoon in 1896 in Yonkers, New York. He had traveled much in his active youth—wandering at sea in a sailing vessel and toiling at various manly jobs ashore—but he had never breathed "the pure serene" of poetry until that day when he read Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*. After that he read avidly in English literature and began trying his own hand at verse. His first volume, *Salt-water Ballads*, appeared in 1902. In it were "Sea-Fever" and "The West Wind," which revealed him to be a genuine if conventional lyric poet with a sensitive ear for lilting rhythms. This is still the Masefield which the general reading public knows best.

The year 1908 saw the production of *The Tragedy of Nan*, the first of Masefield's plays and the most celebrated. It has been called "the best English tragedy of our time." But the real stir did not come until 1911, when Masefield published his first long narrative poem, *The Everlasting Mercy*. In this tale of the conversion of the double-dyed sinner, Saul Kane, the lyric note is still present, but the lilt has given way to a rough and rugged tetrameter, and the language is colloquial, sometimes frankly vulgar. Although it should not have surprised anyone who knew that Chaucer was the poet's first love, *The Everlasting Mercy* was new and shocking to many of its genteel readers—an arresting prelude to Georgian poetry.

Masefield followed this triumph with other long narrative poems: *The Widow in the Bye Street* (1912), the raw tale of a hanging; *Dauber* (1913), the story of a sailor who wanted to be a painter; *The Daffodil Fields* (1913), a story of murder; and *Reynard the Fox* (1919), the tumbling tale of an English hunt told from the point of view of the quarry. During the same decade appeared *Sonnets and Poems* (1916), which indicated that the poet was undergoing a change from a narrator of stark action to a philosopher concerned, like Robert Bridges, with analyzing beauty.

Neither his early fame nor his elevation to the laureateship in 1930 induced Masefield to rest on his laurels. His production during the past quarter century has been prolific and versatile. He has written more verse plays, numerous prose tales of the sea, novels on other themes, and autobiographical reminiscences. During the last war the Laureate published *Some Verses to Germans* (1939), a sincere plea to the "better element" in Nazi Germany; *The Nine Days Wonder* (1941), the story of Dunkirk in prose and verse; and *A Generation Risen* (1943), a collection of war poems.

Sea-Fever

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face and a gray dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again to the vagrant gypsy life,

To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's[1] over.

(1902)

The West Wind

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills,
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired as mine,
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like wine.
There is cool green grass there, where men may lie at rest,
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the nest.

"Will you not come home, brother? you have been long away,
It's April, and blossom time, and white is the spray;
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is the rain—
Will you not come home, brother, home to us again?

The young corn is green, brother, where the rabbits run,
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain and sun.
It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's brain,
To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring again.

Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the green wheat,
So will ye not come home, brother, and rest your tired feet?
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for aching eyes,"
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries.

It's the white road westwards is the road I must tread
To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest for heart and head,
To the violets and the brown brooks and the thrushes' song,
In the fine land, the west land, the land where I belong.

(1902)

[1] The "trick" is one's turn at the wheel. The long trick here is life.

Cargoes

Quinquireme[1] of Nineveh[2] from distant Ophir,[3]
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,[4]
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.[5]

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne[6] coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

(1910)

[1] an ancient ship.
[2] capital of ancient Assyria.
[3] famous for gold in Biblical times.
[4] of Panama.
[5] coins of Portugal.
[6] the Tyne River in Northumberland.

Roses are Beauty, but I Never See

Roses are beauty, but I never see
Those blood drops from the burning heart of June
Glowing like thought upon the living tree,
Without a pity that they die so soon,
Die into petals, like those roses old,
Those women, who were summer in men's hearts
Before the smile upon the Sphinx was cold,
Or sand had hid the Syrian and his arts.
O myriad dust of beauty that lies thick
Under our feet that not a single grain
But stirred and moved in beauty and was quick
For one brief moon and died nor lived again;
But when the moon rose lay upon the grass
Pasture to living beauty, life that was.

I Never See the Red Rose Crown the Year

I never see the red rose crown the year,
Nor feel the young grass underneath my tread,
Without the thought, "This living beauty here
Is earth's remembrance of a beauty dead.
Surely where all this glory is displayed
Love has been quick, like fire, to high ends,
Here, in this grass, an altar has been made
For some white joy, some sacrifice of friends;
Here, where I stand, some leap of human brains
Has touched immortal things and left its trace,
The earth is happy here, the gleam remains;
Beauty is here, the spirit of the place,
I touch the faith which nothing can destroy,
The earth, the living church of ancient joy."

(1916)

Wilfred Owen

(1893-1918)

In the popular imagination Rupert Brooke is still the English poet of the First World War. To Wilfred Owen, Captain Siegfried Sassoon was the idol. "I am not worthy," Owen wrote, "to light his pipe." But it appears likely now that Owen's intimate portraits of the shock and pity of the conflict will survive both Brooke's conventional idealizations and Sassoon's acid etchings. He has been especially admired by other young poets on both sides of the Atlantic. Stephen Spender has called him "the most useful influence in modern verse," Selden Rodman "the noblest voice in English poetry since the death of Keats."

Owen was born in Shropshire and educated at Birkenhead Institute, Liverpool. When the war broke out, he was studying under a private tutor in Bordeaux. In 1915 he returned home to join the Artists' Rifles, and by January, 1917 he was in action on the Somme with the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment. After being wounded and sent back to England he returned to the front in the summer of 1918. One week before the Armistice, while trying to pass his company across the Sambre Canal, he was killed at the water's edge by German machine gun fire.

Throughout the conflict, as his letters home reveal, Owen thought of his poetry only as an instrument with which to tell the truth about war. Shortly after leading the remnant of his company through a desperate attack in Flanders—a deed for which he received the Military Cross—he wrote to his mother: "I came out in order to help these boys—directly by leading them as well as an officer can, indirectly by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can." In notes for a projected volume of poems that he was never to see in print, he revealed an ambitious plan for a rounded picture of war, each poem on a different aspect of the pitiful struggle. In the famous preface he wrote:

> This book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.
> Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honor, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.

Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.
My subject is War, and the pity of War.
The Poetry is in the pity.
Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.
(If I thought the letter of this book would last, I might have used proper names; but if the spirit of it survives—survives Prussia—my ambition and those names will have achieved themselves fresher fields than Flanders.)

Greater Love

Red lips are not so red
  As the stained stones kissed by the English dead.
Kindness of wooed and wooer
Seems shame to their love pure.
O Love, your eyes lose lure
  When I behold eyes blinded in my stead!

Your slender attitude
  Trembles not exquisite like limbs knife-skewed,
Rolling and rolling there
Where God seems not to care;
Till the fierce Love they bear
  Cramps them in death's extreme decrepitude.

Your voice sings not so soft,—
  Though even as wind murmuring through raftered loft,—
Your dear voice is not dear,
Gentle, and evening clear,
As theirs whom none now hear,
  Now earth has stopped their piteous mouths that coughed.

Heart, you were never hot,
  Nor large, nor full like hearts made great with shot;
And though your hand be pale,
Paler are all which trail
Your cross through flame and hail:
  Weep, you may weep, for you may touch them not.

(1920)

Strange Meeting

It seemed that out of the battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which Titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall.
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange, friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."
"None," said the other, "save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something has been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.

I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . ." (1920)

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.
(1920)

Wystan Hugh Auden

(1907-)

The most authentic introduction to Auden is the poet's own *Letter to Lord Byron.* Here, in the meandering manner of *Don Juan,* he draws a sharp self-portrait and brings the elliptical record of his life and times down to 1935. He was born in York, the son of a doctor, and was brought up in the austere High Church tradition. From the time he was six until he was sixteen, he "lisped" not in numbers but in the jargon of machines, and dreamed of a career in mining engineering. His sudden conversion to poetry came shortly before he entered Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1925. Here he forsook his new god, Thomas Hardy, for a newer deity named T. S. Eliot, whose *Waste Land* (1922), with its fresh imagery of "gasworks and dried tubers," was the talk of the quadrangle.

During three years at Oxford Auden was associated with left-wing politics, and on a brief tour of further study at Berlin he became intrigued by the brave new doctrines of sex and society preached by D. H. Lawrence and the French novelist, André Gide. Between 1928 and 1933 he labored at the less exciting task of teaching English in boarding schools, both in Scotland and England. He "found the pay good and had time to spend it"—and he also found time to write the poems which were to make him the acknowledged leader of an "Auden Circle" of leftist poets. After six months of making documentary films (1935-36), he resumed his travels. In 1936 he journeyed to Iceland with his fellow-poet, Louis Macneice; a year later he was driving an ambulance in the Civil War in Spain; and in 1938 he "covered" China with another poet, Christopher Isherwood. In the following year, with his wife, Erika Mann, daughter of Thomas Mann, the exiled German novelist, he came to the United States. Here he has taught at the New School for Social Research, Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr, and the University of Michigan. He is now an American citizen, but in another sense, he is a citizen of the world.

A number of Auden's books are collaborations. The journey with Macneice resulted in *Letters from Iceland,* the *potpourri* of prose and verse which includes "A Letter to Lord Byron." The China voyage is reflected in *Journey to a War* (1939), with verse by Auden and prose by Isherwood. Also in collaboration with Isherwood are two satirical verse dramas: *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935), which has been called "a bizarre mixture of Gilbert and Sullivan light opera, musical comedy and an *Everyman* morality piece"; and *The Ascent of F 6* (1936). Auden's own volumes include: *Poems* (1930 and 1934); *The Orators* (1932); *The Dance of Death,* another satirical verse play (1933); *Look, Stranger*

(American title, *On This Island*, 1937); *Another Time* (1940); *Some Poems* (1940); *The Double Man* (English title, *New Year Letter*, 1941); *For the Time Being* (1944); *Collected Poetry* (1945); and *Age of Anxiety*, a "baroque eclogue" set partly in a Third Avenue bar (1947). He also edited *The Oxford Book of Light Verse* (1938).

As many of the titles indicate, Auden is self-consciously a poet of his generation. He is enthroned in the midst of the startling group of Oxford poets—Auden, Spender, MacNeice, and Cecil Day Lewis—who came into their own in the chaotic thirties. Born too late to fight in the First World War, they were—in Auden's own phrase—"the tail, a sort of poor relation" to the lost old-young men of the 'twenties. Instead of worshipping at the shrine of disillusionment, they sought more affirmative gods. Auden found comfort in Freud: Day Lewis wrote in 1937 that the "survival-value of [Auden's] poetry is bound up inextricably with the survival-value of Freud's teachings." He also took refuge temporarily in Marx, and his work in the 'thirties is saturated with Communist propaganda. More recently, however, his poetry has taken on a more religious cast, and he has become an earnest advocate of universal brotherhood based on Christian principles.

It is fashionable to refer to Auden as the Byron of our time. His rampant individualism, his ready wit, the evident delight with which he mocks conventions, his restless travels, his immersion in political problems—all these are obvious resemblances. Among others are his disarming habit of changing keys in mid-poem from soberness to roguishness and his almost fatal virtuosity in versifying. No slave to the cryptic technique of a modern cult, he has experimented unceasingly. His gamut extends from the studied alliteration of the Old English poets to the latest street-corner slang; and there are echoes and imitations of Donne, Blake, Byron, Hopkins, Housman, and Yeats—as well as two "minor" poets whose genius he admittedly envies, Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. Whatever his rank with posterity, he is certainly the most versatile poet of his generation.

The Riddle

Underneath the leaves of life,
Green on the prodigious tree,
In a trance of grief
Stand the fallen man and wife:
Far away the single stag
Banished to a lonely crag
Gazes placid out to sea,
And from thickets round about
Breeding animals look in
On Duality,
And the birds fly in and out
Of the world of man.

Down in order from the ridge,
Bayonets glittering in the sun,
Soldiers who will judge
Wind towards the little bridge:
Even politicians speak
Truths of value to the weak,
Necessary acts are done
By the ill and the unjust;
But the Judgment and the Smile,
Though these two-in-one
See creation as they must,
None shall reconcile.

Bordering our middle earth
Kingdoms of the Short and Tall,
Rivals for our faith,
Stir up envy from our birth:
So the giant who storms the sky
In an angry wish to die
Wakes the hero in us all,
While the tiny with their power
To divide and hide and flee,
When our fortunes fall
Tempt to a belief in our
Immortality.

Lovers running each to each
Feel such timid dreams catch fire
Blazing as they touch,
Learn what love can teach:
Happy on a tousled bed
Praise Blake's acumen who said:

"One thing only we require
Of each other; we must see
In another's lineaments
Gratified desire";
That is our humanity;
Nothing else contents.

Nowhere else could I have known
Than, beloved, in your eyes
What we have to learn,
That we love ourselves alone:
All our terrors burned away
We can learn at last to say:
"All our knowledge comes to this,
That existence is enough,
That in savage solitude
Or the play of love
Every living creature is
Woman, Man, and Child."

(1940)

Over the Heather the Wet Wind Blows

Over the heather the wet wind blows,
I've lice in my tunic and a cold in my nose.

The rain comes pattering out of the sky,
I'm a Wall soldier, I don't know why.

The mist creeps over the hard grey stone,
My girl's in Tungria; I sleep alone.

Aulus goes hanging around her place,
I don't like his manners, I don't like his face.

Piso's a Christian, he worships a fish;
There'd be no kissing if he had his wish.

She gave me a ring but I diced it away;
I want my girl and I want my pay.

When I'm a veteran with only one eye
I shall do nothing but look at the sky.

(1940)

Song for the New Year

It's farewell to the drawing-room's civilized cry
The professor's sensible whereto and why
The frock-coated diplomat's social aplomb
Now matters are settled with gas and with bomb.

The works for two pianos, the brilliant stories
Of reasonable giants and remarkable fairies,
The pictures, the ointments, the frangible wares,
And the branches of olive are stored upstairs.

For the Devil has broken parole and arisen
He has dynamited his way out of prison,
Out of the well where his Papa throws
The rebel angel, the outcast rose.

Like influenza he walks abroad,
He stands on the bridge, he waits by the ford;
As a goose or a gull he flies overhead,
He hides in the cupboards and under the bed.

Assuming such shapes as may best disguise
The hate that burns in his big blue eyes;
He may be a baby that croons in its pram,
Or a dear old grannie boarding a tram.

A plumber, a doctor, for he has the skill
To adopt a serious profession at will;
Superb at ice-hockey, a prince at the dance,
He's fierce as the tiger, secretive as plants.

O were he to triumph, dear heart, you know
To what depths of shame he would drag you low;
He would steal you away from me, yes, my dear,
He would steal you and cut off your marvellous hair.

Millions already have come to their harm,
Succumbing like doves to his adder's charm:
Hundreds of trees in the wood are unsound;
I'm the axe that must cut them down to the ground.

For I, after all, am the fortunate one,
The Happy-go-Lucky, the spoilt third son;
For me it is written the Devil to chase,
And to rid the earth of the human race.

The behaving of man is a world of horror,
A sedentary Sodom and slick Gomorrah:
I must take charge of the liquid fire
And storm the cities of human desire;

The buying and selling, the eating and drinking,
The disloyal machines and irreverent thinking,
The lovely dullards again and again
Inspiring their bitter ambitious men.

I shall come, I shall punish, the Devil be dead:
I shall have caviare thick on my bread,
I shall build myself a cathedral for home
With a vacuum cleaner in every room.

I shall ride on the front in a platinum car,
My features shall shine, my name shall be Star:
Day long and night long the bells I shall peal,
And down the long street I shall turn the cart-wheel.

So Little John, Long John, Polly and Peg,
And poor little Horace with only one leg,
You must leave your breakfast, your desk, and your play
On a fine summer morning the Devil to slay.

For it's order and trumpet and anger and drum,
And power and glory command you to come:
The graves shall fly open and suck you all in
And the earth shall be emptied of mortal sin.

The fishes are silent deep in the sea,
The skies are lit up like a Christmas tree,
The star in the West shoots its warning cry:
"Mankind is alive, but mankind must die."

So good-bye to the house with its wallpaper red,
Good-bye to the sheets on the warm double bed,
Good-bye to the beautiful birds on the wall,
It's good-bye, dear heart, good-bye to you all.

(1940)

Stephen Spender

(1909-)

Stephen Spender is generally ranked second to Auden among the left-wing Oxford poets who came into prominence in the 'thirties. He was born near London, the son of a well-known novelist and journalist, Harold Spender. From 1928 to 1931 he attended University College, Oxford, where he was a friend of both Auden and Louis MacNeice. He left without a degree but with a reputation as a brilliant undergraduate poet. He had helped to edit the anthologies called *Oxford Poetry* and had published two small volumes of his own, *Nine Experiments* (1928) and *Twenty Poems* (1930). With the publication of *Poems* (1933) his reputation was established among readers of serious poetry on both sides of the Atlantic.

Like Auden, Spender plunged earnestly into the international political turmoil which foreshadowed the Second World War. In 1934 he was in Vienna during the abortive uprising of the Socialists, and in 1937 he went to Spain to attend the International Writers Congress and remained for several months to support the Loyalist forces in the Civil War. In the mounting struggle between Communism and Fascism throughout Europe, Spender threw his weight to the Left, but he had too keen a sense of justice to condone the excesses of the extremists and too much respect for artistic freedom to subscribe wholeheartedly to a regime that would enslave a poet to a party line. His own search for a political and moral credo was reflected during the thirties in *Vienna* (1935), a militant anti-Nazi poem; *Forward from Liberalism* (1937), in which he defended his own political convictions and advocated Communism as the final goal of nineteenth-century Liberalism; and *Trial of a Judge* (1938), a five-act verse tragedy set against a background of Nazi cruelty. During the same period he also published: *The Burning Cactus* (1936), which includes a novelette and four short stories; and *The Destructive Element* (1935), a provocative book of criticism in which Henry James, Yeats, Eliot, Lawrence, Auden, and others are analyzed in terms of their struggle to find a safe moral-political refuge against the storms of a "world without belief." His more recent publications include three further volumes of verse—*The Still Centre* (1939), *Ruins and Visions* (1942), and *Poems of Dedication* (1947)—and *European Witness* (1946), the prose report of a journey on the ravaged continent during the summer and autumn of 1945.

Judgments of Spender's achievement have varied widely. For example, one reviewer found *Trial of a Judge* "a new low in Mr. Spender's career . . . frightful poetry, and, academically speaking, no tragedy at all"; another called it "the finest English poetic drama . . . since Otway's *Venice Preserved*." Most critics, in drawing the inevitable comparison with Auden, have found Spender less vigorous and less versatile; while praising him for his moral earnestness, they have expressed annoyance at his humorlessness and the continual emphasis on pity. But they have found in his best work the clear, musical note of an intense lyric poet of the first order. As often as Auden has been called the Byron of our time, Spender has been designated as its Shelley.

Moving Through the Silent Crowd

Moving through the silent crowd
Who stand behind dull cigarettes
These men who idle in the road,
I have the sense of falling light.

They lounge at corners of the street
And greet friends with a shrug of shoulder
And turn their empty pockets out,
The cynical gestures of the poor.

Now they've no work, like better men
Who sit at desks and take much pay
They sleep long nights and rise at ten
To watch the hours that drain away.

I'm jealous of the weeping hours
They stare through with such hungry eyes.
I'm haunted by these images,
I'm haunted by their emptiness.

(1933)

The Express

After the first powerful plain manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,
The gasworks and at last the heavy page
Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.
Beyond the town there lies the open country
Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,
The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.
It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low
Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness—
The song of her whistle screaming at curves,
Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.
And always light, aerial, underneath
Goes the elate meter of her wheels.
Steaming through metal landscape on her lines
She plunges new eras of wild happiness
Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves
And parallels clean like the steel of guns.
At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,
Beyond the crest of the world, she reaches night
Where only a low streamline brightness
Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is white.
Ah, like a comet through flames she moves entranced
Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.

(1933)

The Pylons

The secret of these hills was stone, and cottages
Of that stone made,
And crumbling roads
That turned on sudden hidden villages.

Now over these small hills they have built the concrete
That trails black wire:
Pylons, those pillars
Bare like nude, giant girls that have no secret.

The valley with its gilt and evening look
And the green chestnut
Of customary root
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

But far above and far as sight endures
Like whips of anger
With lightning's danger
There runs the quick perspective of the future.

This dwarfs our emerald country by its trek
So tall with prophecy:
Dreaming of cities
Where often clouds shall lean their swan-white neck.

(1933)

Not Palaces, an Era's Crown

Not palaces, an era's crown
Where the mind dwells, intrigues, rests;
The architectural gold-leaved flower
From people ordered like a single mind,
I build. This only what I tell:
It is too late for rare accumulation
For family pride, for beauty's filtered dusts;
I say, stamping the words with emphasis,
Drink from here energy and only energy,
As from the electric charge of a battery,
To will this Time's change.
Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
Drinker of horizon's fluid line;
Ear that suspends on a chord
The spirit drinking timelessness;
Touch, love, all senses;
Leave your gardens, your singing feasts,
Your dreams of suns circling before our sun,
Of heaven after our world.
Instead, watch images of flashing brass
That strike the outward sense, the polished will,
Flag of our purpose which the wind engraves.
No spirit seek here rest. But this: No man
Shall hunger: Man shall spend equally.
Our goal which we compel: Man shall be man.

—That programme of the antique Satan
Bristling with guns on the indented page
With battleship towering from hilly waves:
For what? Drive of a ruining purpose
Destroying all but its age-long exploiters.
Our programme like this, yet opposite,
Death to the killers, bringing light to life.

(1933)

Ultima Ratio Regum[1]

The guns spell money's ultimate reason
In letters of lead on the spring hillside.
But the boy lying dead under the olive trees
Was too young and too silly
To have been notable to their important eye.
He was a better target for a kiss.

When he lived, tall factory hooters never summoned him.
Nor did restaurant plate-glass doors revolve to wave him in.
His name never appeared in the papers.
The world maintained its traditional wall
Round the dead with their gold sunk deep as a well,
Whilst his life, intangible as a Stock Exchange rumour, drifted outside.

O too lightly he threw down his cap
One day when the breeze threw petals from the trees.
The unflowering wall sprouted with guns,
Machine-gun anger quickly scythed the grasses;
Flags and leaves fell from hands and branches;
The tweed cap rotted in the nettles.

Consider his life which was valueless
In terms of employment, hotel ledgers, news files.
Consider. One bullet in ten thousand kills a man.
Ask. Was so much expenditure justified
On the death of one so young and so silly
Lying under the olive trees, O world, O death?

(1939)

[1] "the last argument of kings." This was a motto which Louis XIV had carved on his cannon.

PROSE

Gilbert Keith Chesterton

(1874-1936)

Chesterton was one of those figures whose astounding versatility has forced critics to string together long lists of epithets—journalist, poet, essayist, pamphleteer, propagandist, novelist, literary critic, historian, biographer—or to take refuge in that comfortable category, miscellaneous writer. That he could turn out an average of three volumes a year for three and a half decades is remarkable enough; it is more remarkable that so much of this gargantuan output rises above the routine level of mere journalistic competence.

He was born in London and educated there at time-honored St. Paul's School and King's College. A brief period of art study helped him develop the small talent which he used later in illustrating some of his own books. From art criticism he turned easily to general magazine free-lancing, and by 1900 the books were beginning to pour from the presses: miscellaneous essays (*The Defendant,* 1902; *Tremendous Trifles,* 1909); discourses on philosophy and religion (*Heretics,* 1905; *Orthodoxy,* 1908); literary criticism (*Browning,* 1903; *Dickens,* 1906; *Shaw,* 1909); fiction (*The Man Who Was Thursday,* 1907—his best-known novel—and scores of popular Father Brown detective stories, 1911-35); and poetry, including such favorites as *The Ballad of the White Horse* (1911) and *Lepanto* (1915). And these are only a few of his many works. At the height of his fame the great shaggy walrus, G.K.C., was nearly as well known in the English-speaking world as the Mephistophelean pundit, G.B.S.

It is easy to think of Chesterton as the inventor of the most ingenious paradox, the master artificer of epigram and epithet, the wit who could do inimitable juggling tricks with logic. These stylistic devices crackle through his writing like firecrackers. They became a kind of nervous disease for which he had no lasting sedative. Yet he does not easily conform to the common conception of the familiar essayist as a mere snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. Unlike Beerbohm, to whom the essay has often been an escape into nostalgia, Chesterton disguised under the mask of levity his most heartfelt opinions and prejudices.

At the beginning of his career he defended the Boers in the Boer War. Against Fabian Socialism—warmly championed at the turn of the century by Wells and Shaw—he and his fellow journalist Hilaire Belloc set forth the gospel of "Distributivism," arguing for the widest possible ownership and development of arable land. Instead of looking ahead like Wells to a scientific Utopia, he looked back like Carlyle to the more coherent world of the thirteenth century. Yet he did not, like Miniver Cheevy, grow lean while he assailed the seasons. Even if the times were out of joint, he got an immense satisfaction out of living in them, and he tried to convey this gusto to his readers. No stunted ascetic, he suggested that the doctrine of "plain living and high thinking" might well be replaced by one of "high living and plain thinking." He was once quoted as saying that, since Dickens, no one in England had cared for the people's pleasure because the Tories hated the people and the Liberals hated pleasure. He glorified beer to pique the prohibitionists and sanctified beef to twit the vegetarians. England's salvation lay, he felt, not in any change in habit or social routine, but in "a fundamental point of view, a philosophy or religion." He found that religion in Roman Catholicism, to which he became officially converted in 1922. From that year until his death Chesterton devoted much of his energy to explaining and defending his faith.

A Piece of Chalk

I remember one splendid morning, all blue and silver, in the summer holidays, when I reluctantly tore myself away from the task of doing nothing in particular, and put on a hat of some sort and picked up a walking stick, and put six very bright-colored chalks in my pocket. I then went into the kitchen (which, along with the rest of the house, belonged to a very square and sensible old woman in a Sussex village) and asked the owner and occupant of the kitchen if she had any brown paper. She had a great deal; in fact, she had too much; and she mistook the purpose and the rationale of the existence of brown paper. She seemed to have an idea that if a person wanted brown paper he must be wanting to tie up parcels; which was the last thing I wanted to do; indeed, it is a thing which I have found to be beyond my mental capacity. Hence she dwelt very much on the varying qualities of toughness and endurance in the material. I explained to her that I only wanted to draw pictures on it, and that I did not want them to endure in the least; and that from my point of view, therefore, it was a question, not of tough consistency, but of responsive surface, a thing comparatively irrelevant in a parcel. When she understood that I wanted to draw, she offered to overwhelm me with note paper, apparently supposing that I did my notes and correspondence on old brown paper wrappers from motives of economy.

I then tried to explain the rather delicate logical shade, that I not only liked brown paper, but liked the quality of brownness in paper, just as I liked the quality of brownness in October woods, or in the peat streams of the North. Brown paper represents the primal twilight of the first toil of creation, and with a bright-colored chalk or two you can pick out points of fire in it, sparks of gold, and blood-red, and sea-green, like the first fierce stars that sprang out of divine darkness. All this I said (in an offhand way) to the old woman; and I put the brown paper in my pocket along with the chalks, and possibly other things. I suppose everyone must have reflected how primeval and how poetical are the things that one carries in one's pocket: the pocketknife, for instance, the type of all human tools, the infant of the sword. Once I planned to write a book of poems entirely about the things in my pockets. But I found it would be too long; and the age of the great epics is past.

With my stick and my knife, my chalks and my brown paper, I went out on the great downs. I crawled across those colossal contours that express the best quality of England, because they are at the same time soft and strong. The smoothness of them has the same meaning as the smoothness of great cart horses, or the smoothness of the beech tree; it declares in the teeth of our timid and cruel theories that the mighty are merciful. As my eye swept the landscape, the landscape was as kindly as any of its cottages, but for power it was like an earthquake. The villages in the immense valley were safe, one could see, for centuries; yet the lifting of the whole land was like the lifting of one enormous wave to wash them all away.

I crossed one swell of living turf after another, looking for a place to sit down and draw. Do not, for heaven's sake, imagine I was going to sketch from nature. I was going to draw devils and seraphim, and blind old gods that men worshiped before the dawn of right, and saints in robes of angry crimson, and seas of strange green, and all the sacred or monstrous symbols that look so well in bright colors on brown paper. They are much better worth drawing than nature; also they are much easier to draw. When a cow came slouching by in the field next to me, a mere artist might have drawn it; but I always get wrong in the hind legs of quadrupeds. So I drew the soul of the cow; which I saw there plainly walking before me in the sunlight; and the soul was all purple and silver, and had seven horns and the mystery that belongs to all the beasts. But though I could not with a crayon get the best out of the landscape, it does not follow that the landscape was not getting the best out of me. And this, I think, is the mistake that people make about the old poets who lived before Wordsworth, and were supposed not to care very much about nature because they did not describe it much.

They preferred writing about great men to writing about great hills; but they sat on the great hills to write it. They gave out much less about nature, but they drank in, perhaps, much more. They painted the white robes of their holy virgins with the blinding snow, at which they had stared all day. They blazoned the shields of their paladins with the purple and gold of many heraldic sunsets. The greenness of a thousand green leaves clustered into the live green figure of Robin Hood. The blueness of a score of forgotten skies became the blue robes of the Virgin. The inspiration went in like sunbeams and came out like Apollo.

But as I sat scrawling these silly figures on the brown paper, it began to dawn on me, to my great disgust, that I had left one chalk, and that a most exquisite and essential chalk, behind. I searched

all my pockets, but I could not find any white chalk. Now, those who are acquainted with all the philosophy (nay, religion) which is typified in the art of drawing on brown paper, know that white is positive and essential. I cannot avoid remarking here upon a moral significance. One of the wise and awful truths which this brown-paper art reveals is this, that white is a color. It is not a mere absence of color; it is a shining and affirmative thing, as fierce as red, as definite as black. When, so to speak, your pencil grows red-hot, it draws roses; when it grows white-hot, it draws stars. And one of the two or three defiant verities of the best religious morality, of real Christianity, for example, is exactly this same thing; the chief assertion of religious morality is that white is a color. Virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral dangers; virtue is a vivid and separate thing, like pain or a particular smell. Mercy does not mean not being cruel or sparing people revenge or punishment; it means a plain and positive thing like the sun, which one has either seen or not seen.

Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong; it means something flaming, like Joan of Arc. In a word, God paints in many colors; but He never paints so gorgeously, I had almost said so gaudily, as when He paints in white. In a sense our age has realized this fact, and expressed it in our sullen costume. For if it were really true that white was a blank and colorless thing, negative and non-committal, then white would be used instead of black and gray for the funeral dress of this pessimistic period. We should see city gentlemen in frock coats of spotless silver linen, with top hats as white as wonderful arum lilies. Which is not the case.

Meanwhile, I could not find any chalk.

I sat on the hill in a sort of despair. There was no town nearer than Chichester at which it was even remotely probable that there would be such a thing as an artist's colorman. And yet, without white, my absurd little pictures would be as pointless as the world would be if there were no good people in it. I stared stupidly round, racking my brain for expedients. Then I suddenly stood up and roared with laughter, again and again, so that the cows stared at me and called a committee. Imagine a man in the Sahara regretting that he had no sand for his hourglass. Imagine a gentleman in midocean wishing that he had brought some salt water with him for his chemical experiments. I was sitting on an immense warehouse of white chalk. The landscape was made entirely out of white chalk. White chalk was piled more miles until it met the sky. I stooped and broke a piece off the rock I sat on: it did not mark so well as the shop chalks do; but it gave the effect. And I stood there in a trance of pleasure, realizing that this southern England is not only a grand peninsula, and a tradition and a civilization; it is something even more admirable. It is a piece of chalk.

(1909)

On Lying in Bed

Lying in bed would be an altogether perfect and supreme experience if only one had a colored pencil long enough to draw on the ceiling. This, however, is not generally a part of the domestic apparatus on the premises. I think myself that the thing might be managed with several pails of Aspinall and a broom. Only if one worked in a really sweeping and masterly way, and laid on the color in great washes, it might drip down again on one's face in floods of rich and mingled color like some strange fairy rain; and that would have its disadvantages. I am afraid it would be necessary to stick to black and white in this form of artistic composition. To that purpose, indeed, the white ceiling would be of the greatest possible use; in fact it is the only use I think of a white ceiling being put to.

But for the beautiful experiment of lying in bed I might never have discovered it. For years I have been looking for some blank spaces in a modern house to draw on. Paper is much too small for any really allegorical design; as Cyrano de Bergerac says: *"Il me faut des geants."* But when I tried to find these fine clear spaces in the modern rooms such as we all live in I was continually disappointed. I found an endless pattern and complication of small objects hung like a curtain of fine links between me and my desire. I examined the walls; I found them to my surprise to be already covered with wall paper, and I found the wall paper to be already covered with very uninteresting images, all bearing a ridiculous resemblance to each other. I could not understand why one arbitrary symbol (a symbol apparently entirely devoid of any religious or philosophical significance) should thus be sprinkled all over my nice walls like a sort of smallpox. The Bible must be referring to wall papers, I think, when it says, "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do." I found the Turkey carpet a mass of unmeaning colors, rather like the Turkish Empire, or like the sweet-

meat called Turkish Delight. I do not exactly know what Turkish Delight really is; but I suppose it is Macedonian Massacres. Everywhere that I went forlornly, with my pencil or my paint brush, I found that others had unaccountably been before me, spoiling the walls, the curtains, and the furniture with their childish and barbaric designs.

Nowhere did I find a really clear place for sketching until this occasion when I prolonged beyond the proper limit the process of lying on my back in bed. Then the light of that white heaven broke upon my vision, that breadth of mere white which is indeed almost the definition of Paradise, since it means purity and also means freedom. But alas! like all heavens, now that it is seen it is found to be unattainable; it looks more austere and more distant than the blue sky outside the window. For my proposal to paint on it with the bristly end of a broom has been discouraged—never mind by whom; by a person debarred from all political rights—and even my minor proposal to put the other end of the broom into the kitchen fire and turn it into charcoal has not been conceded. Yet I am certain that it was from persons in my position that all the original inspiration came for covering the ceilings of palaces and cathedrals with a riot of fallen angels or victorious gods. I am sure that it was only because Michael Angelo was engaged in the ancient and honorable occupation of lying in bed that he ever realized how the roof of the Sistine Chapel might be made into an awful imitation of a divine drama that could only be acted in the heavens.

The tone now commonly taken towards the practice of lying in bed is hypocritical and unhealthy. Of all the marks of modernity that seem to mean a kind of decadence, there is none more menacing and dangerous than the exaltation of very small and secondary matters of conduct at the expense of very great and primary ones, at the expense of eternal public and tragic human morality. If there is one thing worse than the modern weakening of major morals, it is the modern strengthening of minor morals. Thus it is considered more withering to accuse a man of bad taste than of bad ethics. Cleanliness is not next to godliness nowadays, for cleanliness is made an essential and godliness is regarded as an offence. A playwright can attack the institution of marriage so long as he does not misrepresent the manners of society, and I have met Ibsenite pessimists who thought it wrong to take beer but right to take prussic acid. Especially this is so in matters of hygiene; notably such matters as lying in bed. Instead of being regarded, as it ought to be, as a matter of personal convenience and adjustment, it has come to be regarded by many as if it were a part of essential morals to get up early in the morning. It is, upon the whole, part of practical wisdom; but there is nothing good about it or bad about its opposite.

Misers get up early in the morning, and burglars, I am informed, get up the night before. It is the great peril of our society that all its mechanism may grow more fixed while its spirit grows more fickle. A man's minor actions and arrangements ought to be free, flexible, creative; the things that should be unchangeable are his principles, his ideals. But with us the reverse is true; our views change constantly; but our lunch does not change. Now, I should like men to have strong and rooted conceptions, but, as for their lunch, let them have it sometimes in the garden, sometimes in bed, sometimes on the roof, sometimes in the top of a tree. Let them argue from the same first principles, but let them do it in a bed, or a boat, or a balloon. This alarming growth of good habits really means a too great emphasis on those virtues which mere custom can misuse, it means too little emphasis on those virtues which custom can never quite ensure, sudden and splendid virtues of inspired pity or of inspired candor. If ever that abrupt appeal is made to us we may fail. A man can get used to getting up at five o'clock in the morning. A man cannot very well get used to being burnt for his opinions; the first experiment is commonly fatal. Let us pay a little more attention to these possibilities of the heroic and the unexpected. I daresay that when I get out of this bed I shall do some deed of an almost terrible virtue.

For those who study the great art of lying in bed there is one emphatic caution to be added. Even for those who can do their work in bed (like journalists), still more for those whose work cannot be done in bed (as, for example, the professional harpooner of whales), it is obvious that the indulgence must be very occasional. But that is not the caution I mean. The caution is this: if you do lie in bed, be sure you do it without any reason or justification at all. I do not speak, of course, of the seriously sick. But if a healthy man lies in bed, let him do it without a rag of excuse; then he will get up a healthy man. If he does it for some secondary hygienic reason, if he has some scientific explanation, he may get up a hypochondriac.

(1909)

Sir Max Beerbohm

(1872-)

In 1896, when Max Beerbohm, twenty-four and fresh out of Oxford, corralled his fugitive pieces into his first collection, he called it, with an air of solemn finality, *The Works of Max Beerbohm.* It ended with a nostalgic farewell: "Already I feel myself to be a trifle outmoded. I belong to the Beardsley period. . . . Indeed, I stand aside with no regret. For to be outmoded is to be a classic, if one has written well."

This lament anticipated the passing of an era by about a decade. *The Yellow Book,* the magazine that has come to symbolize the *fin de siècle* in England, had died an early death in the previous year; and of the brilliant contributors with whom Beerbohm shared its pages, some—Oscar Wilde, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and the artist Aubrey Beardsley, for example—did not survive it long; while others—Arthur Symons, Richard Le Gallienne—hardly sustained their early reputations. But Max Beerbohm's own personal epitaph was notoriously premature. *The Works* was succeeded in 1899 by *More,* in 1909 by *Yet Again,* and in 1920 by *And Even Now*—all collections of miscellaneous essays. In 1911 appeared *Zuleika Dobson,* the classic satirical novel on life at Oxford which many call Beerbohm's masterpiece; in 1912 came *A Christmas Garland,* a volume of parodies; and in 1919 *Seven Men,* a book of satirical portraits of six men and the author. In the same busy period portfolios of caricatures and cartoons appeared regularly, including *Caricatures of Twenty-Five Gentlemen* (1896), *The Poet's Corner* (1904), *Fifty Caricatures* (1913), and *Rossetti and His Circle* (1922).

In 1925 Carl and Mark Van Doren described Beerbohm as "the only surviving writer who carries over to the present time the full flavor of the eighteen-nineties." But the gentle, gnomelike jester with "a moustache acute as a wren's tail"—the "incomparable," the "inimitable" Max, "a British institution [despite years of living in Italy] in the same category as Parliament, afternoon tea . . . and the Oxford accent"—refused to be a mere survivor of bygone days. *A Variety of Things* (1928) was followed two years later by *Around Theatres,* a collection of his early drama criticism for the *Saturday Review.* Max became Sir Max in 1939. In 1946 appeared *Mainly on the Air,* a miscellany of essays and of London radio broadcasts in which the author summoned up remembrance of things past. A half century had elapsed since the first definitive farewell volume.

The magic that clings to the name of Beerbohm means different things to different people. Some think of him first as the master caricaturist whose ubiquitous drawings are still standard illustrations in the textbooks and book reviews—the creator of the virile Browning taking tea with the effete enthusiasts of the Browning Society, of the aged Wordsworth torn between cross-examining a village maid and finding shelter from a Lake Country downpour, of Coleridge at Highgate talking his hearers into an enormous, unanimous yawn. To others he is supreme as a parodist, a literary critic, or a satirist of life at Oxford. But to the literary historian he is likely to be remembered as the writer who, more than any other in his time, preserved the fine essence of the old-fashioned informal essay. In the years when it was giving ground on all sides to the formal article packed with facts and statistics and smug expert opinion, Beerbohm was still making delightful mountains out of apparent molehills and inviting his reader to ramble along their meandering paths. Charles Lamb would never have preferred Italy to London, but in many respects Max Beerbohm is his spiritual descendant.

A Clergyman

Fragmentary, pale, momentary; almost nothing; glimpsed and gone; as it were, a faint human hand thrust up, never to reappear, from beneath the rolling waters of Time, he forever haunts my memory and solicits my weak imagination. Nothing is told of him but that once, abruptly, he asked a question, and received an answer.

This was on the afternoon of April 7th, 1778, at Streatham, in the well-appointed house of Mr. Thrale. Johnson, on the morning of that day, had entertained Boswell at breakfast in Bolt Court and invited him to dine at Thrale Hall. The two took coach and arrived early. It seems that Sir John Pringle had asked Boswell to ask Johnson "what were the best English sermons for style." In the interval before dinner, accordingly, Boswell reeled off the names of several divines whose prose might or might not win commendation. "Atterbury?" he suggested. "JOHNSON: Yes, Sir, one of the best. BOSWELL: Tillotson? JOHNSON: Why, not now. I should not advise any one to imitate Tillotson's style; though I don't know; I should be cautious of censuring anything that has been applauded by so many suffrages.—South is one of the best, if you except his peculiarities, and his violence, and sometimes coarseness of language.—Seed has a very fine style; but he is not very theological.—Jortin's sermons are very elegant.—Sherlock's style, too, is very elegant though he has not made it his principal study.—And you may add Smalridge. BOSWELL: I like Ogden's Sermons on Prayer very much, both for neatness of style and subtility of reasoning. JOHNSON: I should like to read all that Ogden has written. BOSWELL: What I want to know is, what sermons afford the best specimen of English pulpit eloquence. JOHNSON: We have no sermons addressed to the passions, that are good for anything; if you mean that kind of eloquence. A CLERGYMAN, whose name I do not recollect: Were not Dodd's sermons addressed to the passions? JOHNSON: They were nothing, Sir, be they addressed to what they may."

The suddenness of it! Bang!—and the rabbit that had popped from its burrow was no more.

I know not which is the more startling—the début of the unfortunate clergyman, or the instantaneousness of his end. Why hadn't Boswell told us there was a clergyman present? Well, we may be sure that so careful and acute an artist had some good reason. And I suppose the clergyman was left to take us unawares because just so did he take the company. Had we been told he was there, we might have expected that sooner or later he would join in the conversation. He would have had a place in our minds. We may assume that in the minds of the company around Johnson he had no place. He sat forgotten, overlooked; so that his self-assertion startled every one just as on Boswell's page it startles us. In Johnson's massive and magnetic presence only some very remarkable man, such as Mr. Burke, was sharply distinguishable from the rest. Others might, if they had something in them, stand out slightly. This unfortunate clergyman may have had something in him, but I judge that he lacked the gift of seeming as if he had. That deficiency, however, does not account for the horrid fate that befell him. One of Johnson's strongest and most inveterate feelings was his veneration for the Cloth. To any one in Holy Orders he habitually listened with a grave and charming deference. Today moreover, he was in excellent good humor. He was at the Thrales', where he loved to be; the day was fine; a fine dinner was in close prospect; and he had had what he always declared to be the sum of human felicity —a ride in a coach. Nor was there in the question put by the clergyman anything likely to enrage him. Dodd was one whom Johnson had befriended in adversity; and it had always been agreed that Dodd in his pulpit was very emotional. What drew the blasting flash must have been not the question itself, but the manner in which it was asked. And I think we can guess what that manner was.

Say the words aloud: "Were not Dodd's sermons addressed to the passions?" They are words which, if you have any dramatic and histrionic sense, *cannot* be said except in a high, thin voice.

You may, from sheer perversity, utter them in a rich and sonorous baritone or bass. But if you do so, they sound utterly unnatural. To make them carry the conviction of human utterance, you have no choice: you must pipe them.

Remember, now, Johnson was very deaf. Even the people whom he knew well, the people to whose voices he was accustomed, had to address him very loudly. It is probable that this unregarded, young, shy clergyman, when at length he suddenly mustered courage to "cut in," let his high, thin voice soar *too* high, insomuch that it was a kind of scream. On no other hypothesis can we account for the ferocity with which Johnson turned and rended him. Johnson didn't, we may

be sure, mean to be cruel. The old lion, startled, just struck out blindly. But the force of paw and claws was not the less lethal. We have endless testimony to the strength of Johnson's voice; and the very cadence of those words, "They were nothing, Sir, be they addressed to what they may," convinces me that the old lion's jaws never gave forth a louder roar. Boswell does not record that there was any further conversation before the announcement of dinner. Perhaps the whole company had been temporarily deafened. But I am not bothering about *them*. My heart goes out to the poor dear clergyman exclusively.

I said a moment ago that he was young and shy; and I admit that I slipped those epithets in without having justified them to you by due process of induction. Your quick mind will have already supplied what I omitted. A man with a high, thin voice, and without power to impress any one with a sense of his importance, a man so null in effect that even the retentive mind of Boswell did not retain his very name, would assuredly not be a self-confident man. Even if he were not naturally shy, social courage would soon have been sapped in him, and would in time have been destroyed, by experience. That he had not yet given himself up as a bad job, that he still had faint wild hopes, is proved by the fact that he did snatch the opportunity for asking that question. He must, accordingly, have been young. Was he the curate of the neighboring church? I think so. It would account for his having been invited. I see him as he sits there listening to the great Doctor's pronouncement on Atterbury and those others. He sits on the edge of a chair in the background. He has colorless eyes, fixed earnestly, and a face almost as pale as the clerical bands beneath his somewhat receding chin. His forehead is high and narrow, his hair mouse-colored. His hands are clasped tight before him, the knuckles standing out sharply. This constriction does not mean that he is steeling himself to speak. He has no positive intention of speaking. Very much, nevertheless, is he wishing in the back of his mind that he *could* say something—something whereat the great Doctor would turn on him and say, after a pause for thought, "Why yes, Sir. That is most justly observed," or "Sir, this has never occurred to me. I thank you"—thereby fixing the observer forever high in the esteem of all. And now in a flash the chance presents itself. "We have," shouts Johnson, "no sermons addressed to the passions, that are good for anything." I see the curate's frame quiver with sudden impulse, and his mouth fly open, and—no, I can't bear it, I shut my eyes and ears. But audible, even so, is something shrill, followed by something thunderous.

Presently I re-open my eyes. The crimson has not yet faded from that young face yonder, and slowly down either cheek falls a glistening tear. Shades of Atterbury and Tillotson! Such weakness shames the Established Church. What would Jorton and Smalridge have said?—what Seed and South? And, by the way, who *were* they, these worthies? It is a solemn thought that so little is conveyed to us by names which to the paleo-Georgians conveyed so much. We discern a dim, composite picture of a big man in a big wig and a billowing black gown, with a big congregation beneath him. But we are not anxious to hear what he is saying. We know it is all very elegant. We know it will be printed and be bound in finely tooled full calf, and no paleo-Georgian gentleman's library will be complete without it. Literate people in those days were comparatively few; but, bating that, one may say that sermons were as much in request as novels are today. I wonder, will mankind continue to be capricious? It is a very solemn thought indeed that no more than a hundred-and-fifty years hence the novelists of our time, with all their moral and political and sociological outlook and influence, will perhaps shine as indistinctly as do those old preachers, with all their elegance, now. "Yes, Sir," some great pundit may be telling a disciple at this moment, "Wells is one of the best. Galsworthy is one of the best, if you except his concern for delicacy of style. Mrs. Ward has a very firm grasp of problems, but is not very creational.—Caine's books are very edifying. I should like to read all that Caine has written. Miss Corelli, too, is very edifying.—And you may add Upton Sinclair." "What I want to know," says the disciple, "is, what English novels may be selected as specially enthralling." The pundit answers: "We have no novels addressed to the passions that are good for anything, if you mean that kind of enthralment." And here some poor wretch (whose name the disciple will not remember) inquires: "Are not Mrs. Glyn's novels addressed to the passions?" and is in due form annihilated. Can it be that a time will come when readers of this passage in our pundit's life will take more interest in the poor nameless wretch than in all the bearers of those great names put together, being no more able or anxious to discriminate between (say) Mrs. Ward and Mr. Sinclair than we are to set Ogden

above Sherlock, or Sherlock above Ogden? It seems impossible. But we must remember that things are not always what they seem.

Every man illustrious in his day, however much he may be gratified by his fame, looks with an eager eye to posterity for a continuance of past favors, and would even live the remainder of his life in obscurity if by so doing he could insure that future generations would preserve a correct attitude towards him forever. This is very natural and human, but, like so many very natural and human things, very silly. Tillotson and the rest need not, after all, be pitied for our neglect of them. They either know nothing about it, or are above such terrene trifles. Let us keep our pity for the great seething mass of divines who were *not* elegantly verbose, and had no fun or glory while they lasted. And let us keep a specially large portion for one whose lot was so much worse than merely undistinguished. If that nameless curate had not been at the Thrales' that day, or, being there, had kept the silence that so well became him, his life would not have been nipped in the bud. And that is what in fact happened, I'm sure of it. A robust man might have rallied under the blow. Not so our friend. Those who knew him in infancy had not expected that he would be reared. Better for him had they been right. It is well to grow up and be ordained, but not if you are delicate and very sensitive, and shall happen to annoy the greatest, the most stentorian and roughest of contemporary personages. "A Clergyman" never held up his head or smiled again after the brief encounter recorded for us by Boswell. He sank into a rapid decline. Before the next blossoming of Thrale Hall's almond trees he was no more. I like to think that he died forgiving Dr. Johnson.

(1918)

Edward Morgan Forster

(1879-)

When E. M. Forster's works first began to come out shortly after his graduation from King's College, Cambridge, it looked for a time as if he might become a prolific, if not a popular, novelist. Four novels appeared in quick succession: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), and *Howards End* (1910). But as the years ticked by with no further titles on the list, Forster began to settle into his niche as an interesting younger Edwardian who had written discriminately for the discriminating but had not kept pace with such energetic storytellers as Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy. In the twenties, however, he came to the attention of a new generation of readers. *The Celestial Omnibus* (1923), a collection of short stories, was followed a year later by the novel that is generally regarded as his masterpiece, *A Passage to India*. Since then he has published intermittently: *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), a series of Cambridge lectures now regarded as one of the classics of modern criticism; *The Eternal Moment* (1928), the second of his two short-story collections; *Abinger Harvest* (1936), a sheaf of fugitive essays; and biographical studies of G. Lowes Dickinson, his friend and teacher at Cambridge (1934), and Virginia Woolf (1941). Although the list of novels seems to have ended for good at five, many discerning critics rank Forster today as the greatest living English novelist.

In his novels Forster reveals himself as a brilliant ironist, acutely aware of the delicate relationships between human beings and of the elusive influence of their environment. His first four are ironic pictures of the British middle class, effective antidotes to Kipling's imperialism. His masterpiece is a subtle study of interracial tension in which both Anglo-Indian and Indian are depicted with the humane perception that one yearns to see at the sick world's conference tables. It is doubtful if, now that India has been given back to the Indians, Forster's novel will cease to be widely read. For, as Lionel Trilling has said, "it is not about India alone; it is about all of human life."

In his miscellaneous essays—whether he is writing on Jane Austen or Sinclair Lewis, Mickey Mouse or chess—and in the dozen "fantasies" which comprise his total output of short stories, Forster creates the same impression as in the novels: that of a genuinely civilized human being to whom souls are more important than systems. *The Machine Stops* was written, like all the short stories, before the First World War. It was originally intended as a counterblast to the technological Utopias of H. G. Wells. But today, after the fitful fevers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when the faithful readers of atomic comics are talking glibly of "living" underground when Armageddon comes, Forster's tragi-comic warning takes on a new significance.

The Machine Stops

PART I

THE AIR-SHIP

Imagine, if you can, a small room, hexagonal in shape, like the cell of a bee. It is lighted neither by window nor by lamp, yet it is filled with a soft radiance. There are no apertures for ventilation, yet the air is fresh. There are no musical instruments, and yet, at the moment that my meditation opens, this room is throbbing with melodious sounds. An arm-chair is in the center, by its side a reading-desk—that is all the furniture. And in the arm-chair there sits a swaddled lump of flesh—a woman, about five feet high, with a face as white as a fungus. It is to her that the little room belongs.

An electric bell rang.

The woman touched a switch and the music was silent.

"I suppose I must see who it is," she thought, and set her chair in motion. The chair, like the music, was worked by machinery, and it rolled her to the other side of the room, where the bell still rang importunately.

"Who is it?" she called. Her voice was irritable, for she had been interrupted often since the music began. She knew several thousand people; in certain directions human intercourse had advanced enormously.

But when she listened into the receiver, her white face wrinkled into smiles, and she said:

"Very well. Let us talk, I will isolate myself. I do not expect anything important will happen for the next five minutes—for I can give you fully five minutes, Kuno. Then I must deliver my lecture on 'Music during the Australian Period.'"

She touched the isolation knob, so that no one else could speak to her. Then she touched the lighting apparatus, and the little room was plunged into darkness.

"Be quick!" she called, her irritation returning. "Be quick, Kuno; here I am in the dark wasting my time."

But it was fully fifteen seconds before the round plate that she held in her hands began to glow. A faint blue light shot across it, darkening to purple, and presently she could see the image of her son, who lived on the other side of the earth, and he could see her.

"Kuno, how slow you are."

He smiled gravely.

"I really believe you enjoy dawdling."

"I have called you before, mother, but you were always busy or isolated. I have something particular to say."

"What is it, dearest boy? Be quick. Why could you not send it by pneumatic post?"

"Because I prefer saying such a thing. I want—"

"Well?"

"I want you to come and see me."

Vashti watched his face in the blue plate.

"But I can see you!" she exclaimed. "What more do you want?"

"I want to see you not through the Machine," said Kuno. "I want to speak to you not through the wearisome Machine."

"Oh, hush!" said his mother, vaguely shocked. "You mustn't say anything against the Machine."

"Why not?"

"One mustn't."

"You talk as if a god had made the Machine," cried the other. "I believe that you pray to it when you are unhappy. Men made it, do not forget that. Great men, but men. The Machine is much, but it is not everything. I see something like you in this plate, but I do not see you. I hear something like you through this telephone, but I do not hear you. That is why I want you to come. Come and stop with me. Pay me a visit, so that we can meet face to face, and talk about the hopes that are in my mind."

She replied that she could scarcely spare the time for a visit.

"The air-ship barely takes two days to fly between me and you."

"I dislike air-ships."

"Why?"

"I dislike seeing the horrible brown earth, and the sea, and the stars when it is dark. I get no ideas in an air-ship."

"I do not get them anywhere else."

"What kind of ideas can the air give you?"

He paused for an instant.

"Do you not know four big stars that form an oblong, and three stars close together in the middle of the oblong, and hanging from these stars, three other stars?"

"No, I do not. I dislike the stars. But did they give you an idea? How interesting; tell me."

"I had an idea that they were like a man."

"I do not understand."

"The four big stars are the man's shoulders and his knees. The three stars in the middle are like the belts that men wore once, and the three stars hanging are like a sword."

"A sword?"

"Men carried swords about with them, to kill animals and other men."

"It does not strike me as a very good idea, but it is certainly original. When did it come to you first?"

"In the air-ship—" He broke off, and she fancied that he looked sad. She could not be sure, for the Machine did not transmit *nuances* of expression. It only gave a general idea of people—an idea that was good enough for all practical purposes, Vashti thought. The imponderable bloom, declared by a discredited philosophy to be the actual essence of intercourse, was rightly ignored by the Machine, just as the imponderable bloom of the grape was ignored by the manufacturers of artificial fruit. Something "good enough" had long since been accepted by our race.

"The truth is," he continued, "that I want to see these stars again. They are curious stars. I want to see them not from the air-ship, but from the surface of the earth, as our ancestors did, thousands of years ago. I want to visit the surface of the earth."

She was shocked again.

"Mother, you must come, if only to explain to me what is the harm of visiting the surface of the earth."

"No harm," she replied, controlling herself. "But no advantage. The surface of the earth is only dust and mud, no life remains on it, and you would need a respirator, or the cold of the outer air would kill you. One dies immediately in the outer air."

"I know; of course I shall take all precautions."

"And besides—"

"Well?"

She considered, and chose her words with care. Her son had a queer temper, and she wished to dissuade him from the expedition.

"It is contrary to the spirit of the age," she asserted.

"Do you mean by that, contrary to the Machine?"

"In a sense, but—"

His image in the blue plate faded.

"Kuno!"

He had isolated himself.

For a moment Vashti felt lonely.

Then she generated the light, and the sight of her room, flooded with radiance and studded with electric buttons, revived her. There were buttons and switches everywhere—buttons to call for food, for music, for clothing. There was the hot-bath button, by pressure of which a basin of (imitation) marble rose out of the floor, filled to the brim with a warm deodorized liquid. There was the cold-bath button. There was the button that produced literature. And there were of course the buttons by which she communicated with her friends. The room, though it contained nothing, was in touch with all that she cared for in the world.

Vashti's next move was to turn off the isolation-switch, and all the accumulations of the last three minutes burst upon her. The room was filled with the noise of bells, and speaking-tubes. What was the new food like? Could she recommend it? Had she had any ideas lately? Might one tell her one's own ideas? Would she make an engagement to visit the public nurseries at an early date?—say this day month.

To most of these questions she replied with irritation—a growing quality in that accelerated age. She said that the new food was horrible. That she could not visit the public nurseries through press of engagements. That she had no ideas of her own but had just been told one—that four stars and three in the middle were like a man: she doubted there was much in it. Then she switched off her correspondents, for it was time to deliver her lecture on Australian music.

The clumsy system of public gatherings had been long since abandoned; neither Vashti nor her audience stirred from their rooms. Seated in her arm-chair she spoke, while they in their arm-

chairs heard her, fairly well, and saw her, fairly well. She opened with a humorous account of music in the pre-Mongolian epoch, and went on to describe the great outburst of song that followed the Chinese conquest. Remote and primeval as were the methods of I-San-So and the Brisbane school, she yet felt (she said) that study of them might repay the musician of today: they had freshness; they had, above all, ideas.

Her lecture, which lasted ten minutes, was well received, and at its conclusion she and many of her audience listened to a lecture on the sea; there were ideas to be got from the sea; the speaker had donned a respirator and visited it lately. Then she fed, talked to many friends, had a bath, talked again, and summoned her bed.

The bed was not to her liking. It was too large, and she had a feeling for a small bed. Complaint was useless, for beds were of the same dimension all over the world, and to have had an alternative size would have involved vast alterations in the Machine. Vashti isolated herself—it was necessary, for neither day nor night existed under the ground—and reviewed all that had happened since she had summoned the bed last. Ideas? Scarcely any. Events—was Kuno's invitation an event?

By her side, on the little reading-desk, was a survival from the ages of litter—one book. This was the Book of the Machine. In it were instructions against every possible contingency. If she was hot or cold or dyspeptic or at loss for a word, she went to the book, and it told her which button to press. The Central Committee published it. In accordance with a growing habit, it was richly bound.

Sitting up in the bed, she took it reverently in her hands. She glanced round the glowing room as if some one might be watching her. Then, half ashamed, half joyful, she murmured "O Machine! O Machine!" and raised the volume to her lips. Thrice she kissed it, thrice inclined her head, thrice she felt the delirium of acquiescence. Her ritual performed, she turned to page 1367, which gave the times of the departure of the air-ships from the island in the southern hemisphere, under whose soil she lived, to the island in the northern hemisphere, whereunder lived her son.

She thought, "I have not the time."

She made the room dark and slept; she awoke and made the room light; she ate and exchanged ideas with her friends, and listened to music and attended lectures; she made the room dark and slept. Above her, beneath her, and around her, the Machine hummed eternally; she did not notice the noise, for she had been born with it in her ears. The earth, carrying her, hummed as it sped through silence, turning her now to the invisible sun, now to the invisible stars. She awoke and made the room light.

"Kuno!"

"I will not talk to you," he answered, "until you come."

"Have you been on the surface of the earth since we spoke last?"

His image faded.

Again she consulted the book. She became very nervous and lay back in her chair palpitating. Think of her as without teeth or hair. Presently she directed the chair to the wall, and pressed an unfamiliar button. The wall swung apart slowly. Through the opening she saw a tunnel that curved slightly, so that its goal was not visible. Should she go to see her son, here was the beginning of the journey.

Of course she knew all about the communication-system. There was nothing mysterious in it. She would summon a car and it would fly with her down the tunnel until it reached the lift that communicated with the air-ship station: the system had been in use for many, many years, long before the universal establishment of the Machine. And of course she had studied the civilization that had immediately preceded her own—the civilization that had mistaken the functions of the system, and had used it for bringing people to things, instead of for bringing things to people. Those funny old days, when men went for change of air instead of changing the air in their rooms! And yet—she was frightened of the tunnel: she had not seen it since her last child was born. It curved—but not quite as she remembered; it was brilliant—but not quite as brilliant as a lecturer had suggested. Vashti was seized with the terrors of direct experience. She shrank back into the room, and the wall closed up again.

"Kuno," she said, "I cannot come to see you. I am not well."

Immediately an enormous apparatus fell on to her out of the ceiling, a thermometer was automatically inserted between her lips, a stethoscope was automatically laid upon her heart. She lay powerless. Cool pads soothed her forehead. Kuno had telegraphed to her doctor.

So the human passions still blundered up and down in the Machine. Vashti drank the medicine that the doctor projected into her mouth, and the

machinery retired into the ceiling. The voice of Kuno was heard asking how she felt.

"Better." Then with irritation: "But why do you not come to me instead?"

"Because I cannot leave this place."

"Why?"

"Because, any moment, something tremendous may happen."

"Have you been on the surface of the earth yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then what is it?"

"I will not tell you through the Machine."

She resumed her life.

But she thought of Kuno as a baby, his birth, his removal to the public nurseries, her one visit to him there, his visits to her—visits which stopped when the Machine had assigned him a room on the other side of the earth. "Parents, duties of," said the book of the Machine, "cease at the moment of birth. p. 422327483." True, but there was something special about Kuno—indeed there had been something special about all her children—and, after all, she must brave the journey if he desired it. And "something tremendous might happen." What did that mean? The nonsense of a youthful man, no doubt, but she must go. Again she pressed the unfamiliar button, again the wall swung back, and she saw the tunnel that curved out of sight. Clasping the Book, she rose, tottered on to the platform, and summoned the car. Her room closed behind her: the journey to the northern hemisphere had begun.

Of course it was perfectly easy. The car approached and in it she found arm-chairs exactly like her own. When she signaled, it stopped, and she tottered into the lift. One other passenger was in the lift, the first fellow creature she had seen face to face for months. Few traveled in these days, for, thanks to the advance of science, the earth was exactly alike all over. Rapid intercourse, from which the previous civilization had hoped so much, had ended by defeating itself. What was the good of going to Pekin when it was just like Shrewsbury? Why return to Shrewsbury when it would be just like Pekin? Men seldom moved their bodies; all unrest was concentrated in the soul.

The air-ship service was a relic from the former age. It was kept up, because it was easier to keep it up than to stop it or to diminish it, but it now far exceeded the wants of the population. Vessel after vessel would rise from the vomitories of Rye or of Christchurch (I use the antique names), would sail into the crowded sky, and would draw up at the wharves of the south—empty. So nicely adjusted was the system, so independent of meteorology, that the sky, whether calm or cloudy, resembled a vast kaleidoscope whereon the same patterns periodically recurred. The ship on which Vashti sailed started now at sunset, now at dawn. But always, as it passed above Rheims, it would neighbor the ship that served between Helsingfors and the Brazils, and, every third time it surmounted the Alps, the fleet of Palermo would cross its track behind. Night and day, wind and storm, tide and earthquake, impeded man no longer. He had harnessed Leviathan.[1] All the old literature, with its praise of Nature, and its fear of Nature, rang false as the prattle of a child.

Yet as Vashti saw the vast flank of the ship, stained with exposure to the outer air, her horror of direct experience returned. It was not quite like the air-ship in the cinematophote. For one thing it smelt—not strongly or unpleasantly, but it did smell, and with her eyes shut she should have known that a new thing was close to her. Then she had to walk to it from the lift, had to submit to glances from the other passengers. The man in front dropped his Book—no great matter, but it disquieted them all. In the rooms, if the Book was dropped, the floor raised it mechanically, but the gangway to the air-ship was not so prepared, and the sacred volume lay motionless. They stopped —the thing was unforeseen—and the man, instead of picking up his property, felt the muscles of his arm to see how they had failed him. Then some one actually said with direct utterance: "We shall be late"—and they trooped on board, Vashti treading on the pages as she did so.

Inside, her anxiety increased. The arrangements were old-fashioned and rough. There was even a female attendant, to whom she would have to announce her wants during the voyage. Of course a revolving platform ran the length of the boat, but she was expected to walk from it to her cabin. Some cabins were better than others, and she did not get the best. She thought the attendant had been unfair, and spasms of rage shook her. The glass valves had closed, she could not go back. She saw, at the end of the vestibule, the lift in which she had ascended going quietly up and down, empty. Beneath those corridors of shining tiles were rooms, tier below tier, reaching far into the earth, and in each room there sat a human being, eating, or sleeping, or producing ideas.

[1] an aquatic monster mentioned in several places in the Bible; hence, figuratively, anything huge and formidable.

And buried deep in the hive was her own room. Vashti was afraid.

"O Machine! O Machine!" she murmured, and caressed her Book, and was comforted.

Then the sides of the vestibule seemed to melt together, as do the passages that we see in dreams, the lift vanished, the Book that had been dropped slid to the left and vanished, polished tiles rushed by like a stream of water, there was a slight jar, and the air-ship, issuing from its tunnel, soared above the waters of a tropical ocean.

It was night. For a moment she saw the coast of Sumatra edged by the phosphorescence of waves, and crowned by lighthouses, still sending forth their disregarded beams. They also vanished, and only the stars distracted her. They were not motionless, but swayed to and fro above her head, thronging out of one skylight into another, as if the universe and not the air-ship was careening. And, as often happens on clear nights, they seemed now to be in perspective, now on a plane; now piled tier beyond tier into the infinite heavens, now concealing infinity, a roof limiting for ever the visions of men. In either case they seemed intolerable. "Are we to travel in the dark?" called the passengers angrily, and the attendant, who had been careless, generated the light, and pulled down the blinds of pliable metal. When the air-ships had been built, the desire to look direct at things still lingered in the world. Hence the extraordinary number of skylights and windows, and the proportionate discomfort to those who were civilized and refined. Even in Vashti's cabin one star peeped through a flaw in the blind, and after a few hours' uneasy slumber, she was disturbed by an unfamiliar glow, which was the dawn.

Quick as the ship had sped westwards, the earth had rolled eastwards quicker still, and had dragged back Vashti and her companions towards the sun. Science could prolong the night, but only for a little, and those high hopes of neutralizing the earth's diurnal revolution had passed, together with hopes that were possibly higher. To "keep pace with the sun," or even to outstrip it, had been the aim of the civilization preceding this. Racing aeroplanes had been built for the purpose, capable of enormous speed, and steered by the greatest intellects of the epoch. Round the globe they went, round and round, westward, westward, round and round, amidst humanity's applause. In vain. The globe went eastward quicker still, horrible accidents occurred, and the Committee of the Machine, at the time rising into prominence, declared the pursuit illegal, unmechanical, and punishable by Homelessness.

Of Homelessness more will be said later.

Doubtless the Committee was right. Yet the attempt to "defeat the sun" aroused the last common interest that our race experienced about the heavenly bodies, or indeed about anything. It was the last time that men were compacted by thinking of a power outside the world. The sun had conquered, yet it was the end of his spiritual dominion. Dawn, midday, twilight, the zodiacal path, touched neither men's lives nor their hearts, and science retreated into the ground, to concentrate herself upon problems that she was certain of solving.

So when Vashti found her cabin invaded by a rosy finger of light, she was annoyed, and tried to adjust the blind. But the blind flew up altogether, and she saw through the skylight small pink clouds, swaying against a background of blue, and as the sun crept higher, its radiance entered direct, brimming down the wall, like a golden sea. It rose and fell with the air-ship's motion, just as waves rise and fall, but it advanced steadily, as a tide advances. Unless she was careful, it would strike her face. A spasm of horror shook her and she rang for the attendant. The attendant too was horrified, but she could do nothing; it was not her place to mend the blind. She could only suggest that the lady should change her cabin, which she accordingly prepared to do.

People were almost exactly alike all over the world, but the attendant of the air-ship, perhaps owing to her exceptional duties, had grown a little out of the common. She had often to address passengers with direct speech, and this had given her a certain roughness and originality of manner. When Vashti swerved away from the sunbeams with a cry, she behaved barbarically—she put out her hand to steady her.

"How dare you!" exclaimed the passenger. "You forget yourself!"

The woman was confused, and apologized for not having let her fall. People never touched one another. The custom had become obsolete, owing to the Machine.

"Where are we now?" asked Vashti haughtily.

"We are over Asia," said the attendant, anxious to be polite.

"Asia?"

"You must excuse my common way of speaking. I have got into the habit of calling places over which I pass by their unmechanical names."

"Oh, I remember Asia. The Mongols came from it."

"Beneath us, in the open air, stood a city that was once called Simla."

"Have you ever heard of the Mongols and of the Brisbane school?"

"No."

"Brisbane also stood in the open air."

"Those mountains to the right—let me show you them." She pushed back a metal blind. The main chain of the Himalayas was revealed. "They were once called the Roof of the World, those mountains."

"What a foolish name!"

"You must remember that, before the dawn of civilization, they seemed to be an impenetrable wall that touched the stars. It was supposed that no one but the gods could exist above their summits. How we have advanced, thanks to the Machine!"

"How we have advanced, thanks to the Machine!" said Vashti.

"How we have advanced, thanks to the Machine!" echoed the passenger who had dropped his Book the night before, and who was standing in the passage.

"And that white stuff in the cracks?—what is it?"

"I have forgotten its name."

"Cover the window, please. These mountains give me no ideas."

The northern aspect of the Himalayas was in deep shadow: on the Indian slope the sun had just prevailed. The forests had been destroyed during the literature epoch for the purpose of making newspaper-pulp, but the snows were awakening to their morning glory, and clouds still hung on the breasts of Kinchinjunga. In the plain were seen the ruins of cities, with diminished rivers creeping by their walls, and by the sides of these were sometimes the signs of vomitories, marking the cities of today. Over the whole prospect air-ships rushed, crossing and intercrossing with incredible aplomb, and rising nonchalantly when they desired to escape the perturbations of the lower atmosphere and to traverse the Roof of the World.

"We have indeed advanced, thanks to the Machine," repeated the attendant, and hid the Himalayas behind a metal blind.

The day dragged wearily forward. The passengers sat each in his cabin, avoiding one another with an almost physical repulsion and longing to be once more under the surface of the earth. There were eight or ten of them, mostly young males, sent out from the public nurseries to inhabit the rooms of those who had died in various parts of the earth. The man who had dropped his Book was on the homeward journey. He had been sent to Sumatra for the purpose of propagating the race. Vashti alone was traveling by her private will.

At midday she took a second glance at the earth. The air-ship was crossing another range of mountains, but she could see little, owing to clouds. Masses of black rock hovered below her, and merged indistinctly into gray. Their shapes were fantastic; one of them resembled a prostrate man.

"No ideas here," murmured Vashti, and hid the Caucasus behind a metal blind.

In the evening she looked again. They were crossing a golden sea, in which lay many small islands and one peninsula.

She repeated, "No ideas here," and hid Greece behind a metal blind.

Part II

The Mending Apparatus

By a vestibule, by a lift, by a tubular railway, by a platform, by a sliding door—by reversing all the steps of her departure did Vashti arrive at her son's room, which exactly resembled her own. She might well declare that the visit was superfluous. The buttons, the knobs, the reading-desk with the Book, the temperature, the atmosphere, the illumination—all were exactly the same. And if Kuno himself, flesh of her flesh, stood close beside her at last, what profit was there in that? She was too well-bred to shake him by the hand.

Averting her eyes, she spoke as follows:

"Here I am. I have had the most terrible journey and greatly retarded the development of my soul. It is not worth it, Kuno, it is not worth it. My time is too precious. The sunlight almost touched me, and I have met with the rudest people. I can only stop a few minutes. Say what you want to say, and then I must return."

"I have been threatened with Homelessness," said Kuno.

She looked at him now.

"I have been threatened with Homelessness, and I could not tell you such a thing through the Machine."

Homelessness means death. The victim is exposed to the air, which kills him.

"I have been outside since I spoke to you last. The tremendous thing has happened, and they have discovered me."

"But why shouldn't you go outside!" she exclaimed. "It is perfectly legal, perfectly mechanical, to visit the surface of the earth. I have lately been to a lecture on the sea; there is no objection to that; one simply summons a respirator and gets an Egression-permit. It is not the kind of thing that spiritually-minded people do, and I begged you not to do it, but there is no legal objection to it."

"I did not get an Egression-permit."

"Then how did you get out?"

"I found out a way of my own."

The phrase conveyed no meaning to her, and he had to repeat it.

"A way of your own?" she whispered. "But that would be wrong."

"Why?"

The question shocked her beyond measure.

"You are beginning to worship the Machine," he said coldly. "You think it irreligious of me to have found out a way of my own. It was just what the Committee thought, when they threatened me with Homelessness."

At this she grew angry. "I worship nothing!" she cried. "I am most advanced. I don't think you irreligious, for there is no such thing as religion left. All the fear and the superstition that existed once have been destroyed by the Machine. I only meant that to find out a way of your own was—Besides, there is no new way out."

"So it is always supposed."

"Except through the vomitories, for which one must have an Egression-permit, it is impossible to get out. The Book says so."

"Well, the Book's wrong, for I have been out on my feet."

For Kuno was possessed of a certain physical strength.

By these days it was a demerit to be muscular. Each infant was examined at birth, and all who promised undue strength were destroyed. Humanitarians may protest, but it would have been no true kindness to let an athlete live; he would never have been happy in that state of life to which the Machine had called him; he would have yearned for trees to climb, rivers to bathe in, meadows and hills against which he might measure his body. Man must be adapted to his surroundings, must he not? In the dawn of the world our weakly must be exposed on Mount Taygetus, in its twilight our strong will suffer euthanasia, that the Machine may progress, that the Machine may progress, that the Machine may progress eternally.

"You know that we have lost the sense of space. We say 'space is annihilated,' but we have annihilated not space, but the sense thereof. We have lost a part of ourselves. I determined to recover it, and I began by walking up and down the platform of the railway outside my room. Up and down, until I was tired, and so did recapture the meaning of 'Near' and 'Far.' 'Near' is a place to which I can get quickly *on my feet*, not a place to which the train or the air-ship will take me quickly. 'Far' is a place to which I cannot get quickly on my feet; the vomitory is 'far,' though I could be there in thirty-eight seconds by summoning the train. Man is the measure. That was my first lesson. Man's feet are the measure for distance, his hands are the measure for ownership, his body is the measure for all that is lovable and desirable and strong. Then I went further: it was then that I called to you for the first time, and you would not come.

"This city, as you know, is built deep beneath the surface of the earth, with only the vomitories protruding. Having paced the platform outside my own room, I took the lift to the next platform and paced that also, and so with each in turn, until I came to the topmost, above which begins the earth. All the platforms were exactly alike, and all that I gained by visiting them was to develop my sense of space and my muscles. I think I should have been content with this—it is not a little thing—but as I walked and brooded, it occurred to me that our cities had been built in the days when men still breathed the outer air, and that there had been ventilation shafts for the workmen. I could think of nothing but these ventilation shafts. Had they been destroyed by all the food-tubes and medicine-tubes and music-tubes that the Machine has evolved lately? Or did traces of them remain? One thing was certain. If I came upon them anywhere, it would be in the railway-tunnels of the topmost story. Everywhere else, all space was accounted for.

"I am telling my story quickly, but don't think that I was not a coward or that your answers never depressed me. It is not the proper thing, it is not mechanical, it is not decent to walk along a railway-tunnel. I did not fear that I might tread upon a live rail and be killed. I feared something far more intangible—doing what was not contemplated by the Machine. Then I said to myself, 'Man

is the measure,' and I went, and after many visits I found an opening.

"The tunnels, of course, were lighted. Everything is light, artificial light; darkness is the exception. So when I saw a black gap in the tiles, I knew that it was an exception, and rejoiced. I put in my arm—I could put in no more at first—and waved it round and round in ecstasy. I loosened another tile, and put in my head, and shouted into the darkness: 'I am coming, I shall do it yet,' and my voice reverberated down endless passages. I seemed to hear the spirits of those dead workmen who had returned each evening to the starlight and to their wives, and all the generations who had lived in the open air called back to me, 'You will do it yet, you are coming.'"

He paused, and, absurd as he was, his last words moved her. For Kuno had lately asked to be a father, and his request had been refused by the Committee. His was not a type that the Machine desired to hand on.

"Then a train passed. It brushed by me, but I thrust my head and arms into the hole. I had done enough for one day, so I crawled back to the platform, went down in the lift, and summoned my bed. Ah, what dreams! And again I called you, and again you refused."

She shook her head and said:

"Don't. Don't talk of these terrible things. You make me miserable. You are throwing civilization away."

"But I had got back the sense of space and a man cannot rest then. I determined to get in at the hole and climb the shaft. And so I exercised my arms. Day after day I went through ridiculous movements, until my flesh ached, and I could hang by my hands and hold the pillow of my bed outstretched for many minutes. Then I summoned a respirator, and started.

It was easy at first. The mortar had somehow rotted, and I soon pushed some more tiles in, and clambered after them into the darkness, and the spirits of the dead comforted me. I don't know what I mean by that. I just say what I felt. I felt, for the first time, that a protest had been lodged against corruption, and that even as the dead were comforting me, so I was comforting the unborn. I felt that humanity existed, and that it existed without clothes. How can I possibly explain this? It was naked, humanity seemed naked, and all these tubes and buttons and machineries neither came into the world with us, nor will they follow us out, nor do they matter supremely while we are here. Had I been strong, I would have torn off every garment I had, and gone out into the outer air unswaddled. But this is not for me, nor perhaps for my generation. I climbed with my respirator and my hygienic clothes and my dietetic tabloids! Better thus than not at all.

"There was a ladder, made of some primeval metal. The light from the railway fell upon its lowest rungs, and I saw that it led straight upwards out of the rubble at the bottom of the shaft. Perhaps our ancestors ran up and down it a dozen times daily, in their building. As I climbed, the rough edges cut through my gloves so that my hands bled. The light helped me for a little, and then came darkness and, worse still, silence which pierced my ears like a sword. The Machine hums! Did you know that? Its hum penetrates our blood, and may even guide our thoughts. Who knows! I was getting beyond its power. Then I thought: 'This silence means that I am doing wrong.' But I heard voices in the silence, and again they strengthened me." He laughed. "I had need of them. The next moment I cracked my head against something."

She sighed.

"I had reached one of those pneumatic stoppers that defend us from the outer air. You may have noticed them on the air-ship. Pitch dark, my feet on the rungs of an invisible ladder, my hands cut; I cannot explain how I lived through this part, but the voices still comforted me, and I felt for fastenings. The stopper, I suppose, was about eight feet across. I passed my hand over it as far as I could reach. It was perfectly smooth. I felt it almost to the center. Not quite to the center, for my arm was too short. Then the voice said: 'Jump. It is worth it. There may be a handle in the center, and you may catch hold of it and so come to us your own way. And if there is no handle, so that you may fall and are dashed to pieces—it is still worth it: you will still come to us your own way.' So I jumped. There was a handle, and—"

He paused. Tears gathered in his mother's eyes. She knew that he was fated. If he did not die today he would die tomorrow. There was not room for such a person in the world. And with her pity disgust mingled. She was ashamed at having borne such a son, she who had always been so respectable and so full of ideas. Was he really the little boy to whom she had taught the use of his stops and buttons, and to whom she had given his first lessons in the Book? The very hair that

disfigured his lip showed that he was reverting to some savage type. On atavism the Machine can have no mercy.

"There was a handle, and I did catch it. I hung tranced over the darkness and heard the hum of these workings as the last whisper in a dying dream. All the things I had cared about and all the people I had spoken to through tubes appeared infinitely little. Meanwhile the handle revolved. My weight had set something in motion and I span slowly, and then—

"I cannot describe it. I was lying with my face to the sunshine. Blood poured from my nose and ears and I heard a tremendous roaring. The stopper, with me clinging to it, had simply been blown out of the earth, and the air that we make down here was escaping through the vent into the air above. It burst up like a fountain. I crawled back to it—for the upper air hurts—and, as it were, I took great sips from the edge. My respirator had flown goodness knows where, my clothes were torn. I just lay with my lips close to the hole, and I sipped until the bleeding stopped. You can imagine nothing so curious. This hollow in the grass—I will speak of it in a minute,—the sun shining into it, not brilliantly but through marbled clouds,—the peace, the nonchalance, the sense of space, and, brushing my cheek, the roaring fountain of our artificial air! Soon I spied my respirator, bobbing up and down in the current high above my head, and higher still were many air-ships. But no one ever looks out of air-ships, and in my case they could not have picked me up. There I was, stranded. The sun shone a little way down the shaft, and revealed the topmost rung of the ladder, but it was hopeless trying to reach it. I should either have been tossed up again by the escape, or else have fallen in, and died. I could only lie on the grass, sipping and sipping, and from time to time glancing around me.

"I knew that I was in Wessex, for I had taken care to go to a lecture on the subject before starting. Wessex lies above the room in which we are talking now. It was once an important state. Its kings held all the southern coast from the Andredswald to Cornwall, while the Wansdyke protected them on the north, running over the high ground. The lecturer was only concerned with the rise of Wessex, so I do not know how long it remained an international power, nor would the knowledge have assisted me. To tell the truth I could do nothing but laugh, during this part. There was I, with a pneumatic stopper by my side and a respirator bobbing over my head, imprisoned, all three of us, in a grass-grown hollow that was edged with fern."

Then he grew grave again.

"Lucky for me that it was a hollow. For the air began to fall back into it and to fill it as water fills a bowl. I could crawl about. Presently I stood. I breathed a mixture, in which the air that hurts predominated whenever I tried to climb the sides. This was not so bad. I had not lost my tabloids and remained ridiculously cheerful, and as for the Machine, I forgot about it altogether. My one aim now was to get to the top, where the ferns were, and to view whatever objects lay beyond.

"I rushed the slope. The new air was still too bitter for me and I came rolling back, after a momentary vision of something gray. The sun grew very feeble, and I remembered that he was in Scorpio—I had been to a lecture on that too. If the sun is in Scorpio and you are in Wessex, it means that you must be as quick as you can, or it will get too dark. (This is the first bit of useful information I have ever got from a lecture, and I expect it will be the last.) It made me try frantically to breathe the new air, and to advance as far as I dared out of my pond. The hollow filled so slowly. At times I though that the fountain played with less vigor. My respirator seemed to dance nearer the earth; the roar was decreasing."

He broke off.

"I don't think this is interesting you. The rest will interest you even less. There are no ideas in it, and I wish that I had not troubled you to come. We are too different, mother."

She told him to continue.

"It was evening before I climbed the bank. The sun had very nearly slipped out of the sky by this time, and I could not get a good view. You, who have just crossed the Roof of the World, will not want to hear an account of the little hills that I saw—low colorless hills. But to me they were living and the turf that covered them was a skin, under which their muscles rippled, and I felt that those hills had called with incalculable force to men in the past, and that men had loved them. Now they sleep—perhaps for ever. They commune with humanity in dreams. Happy the man, happy the woman, who awakes the hills of Wessex. For though they sleep, they will never die."

His voice rose passionately.

"Cannot you see, cannot all your lecturers see, that it is we who are dying, and that down here

the only thing that really lives is the Machine? We created the Machine, to do our will, but we cannot make it do our will now. It has robbed us of the sense of space and of the sense of touch, it has blurred every human relation and narrowed down love to a carnal act, it has paralyzed our bodies and our wills, and now it compels us to worship it. The Machine develops—but not on our lines. The Machine proceeds—but not to our goal. We only exist as the blood corpuscles that course through its arteries, and if it could work without us, it would let us die. Oh, I have no remedy—or, at least, only one—to tell men again and again that I have seen the hills of Wessex as Aelfrid[2] saw them when he overthrew the Danes.

"So the sun set. I forgot to mention that a belt of mist lay between my hill and other hills, and that it was the color of pearl."

He broke off for the second time.

"Go on," said his mother wearily.

He shook his head.

"Go on. Nothing that you say can distress me now. I am hardened."

"I had meant to tell you the rest, but I cannot: I know that I cannot: good-bye."

Vashti stood irresolute. All her nerves were tingling with his blasphemies. But she was also inquisitive.

"This is unfair," she complained. "You have called me across the world to hear your story, and hear it I will. Tell me—as briefly as possible, for this is a disastrous waste of time—tell me how you returned to civilization."

"Oh,—that!" he said, starting. "You would like to hear about civilization. Certainly. Had I got to where my respirator fell down?"

"No—but I understand everything now. You put on your respirator, and managed to walk along the surface of the earth to a vomitory, and there your conduct was reported to the Central Committee."

"By no means."

He passed his hand over his forehead, as if dispelling some strong impression. Then, resuming his narrative, he warmed to it again.

"My respirator fell about sunset. I had mentioned that the fountain seemed feebler, had I not?"

"Yes."

"About sunset, it let the respirator fall. As I said, I had entirely forgotten about the Machine, and I paid no great attention at the time, being occupied with other things. I had my pool of air, into which I could dip when the outer keenness became intolerable, and which would possibly remain for days, provided that no wind sprang up to disperse it. Not until it was too late, did I realize what the stoppage of the escape implied. You see—the gap in the tunnel had been mended; the Mending Apparatus, the Mending Apparatus, was after me.

"One other warning I had, but I neglected it. The sky at night was clearer than it had been in the day, and the moon, which was about half the sky behind the sun, shone into the dell at moments quite brightly. I was in my usual place—on the boundary between the two atmospheres—when I thought I saw something dark move across the bottom of the dell, and vanish into the shaft. In my folly, I ran down. I bent over and listened, and I thought I heard a faint scraping noise in the depths.

"At this—but it was too late—I took alarm. I determined to put on my respirator and to walk right out of the dell. But my respirator had gone. I knew exactly where it had fallen—between the stopper and the aperture—and I could even feel the mark that it had made in the turf. It had gone, and I realized that something evil was at work, and I had better escape to the other air, and, if I must die, die running towards the cloud that had been the color of a pearl. I never started. Out of the shaft—it is too horrible. A worm, a long white worm, had crawled out of the shaft and was gliding over the moonlit grass.

"I screamed. I did everything that I should not have done, I stamped upon the creature instead of flying from it, and it at once curled round the ankle. Then we fought. The worm let me run all over the dell, but edged up my leg as I ran. 'Help!' I cried. (That part is too awful. It belongs to the part that you will never know.) 'Help!' I cried. (Why cannot we suffer in silence?) 'Help!' I cried. Then my feet were wound together, I fell, I was dragged away from the dear ferns and the living hills, and past the great metal stopper (I can tell you this part), and I thought it might save me again if I caught hold of the handle. It also was enwrapped, it also. Oh, the whole dell was full of the things. They were searching it in all directions, they were denuding it, and the white snouts of others peeped out of the hole, ready if needed. Everything that could be moved they brought—brushwood, bundles of fern, everything, and down we all went intertwined into hell. The last things

[2] Alfred the Great (849-901), King of the West Saxons.

that I saw, ere the stopper closed after us, were certain stars, and I felt that a man of my sort lived in the sky. For I did fight, I fought till the very end, and it was only my head hitting against the ladder that quieted me. I woke up in this room. The worms had vanished. I was surrounded by artificial air, artificial light, artificial peace, and my friends were calling to me down speaking-tubes to know whether I had come across any new ideas lately."

Here his story ended. Discussion of it was impossible, and Vashti turned to go.

"It will end in Homelessness," she said quietly.

"I wish it would," retorted Kuno.

"The Machine has been most merciful."

"I prefer the mercy of God."

"By that superstitious phrase, do you mean that you could live in the outer air?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever seen, round the vomitories, the bones of those who were extruded after the Great Rebellion?"

"Yes."

"They were left where they perished for our edification. A few crawled away, but they perished, too—who can doubt it? And so with the Homeless of our own day. The surface of the earth supports life no longer."

"Indeed."

"Ferns and a little grass may survive, but all higher forms have perished. Has any air-ship detected them?"

"No."

"Has any lecturer dealt with them?"

"No."

"Then why this obstinacy?"

"Because I have seen them," he exploded.

"Seen *what*?"

"Because I have seen her in the twilight—because she came to my help when I called—because she, too, was entangled by the worms, and, luckier than I, was killed by one of them piercing her throat."

He was mad. Vashti departed, nor, in the troubles that followed, did she ever see his face again.

Part III

The Homeless

During the years that followed Kuno's escapade, two important developments took place in the Machine. On the surface they were revolutionary, but in either case men's minds had been prepared beforehand, and they did but express tendencies that were latent already.

The first of these was the abolition of respirators.

Advanced thinkers, like Vashti, had always held it foolish to visit the surface of the earth. Air-ships might be necessary, but what was the good of going out for mere curiosity and crawling along for a mile or two in a terrestrial motor? The habit was vulgar and perhaps faintly improper: it was unproductive of ideas, and had no connection with the habits that really mattered. So respirators were abolished, and with them, of course, the terrestrial motors, and except for a few lecturers, who complained that they were debarred access to their subject-matter, the development was accepted quietly. Those who still wanted to know what the earth was like had after all only to listen to some gramophone, or to look into some cinematophote. And even the lecturers acquiesced when they found that a lecture on the sea was none the less stimulating when compiled out of other lectures that had already been delivered on the same subject. "Beware of first-hand ideas!" exclaimed one of the most advanced of them. "First-hand ideas do not really exist. They are but the physical impressions produced by love and fear, and on this gross foundation who could erect a philosophy? Let your ideas be second-hand, and if possible tenth-hand, for then they will be far removed from that disturbing element—direct observation. Do not learn anything about this subject of mine—the French Revolution. Learn instead what I think that Enicharmon thought Urizen thought Gutch thought Ho-Yung thought Chi-Bo-Sing thought Lafcadio Hearn[3] thought Carlyle thought Mirabeau[4] said about the French Revolution. Through the medium of these eight great minds, the blood that was shed at Paris and the windows that were broken at Versailles will be clarified to an idea which you may employ most profitably in your daily lives. But be sure that the intermediates are many and varied, for in history one authority exists to counteract another. Urizen must counteract the skepticism of Ho-Yung and Enicharmon, I must myself counteract the impetuosity of Gutch. You who listen to me are in a better position to judge about the French Revolution than I am. Your descendants will be even in a better position than you, for they will learn what you think I think, and

[3] English-born writer (1850-1904), interpreter of Japan to the Western world.

[4] French revolutionary leader (1749-1791).

yet another intermediate will be added to the chain. And in time"—his voice rose—"there will come a generation that has got beyond facts, beyond impressions, a generation absolutely colorless, a generation

'seraphically free
From taint of personality,'

which will see the French Revolution not as it happened, nor as they would like it to have happened, but as it would have happened, had it taken place in the days of the Machine."

Tremendous applause greeted this lecture, which did but voice a feeling already latent in the minds of men—a feeling that terrestrial facts must be ignored, and that the abolition of respirators was a positive gain. It was even suggested that air-ships should be abolished too. This was not done, because air-ships had somehow worked themselves into the Machine's system. But year by year they were used less, and mentioned less by thoughtful men.

The second great development was the reëstablishment of religion.

This, too, had been voiced in the celebrated lecture. No one could mistake the reverent tone in which the peroration had concluded, and it awakened a responsive echo in the heart of each. Those who had long worshiped silently, now began to talk. They described the strange feeling of peace that came over them when they handled the Book of the Machine, the pleasure that it was to repeat certain numerals out of it, however little meaning those numerals conveyed to the outward ear, the ecstasy of touching a button, however unimportant, or of ringing an electric bell, however superfluously.

"The Machine," they exclaimed, "feeds us and clothes us and houses us; through it we speak to one another, through it we see one another, in it we have our being. The Machine is the friend of ideas and the enemy of superstition: the Machine is omnipotent, eternal; blessed is the Machine." And before long this allocution was printed on the first page of the Book, and in subsequent editions the ritual swelled into a complicated system of praise and prayer. The word "religion" was sedulously avoided, and in theory the Machine was still the creation and the implement of man. But in practice all, save a few retrogrades, worshiped it as divine. Nor was it worshiped in unity. One believer would be chiefly impressed by the blue optic plates, through which he saw other believers; another by the mending apparatus, which sinful Kuno had compared to worms; another by the lifts, another by the Book. And each would pray to this or to that, and ask it to intercede for him with the Machine as a whole. Persecution—that also was present. It did not break out, for reasons that will be set forward shortly. But it was latent, and all who did not accept the minimum known as "undenominational Mechanism" lived in danger of Homelessness, which means death, as we know.

To attribute these two great developments to the Central Committee, is to take a very narrow view of civilization. The Central Committee announced the developments, it is true, but they were no more the cause of them than were the kings of the imperialistic period the cause of war. Rather did they yield to some invincible pressure, which came no one knew whither, and which, when gratified, was succeeded by some new pressure equally invincible. To such a state of affairs it is convenient to give the name of progress. No one confessed the Machine was out of hand. Year by year it was served with increased efficiency and decreased intelligence. The better a man knew his own duties upon it, the less he understood the duties of his neighbor, and in all the world there was not one who understood the monster as a whole. Those master brains had perished. They had left full directions, it is true, and their successors had each of them mastered a portion of those directions. But Humanity, in its desire for comfort, had overreached itself. It had exploited the riches of nature too far. Quietly and complacently, it was sinking into decadence, and progress had come to mean the progress of the Machine.

As for Vashti, her life went peacefully forward until the final disaster. She made her room dark and slept; she awoke and made the room light. She lectured and attended lectures. She exchanged ideas with her innumerable friends and believed she was growing more spiritual. At times a friend was granted Euthanasia, and left his or her room for the homelessness that is beyond all human conception. Vashti did not much mind. After an unsuccessful lecture, she would sometimes ask for Euthanasia herself. But the death-rate was not permitted to exceed the birth-rate, and the Machine had hitherto refused it to her.

The troubles began quietly, long before she was conscious of them.

One day she was astonished at receiving a message from her son. They never communicated, having nothing in common, and she had only

heard indirectly that he was still alive, and had been transferred from the northern hemisphere, where he had behaved so mischievously, to the southern—indeed, to a room not far from her own.

"Does he want me to visit him?" she thought. "Never again, never. And I have not the time."

No, it was madness of another kind.

He refused to visualize his face upon the blue plate, and speaking out of the darkness with solemnity said:

"The Machine stops."

"What do you say?"

"The Machine is stopping, I know it, I know the signs."

She burst into a peal of laughter. He heard her and was angry, and they spoke no more.

"Can you imagine anything more absurd?" she cried to a friend. "A man who was my son believes that the Machine is stopping. It would be impious if it was not mad."

"The Machine is stopping?" her friend replied. "What does that mean? The phrase conveys nothing to me."

"Nor to me."

"He does not refer, I suppose, to the trouble there has been lately with the music?"

"Oh, no, of course not. Let us talk about music."

"Have you complained to the authorities?"

"Yes, and they say it wants mending, and referred me to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus. I complained of those curious gasping sighs that disfigure the symphonies of the Brisbane school. They sound like some one in pain. The Committee of the Mending Apparatus say that it shall be remedied shortly."

Obscurely worried, she resumed her life. For one thing, the defect in the music irritated her. For another thing, she could not forget Kuno's speech. If he had known that the music was out of repair—he could not know it, for he detested music—if he had known that it was wrong, "the Machine stops" was exactly the venomous sort of remark he would have made. Of course he had made it at a venture, but the coincidence annoyed her, and she spoke with some petulance to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus.

They replied, as before, that the defect would be set right shortly.

"Shortly! At once!" she retorted. "Why should I be worried by imperfect music? Things are always put right at once. If you do not mend it at once, I shall complain to the Central Committee."

"No personal complaints are received by the Central Committee," the Committee of the Mending Apparatus replied.

"Through whom am I to make my complaint, then?"

"Through us."

"I complain then."

"Your complaint shall be forwarded in its turn."

"Have others complained?"

This question was unmechanical, and the Committee of the Mending Apparatus refused to answer it.

"It is too bad!" she exclaimed to another of her friends. "There never was such an unfortunate woman as myself. I can never be sure of my music now. It gets worse and worse each time I summon it."

"I too have my troubles," the friend replied. "Sometimes my ideas are interrupted by a slight jarring noise."

"What is it?"

"I do not know whether it is inside my head, or inside the wall."

"Complain, in either case."

"I have complained, and my complaint will be forwarded in its turn to the Central Committee."

Time passed, and they resented the defects no longer. The defects had not been remedied, but the human tissues in that latter day had become so subservient, that they readily adapted themselves to every caprice of the Machine. The sigh at the crisis of the Brisbane symphony no longer irritated Vashti; she accepted it as part of the melody. The jarring noise, whether in the head or in the wall, was no longer resented by her friend. And so with the moldy artificial fruit, so with the bath water that began to stink, so with the defective rhymes that the poetry machine had taken to emit. All were bitterly complained of at first, and then acquiesced in and forgotten. Things went from bad to worse unchallenged.

It was otherwise with the failure of the sleeping apparatus. That was a more serious stoppage. There came a day when over the whole world—in Sumatra, in Wessex, in the innumerable cities of Courland[5] and Brazil—the beds, when summoned by their tired owners, failed to appear. It may seem a ludicrous matter, but from it we may date the collapse of humanity. The Committee responsible for the failure was assailed by complainants, whom it referred, as usual, to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus, who in its turn assured them that their complaints would be forwarded to

[5] Kurland, now part of Russia.

the Central Committee. But the discontent grew, for mankind was not yet sufficiently adaptable to do without sleeping.

"Some one is meddling with the Machine—" they began.

"Some one is trying to make himself king, to reintroduce the personal element."

"Punish that man with Homelessness."

"To the rescue! Avenge the Machine! Avenge the Machine!"

"War! Kill the man!"

But the Committee of the Mending Apparatus now came forward, and allayed the panic with well-chosen words. It confessed that the Mending Apparatus was itself in need of repair.

The effect of this frank confession was admirable.

"Of course," said a famous lecturer—he of the French Revolution, who gilded each new decay with splendor—"of course we shall not press our complaints now. The Mending Apparatus has treated us so well in the past that we all sympathize with it, and will wait patiently for its recovery. In its own good time it will resume its duties. Meanwhile let us do without our beds, our tabloids, our other little wants. Such, I feel sure, would be the wish of the Machine."

Thousands of miles away his audience applauded. The Machine still linked them. Under the seas, beneath the roots of the mountains, ran the wires through which they saw and heard, the enormous eyes and ears that were their heritage, and the hum of many workings clothed their thoughts in one garment of subserviency. Only the old and the sick remained ungrateful, for it was rumored that Euthanasia, too, was out of order, and that pain had reappeared among men.

It became difficult to read. A blight entered the atmosphere and dulled its luminosity. At times Vashti could scarcely see across her room. The air, too, was foul. Loud were the complaints, impotent the remedies, heroic the tone of the lecturer as he cried: "Courage, courage! What matter so long as the Machine goes on? To it the darkness and the light are one." And though things improved again after a time, the old brilliancy was never recaptured, and humanity never recovered from its entrance into twilight. There was an hysterical talk of "measures," of "provisional dictatorships," and the inhabitants of Sumatra were asked to familiarize themselves with the workings of the central power station, the said power station being situated in France. But for the most part panic reigned, and men spent their strength praying to their Books, tangible proofs of the Machine's omnipotence. There were gradations of terror—at times came rumors of hope—the Mending Apparatus was almost mended—the enemies of the Machine had been got under—new "nerve-centers" were evolving which would do the work even more magnificently than before. But there came a day when, without the slightest warning, without any previous hint of feebleness, the entire communication-system broke down, all over the world, and the world, as they understood it, ended.

Vashti was lecturing at the time and her earlier remarks had been punctuated with applause. As she proceeded the audience became silent, and at the conclusion there was no sound. Somewhat displeased, she called to a friend who was a specialist in sympathy. No sound: doubtless the friend was sleeping. And so with the next friend whom she tried to summon, and so with the next, until she remembered Kuno's cryptic remark, "The Machine stops."

The phrase still conveyed nothing. If Eternity was stopping it would of course be set going shortly.

For example, there was still a little light and air —the atmosphere had improved a few hours previously. There was still the Book, and while there was the Book there was security.

Then she broke down, for with the cessation of activity came an unexpected terror—silence.

She had never known silence, and the coming of it nearly killed her—it did kill many thousands of people outright. Ever since her birth she had been surrounded by the steady hum. It was to the ear what artificial air was to the lungs, and agonizing pains shot across her head. And scarcely knowing what she did, she stumbled forward and pressed the unfamiliar button, the one that opened the door of her cell.

Now the door of the cell worked on a simple hinge of its own. It was not connected with the central power station, dying far away in France. It opened, rousing immoderate hopes in Vashti, for she thought that the Machine had been mended. It opened, and she saw the dim tunnel that curved far away towards freedom. One look, and then she shrank back. For the tunnel was full of people—she was almost the last in that city to have taken alarm.

People at any time repelled her, and these were nightmares from her worst dreams. People were crawling about, people were screaming, whimpering, gasping for breath, touching each other, vanishing in the dark, and ever and anon being

pushed off the platform on to the live rail. Some were fighting round the electric bells, trying to summon trains which could not be summoned. Others were yelling for Euthanasia or for respirators, or blaspheming the Machine. Others stood at the doors of their cells fearing, like herself, either to stop in them or to leave them. And behind all the uproar was silence—the silence which is the voice of the earth and of the generations who have gone.

No—it was worse than solitude. She closed the door again and sat down to wait for the end. The disintegration went on, accompanied by horrible cracks and rumbling. The valves that restrained the Medical Apparatus must have been weakened, for it ruptured and hung hideously from the ceiling. The floor heaved and fell and flung her from her chair. A tube oozed towards her serpent fashion. And at last the final horror approached—light began to ebb, and she knew that civilization's long day was closing.

She whirled round, praying to be saved from this, at any rate, kissing the Book, pressing button after button. The uproar outside was increasing, and even penetrated the wall. Slowly the brilliancy of her cell was dimmed, the reflections faded from her metal switches. Now she could not see the reading-stand, now not the Book, though she held it in her hand. Light followed the flight of sound, air was following light, and the original void returned to the cavern from which it had been so long excluded. Vashti continued to whirl, like the devotees of an earlier religion, screaming, praying, striking at the buttons with bleeding hands.

It was thus that she opened her prison and escaped—escaped in the spirit: at least so it seems to me, ere my meditation closes. That she escapes in the body—I cannot perceive that. She struck, by chance, the switch that released the door, and the rush of foul air on her skin, the loud throbbing whispers in her ears, told her that she was facing the tunnel again, and that tremendous platform on which she had seen men fighting. They were not fighting now. Only the whispers remained, and the little whimpering groans. They were dying by hundreds out in the dark.

She burst into tears.

Tears answered her.

They wept for humanity, those two, not for themselves. They could not bear that this should be the end. Ere silence was completed their hearts were opened, and they knew what had been important on the earth. Man, the flower of all flesh, the noblest of all creatures visible, man who had once made god in his image, and had mirrored his strength on the constellations, beautiful naked man was dying, strangled in the garments that he had woven. Century after century had he toiled, and here was his reward. Truly the garment had seemed heavenly at first, shot with the colors of culture, sewn with the threads of self-denial. And heavenly it had been so long as it was a garment and no more, so long as man could shed it at will and live by the essence that is his soul, and the essence, equally divine, that is his body. The sin against the body—it was for that they wept in chief; the centuries of wrong against the muscles and the nerves, and those five portals by which we can alone apprehend—glozing it over with talk of evolution, until the body was white pap, the home of ideas as colorless, last sloshy stirrings of a spirit that had grasped the stars.

"Where are you?" she sobbed.

His voice in the darkness said, "Here."

"Is there any hope, Kuno?"

"None for us."

"Where are you?"

She crawled towards him over the bodies of the dead. His blood spurted over her hands.

"Quicker," he gasped, "I am dying—but we touch, we talk, not through the Machine."

He kissed her.

"We have come back to our own. We die, but we have recaptured life, as it was in Wessex, when Aelfrid overthrew the Danes. We know what they know outside, they who dwelt in the cloud that is the color of a pearl."

"But, Kuno, is it true? Are there still men on the surface of the earth? Is this—this tunnel, this poisoned darkness—really not the end?"

He replied:

"I have seen them, spoken to them, loved them. They are hiding in the mist and the ferns until our civilization stops. Today they are the Homeless—tomorrow—"

"Oh, tomorrow—some fool will start the Machine again, tomorrow."

"Never," said Kuno, "never. Humanity has learnt its lesson."

As he spoke, the whole city was broken like a honeycomb. An air-ship had sailed in through the vomitory into a ruined wharf. It crashed downwards, exploding as it went, rending gallery after gallery with its wings of steel. For a moment they saw the nations of the dead, and, before they joined them, scraps of the untainted sky.

(1928)

David Herbert Lawrence

(1884-1930)

Of books and articles which tell "the truth about D. H. Lawrence," there is no end. For a decade at least after his death they came from the presses in such a stream that the torrent of contradictions looked as if it might eventually rival the tantalizing saga of the Brontës.

A brief outline of Lawrence's tortured life helps to explain the phenomenon. He was born in a small mining town in Nottinghamshire. His father, an uncouth coal miner, helped to develop in the sensitive child an intense fixation for his mother, a tender and understanding ex-schoolteacher. At thirteen he won a scholarship at Nottingham High School and later went to Nottingham University College to obtain a teaching certificate. He taught for a while at an elementary school at Croyden, during which time he began to publish his first poems in the *English Review*. The death of his mother in 1910 affected him deeply. A year later, with the appearance of his first novel, *The White Peacock*, he abandoned teaching permanently to devote his life to writing. His reputation was established with his third novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913), the passionate story of his boyhood and young manhood dominated by his mother fixation. Although apparently written before he had read Freud, it is the most celebrated treatment of the Oedipus theme in modern English fiction.

Despite this temporary triumph, the war years were years of poverty and persecution. Although physically and psychologically unfit for service, Lawrence was nonetheless revolted by the conflict. His marriage in 1914 to a German divorcée made him the target of self-appointed secret agents. His novel, *The Rainbow* (1915), was attacked as filth and withdrawn from circulation; and he could not find a publisher for his next book, *Women In Love*, until 1920. Although he tried to flee from the country which he had grown to hate, he was not allowed to leave until 1919. The last decade of his life was a continuous flight from civilization: he wandered restlessly—to Italy, Sicily, Germany, Sardinia, Ceylon, Australia, New Mexico, Mexico, and back to Italy and the south of France—in search of a primitive society which would not alienate his rebellious soul. He came closest to his Utopia among the Indians of New Mexico, about whom he wrote his exotic novel, *The Plumed Serpent* (1926).

Lawrence has been both pilloried as a pornographer and lauded as the prophet of a new freedom. To readers who would discard him as a mere purveyor of smut, his admirers answer that he was a conscientious reformer who deplored the Victorian hypocrisy about sex; a serious student of psychology, as revealed in his *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) and reflected throughout his self-revealing fiction; and a devout believer in the philosophy that man can find himself only by putting his faith in the "phallic consciousness as against the irritable cerebral consciousness."

Without becoming entangled in the dilemma of whether such a book as the notorious *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) is the battle cry of a new ethic or an irresponsible aphrodisiac, many readers have found Lawrence to be an arresting nature poet—as in *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* (1923) or in incidental passages throughout his prose—and a powerful storyteller. *The Prussian Officer* (1914), one of his best known short stories, shows that when he was not writing about love, he could write with equal conviction about hate.

The Prussian Officer

I

They had marched more than thirty kilometers since dawn, along the white, hot road where occasional thickets of trees threw a moment of shade, then out into the glare again. On either hand, the valley, wide and shallow, glittered with heat; dark green patches of rye, pale young corn, fallow and meadow and black pine woods spread in a dull, hot diagram under a glistening sky. But right in front the mountains ranged across, pale blue and very still, snow gleaming gently out of the deep atmosphere. And towards the mountains, on and on, the regiment marched between the rye fields and the meadows, between the scraggy fruit trees set regularly on either side the high road. The burnished, dark green rye threw off a suffocating heat, the mountains drew gradually nearer and more distinct. While the feet of the soldiers grew hotter, sweat ran through their hair under their helmets, and their knapsacks could burn no more in contact with their shoulders, but seemed instead to give off a cold, prickly sensation.

He walked on and on in silence, staring at the mountains ahead, that rose sheer out of the land, and stood fold behind fold, half earth, half heaven, the heaven, the barrier with slits of soft snow, in the pale, bluish peaks.

He could now walk almost without pain. At the start, he had determined not to limp. It had made him sick to take the first steps, and during the first mile or so, he had compressed his breath, and the cold drops of sweat had stood on his forehead. But he had walked it off. What were they after all but bruises! He had looked at them, as he was getting up: deep bruises on the backs of his thighs. And since he had made his first step in the morning, he had been conscious of them, till now he had a tight, hot place in his chest, with suppressing the pain, and holding himself in. There seemed no air when he breathed. But he walked almost lightly.

The Captain's hand had trembled at taking his coffee at dawn: his orderly saw it again. And he saw the fine figure of the Captain wheeling on horseback at the farmhouse ahead, a handsome figure in pale blue uniform with facings of scarlet, and the metal gleaming on the black helmet and the sword-scabbard, and dark streaks of sweat coming on the silky bay horse. The orderly felt he was connected with that figure moving so suddenly on horseback: he followed it like a shadow, mute and inevitable and damned by it. And the officer was always aware of the tramp of the company behind, the march of his orderly among the men.

The Captain was a tall man of about forty, gray at the temples. He had a handsome, finely knit figure, and was one of the best horsemen in the West. His orderly, having to rub him down, admired the amazing riding muscles of his loins.

For the rest, the orderly scarcely noticed the officer any more than he noticed himself. It was rarely he saw his master's face: he did not look at it. The Captain had reddish-brown, stiff hair, that he wore short upon his skull. His mustache was also cut short and bristly over a full, brutal mouth. His face was rather rugged, the cheeks thin. Perhaps the man was the more handsome for the deep lines in his face, the irritable tension of his brow, which gave him the look of a man who fights with life. His fair eyebrows stood bushy over light blue eyes that were always flashing with cold fire.

He was a Prussian aristocrat, haughty and overbearing. But his mother had been a Polish Countess. Having made too many gambling debts when he was young, he had ruined his prospects in the Army, and remained an infantry captain. He had never married: his position did not allow of it, and no woman had ever moved him to it. His time he spent riding—occasionally he rode one of his own horses at the races—and at the officers' club. Now and then he took himself a mistress. But after such an event, he returned to duty with his brow still more tense, his eyes still more hostile and irritable. With the men, however, he was merely impersonal, though a devil when roused; so that, on the whole, they feared him, but had no great aversion from him. They accepted him as the inevitable.

To his orderly he was at first cold and just and indifferent: he did not fuss over trifles. So that his servant knew practically nothing about him, except just what orders he would give, and how he wanted them obeyed. That was quite simple. Then the change gradually came.

The orderly was a youth of about twenty-two, of medium height, and well built. He had strong, heavy limbs, was swarthy, with a soft, black, young mustache. There was something altogether warm and young about him. He had firmly marked eyebrows over dark, expressionless eyes, that seemed never to have thought, only to have received life direct through his senses, and acted straight from instinct.

Gradually the officer had become aware of his servant's young, vigorous, unconscious presence about him. He could not get away from the sense of the youth's person, while he was in attendance. It was like a warm flame upon the older man's tense, rigid body, that had become almost unliving, fixed. There was something so free and self-contained about him, and something in the young fellow's movement, that made the officer aware of him. And this irritated the Prussian. He did not choose to be touched into life by his servant. He might easily have changed his man, but he did not. He now very rarely looked direct at his orderly, but kept his face averted, as if to avoid seeing him. And yet as the young soldier moved unthinking about the apartment, the elder watched him, and would notice the movement of his strong young shoulders under the blue cloth, the bend of his neck. And it irritated him. To see the soldier's young, brown, shapely peasant's hand grasp the loaf or the wine-bottle sent a flash of hate or of anger through the elder man's blood. It was not that the youth was clumsy: it was rather the blind, instinctive sureness of movement of an unhampered young animal that irritated the officer to such a degree.

Once, when a bottle of wine had gone over, and the red gushed out on to the tablecloth, the officer had started up with an oath, and his eyes, bluey like fire, had held those of the confused youth for a moment. It was a shock for the young soldier. He felt something sink deeper, deeper into his soul, where nothing had ever gone before. It left him rather blank and wondering. Some of his natural completeness in himself was gone, a little uneasiness took its place. And from that time an undiscovered feeling had held between the two men.

Henceforward the orderly was afraid of really meeting his master. His subconsciousness remembered those steely blue eyes and the harsh brows, and did not intend to meet them again. So he always stared past his master, and avoided him. Also, in a little anxiety, he waited for the three months to have gone, when his time would be up. He began to feel a constraint in the Captain's presence, and the soldier even more than the officer wanted to be left alone, in his neutrality as servant.

He had served the Captain for more than a year, and knew his duty. This he performed easily, as if it were natural to him. The officer and his commands he took for granted, as he took the sun and the rain, and he served as a matter of course. It did not implicate him personally.

But now if he were going to be forced into a personal interchange with his master he would be like a wild thing caught; he felt he must get away.

But the influence of the young soldier's being had penetrated through the officer's stiffened discipline, and perturbed the man in him. He, however, was a gentleman, with long, fine hands and cultivated movements, and was not going to allow such a thing as the stirring of his innate self. He was a man of passionate temper, who had always kept himself suppressed. Occasionally there had been a duel, an outburst before the soldiers. He knew himself to be always on the point of breaking out. But he kept himself hard to the idea of the Service. Whereas the young soldier seemed to live out his warm, full nature, to give it off in his very movements, which had a certain zest, such as wild animals have in free movement. And this irritated the officer more and more.

In spite of himself, the Captain could not regain his neutrality of feeling towards his orderly. Nor could he leave the man alone. In spite of himself, he watched him, gave him sharp orders, tried to take up as much of his time as possible. Sometimes he flew into a rage with the young soldier, and bullied him. Then the orderly shut himself off, as it were out of earshot, and waited, with sullen, flushed face, for the end of the noise. The words never pierced to his intelligence. He made himself, protectively, impervious to the feelings of his master.

He had a scar on his left thumb, a deep seam going across the knuckle. The officer had long suffered from it, and wanted to do something to it. Still it was there, ugly and brutal on the young, brown hand. At last the Captain's reserve gave way. One day, as the orderly was smoothing out the tablecloth, the officer pinned down his thumb with a pencil, asking:

"How did you come by that?"

The young man winced and drew back at attention.

"A wood ax, Herr Hauptmann," he answered.

The officer waited for further explanation. None came. The orderly went about his duties. The elder man was sullenly angry. His servant avoided him. And the next day he had to use all his will power to avoid seeing the scarred thumb. He wanted to get hold of it and—A hot flame ran in his blood.

He knew his servant would soon be free, and would be glad. As yet, the soldier had held him-

self off from the elder man. The Captain grew madly irritable. He could not rest when the soldier was away, and when he was present, he glared at him with tormented eyes. He hated those fine, black brows over the unmeaning, dark eyes, he was infuriated by the free movement of the handsome limbs, which no military discipline could make stiff. And he became harsh and cruelly bullying, using contempt and satire. The young soldier only grew more mute and expressionless.

"What cattle were you bred by, that you can't keep straight eyes? Look me in the eyes when I speak to you."

And the soldier turned his dark eyes to the other's face, but there was no sight in them: he stared with the slightest possible cast, holding back his sight, perceiving the blue of his master's eyes, but receiving no look from them. And the elder man went pale, and his reddish eyebrows twitched. He gave his order, barrenly.

Once he flung a heavy military glove into the young soldier's face. Then he had the satisfaction of seeing the black eyes flare up into his own, like a blaze when straw is thrown on a fire. And he had laughed with a little tremor and a sneer.

But there were only two months more. The youth instinctively tried to keep himself intact: he tried to serve the officer as if the latter were an abstract authority and not a man. All his instinct was to avoid personal contact, even definite hate. But in spite of himself the hate grew, responsive to the officer's passion. However, he put it in the background. When he had left the Army he could dare acknowledge it. By nature he was active, and had many friends. He thought what amazing good fellows they were. But, without knowing it, he was alone. Now this solitariness was intensified. It would carry him through his term. But the officer seemed to be going irritably insane, and the youth was deeply frightened.

The soldier had a sweetheart, a girl from the mountains, independent and primitive. The two walked together, rather silently. He went with her, not to talk, but to have his arm round her, and for the physical contact. This eased him, made it easier for him to ignore the Captain; for he could rest with her held fast against his chest. And she, in some unspoken fashion, was there for him. They loved each other.

The Captain perceived it, and was mad with irritation. He kept the young man engaged all the evenings long, and took pleasure in the dark look that came on his face. Occasionally, the eyes of the two men met, those of the younger sullen and dark, doggedly unalterable, those of the elder sneering with restless contempt.

The officer tried hard not to admit the passion that had got hold of him. He would not know that his feeling for his orderly was anything but that of a man incensed by his stupid, perverse servant. So, keeping quite justified and conventional in his consciousness, he let the other thing run on. His nerves, however, were suffering. At last he slung the end of a belt in his servant's face. When he saw the youth start back, the pain-tears in his eyes and the blood on his mouth, he had felt at once a thrill of deep pleasure and of shame.

But this, he acknowledged to himself, was a thing he had never done before. The fellow was too exasperating. His own nerves must be going to pieces. He went away for some days with a woman.

It was a mockery of pleasure. He simply did not want the woman. But he stayed on for his time. At the end of it, he came back in an agony of irritation, torment, and misery. He rode all the evening, then came straight in to supper. His orderly was out. The officer sat with his long, fine hands lying on the table, perfectly still, and all his blood seemed to be corroding.

At last his servant entered. He watched the strong, easy young figure, the fine eyebrows, the thick black hair. In a week's time the youth had got back his old well-being. The hands of the officer twitched and seemed to be full of mad flame. The young man stood at attention, unmoving, shut off.

The meal went in silence. But the orderly seemed eager. He made a clatter with the dishes.

"Are you in a hurry?" asked the officer, watching the intent, warm face of his servant. The other did not reply.

"Will you answer my question?" said the Captain.

"Yes, sir," replied the orderly, standing with his pile of deep Army plates. The Captain waited, looked at him, then asked again:

"Are you in a hurry?"

"Yes, sir," came the answer, that sent a flash through the listener.

"For what?"

"I was going out, sir."

"I want you this evening."

There was a moment's hesitation. The officer had a curious stiffness of countenance.

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, in his throat.

"I want you to-morrow evening also—in fact, you may consider your evenings occupied, unless I give you leave."

The mouth with the young mustache set close.

"Yes, sir," answered the orderly, loosening his lips for a moment.

He again turned to the door.

"And why have you a piece of pencil in your ear?"

The orderly hesitated, then continued on his way without answering. He set the plates in a pile outside the door, took the stump of pencil from his ear, and put it in his pocket. He had been copying a verse for his sweetheart's birthday card. He returned to finish clearing the table. The officer's eyes were dancing, he had a little, eager smile.

"Why have you a piece of pencil in your ear?" he asked.

The orderly took his hands full of dishes. His master was standing near the great green stove, a little smile on his face, his chin thrust forward. When the young soldier saw him his heart suddenly ran hot. He felt blind. Instead of answering, he turned dazedly to the door. As he was crouching to set down the dishes, he was pitched forward by a kick from behind. The pots went in a stream down the stairs, he clung to the pillar of the banisters. And as he was rising he was kicked heavily again, and again, so that he clung sickly to the post for some moments. His master had gone swiftly into the room and closed the door. The maid-servant downstairs looked up the staircase and made a mocking face at the crockery disaster.

The officer's heart was plunging. He poured himself a glass of wine, part of which he spilled on the floor, and gulped the remainder, leaning against the cool, green stove. He heard his man collecting the dishes from the stairs. Pale, as if intoxicated, he waited. The servant entered again. The Captain's heart gave a pang, as of pleasure, seeing the young fellow bewildered and uncertain on his feet, with pain.

"Schöner!" he said.

The soldier was a little slower in coming to attention.

"Yes, sir!"

The youth stood before him, with pathetic young mustache, and fine eyebrows very distinct on his forehead of dark marble.

"I asked you a question."

"Yes, sir."

The officer's tone bit like acid.

"Why had you a pencil in your ear?"

Again the servant's heart ran hot, and he could not breathe. With dark, strained eyes, he looked at the officer, as if fascinated. And he stood there sturdily planted, unconscious. The withering smile came into the Captain's eyes, and he lifted his foot.

"I—I forgot it—sir," panted the soldier, his dark eyes fixed on the other man's dancing blue ones.

"What was it doing there?"

He saw the young man's breast heaving as he made an effort for words.

"I had been writing."

"Writing what?"

Again the soldier looked him up and down. The officer could hear him panting. The smile came into the blue eyes. The soldier worked his dry throat, but could not speak. Suddenly the smile lit like a flame on the officer's face, and a kick came heavily against the orderly's thigh. The youth moved a pace sideways. His face went dead, with two black, staring eyes.

"Well?" said the officer.

The orderly's mouth had gone dry, and his tongue rubbed in it as on dry brown-paper. He worked his throat. The officer raised his foot. The servant went stiff.

"Some poetry, sir," came the crackling, unrecognizable sound of his voice.

"Poetry, what poetry?" asked the Captain with a sickly smile.

Again there was the working in the throat. The Captain's heart had suddenly gone down heavily, and he stood sick and tired.

"For my girl, sir," he heard the dry, inhuman sound.

"Oh!" he said, turning away. "Clear the table."

"Click!" went the soldier's throat; then again, "click!" and then the half-articulate:

"Yes, sir."

The young soldier was gone, looking old, and walking heavily.

The officer, left alone, held himself rigid, to prevent himself from thinking. His instinct warned him that he must not think. Deep inside him was the intense gratification of his passion, still working powerfully. Then there was a counter-action, a horrible breaking down of something inside him, a whole agony of reaction. He stood there for an hour motionless, a chaos of sensations, but rigid with a will to keep blank his consciousness, to prevent his mind grasping. And

he held himself so until the worst of the stress had passed, when he began to drink, drank himself to an intoxication, till he slept obliterated. When he woke in the morning he was shaken to the base of his nature. But he had fought off the realization of what he had done. He had prevented his mind from taking it in, had suppressed it along with his instincts, and the conscious man had nothing to do with it. He felt only as after a bout of intoxication, weak, but the affair itself all dim and not to be recovered. Of the drunkenness of his passion he successfully refused remembrance. And when his orderly appeared with coffee, the officer assumed the same self he had had the morning before. He refused the event of the past night—denied it had ever been—and was successful in his denial. He had not done any such thing—not he himself. Whatever there might be lay at the door of a stupid, insubordinate servant.

The orderly had gone about in a stupor all the evening. He drank some beer because he was parched, but not much, the alcohol made his feeling come back, and he could not bear it. He was dulled, as if nine-tenths of the ordinary man in him were inert. He crawled about disfigured. Still, when he thought of the kicks, he went sick, and when he thought of the threat of more kicking, in the room afterwards, his heart went hot and faint, and he panted, remembered the one that had come. He had been forced to say, "For my girl." He was much too done even to want to cry. His mouth hung slightly open, like an idiot's. He felt vacant, and wasted. So, he wandered at his work, painfully, and very slowly and clumsily, fumbling blindly with the brushes, and finding it difficult, when he sat down, to summon the energy to move again. His limbs, his jaw, were slack and nerveless. But he was very tired. He got to bed at last, and slept inert, relaxed, in a sleep that was rather stupor than slumber, a dead night of stupefaction shot through with gleams of anguish.

In the morning were the maneuvers. But he woke even before the bugle sounded. The painful ache in his chest, the dryness of his throat, the awful steady feeling of misery made his eyes come awake and dreary at once. He knew, without thinking, what had happened. And he knew that the day had come again, when he must go on with his round. The last bit of darkness was being pushed out of the room. He would have to move his inert body and go on. He was so young, and had known so little trouble, that he was bewildered. He only wished it would stay night, so that he could lie still, covered up by the darkness. And yet nothing would prevent the day from coming, nothing would save him from having to get up and saddle the Captain's horse, and make the Captain's coffee. It was there, inevitable. And then, he thought, it was impossible. Yet they would not leave him free. He must go and take the coffee to the Captain. He was too stunned to understand it. He only knew it was inevitable—inevitable, however long he lay inert.

At last, after heaving at himself, for he seemed to be a mass of inertia, he got up. But he had to force every one of his movements from behind, with his will. He felt lost, and dazed, and helpless. Then he clutched hold of the bed, the pain was so keen. And looking at his thighs, he saw the darker bruises on his swarthy flesh and he knew that, if he pressed one of his fingers on one of the bruises, he should faint. But he did not want to faint—he did not want anybody to know. No one should ever know. It was between him and the Captain. There were only the two people in the world now—himself and the Captain.

Slowly, economically, he got dressed and forced himself to walk. Everything was obscure, except just what he had his hands on. But he managed to get through his work. The very pain revived his dull senses. The worst remained yet. He took the tray and went up to the Captain's room. The officer, pale and heavy, sat at the table. The orderly, as he saluted, felt himself put out of existence. He stood still for a moment submitting to his own nullification—then he gathered himself, seemed to regain himself, and then the Captain began to grow vague, unreal, and the younger soldier's heart beat up. He clung to this situation—that the Captain did not exist—so that he himself might live. But when he saw his officer's hand tremble as he took the coffee, he felt everything falling shattered. And he went away, feeling as if he himself were coming to pieces, disintegrated. And when the Captain was there on horseback, giving orders, while he himself stood, with rifle and knapsack, sick with pain, he felt as if he must shut his eyes—as if he must shut his eyes on everything. It was only the long agony of marching with a parched throat that filled him with one single, sleep-heavy intention: to save himself.

II

He was getting used even to his parched throat. That the snowy peaks were radiant among the sky, that the whity-green glacier-river twisted through

its pale shoals, in the valley below, seemed almost supernatural. But he was going mad with fever and thirst. He plodded on uncomplaining. He did not want to speak, not to anybody. There were two gulls, like flakes of water and snow, over the river. The scent of green rye soaked in sunshine came like a sickness. And the march continued, monotonously, almost like a bad sleep.

At the next farmhouse, which stood low and broad near the high road, tubs of water had been put out. The soldiers clustered round to drink. They took off their helmets, and the steam mounted from their wet hair. The Captain sat on horseback, watching. He needed to see his orderly. His helmet threw a dark shadow over his light, fierce eyes, but his mustache and mouth and chin were distinct in the sunshine. The orderly must move under the presence of the figure of the horseman. It was not that he was afraid, or cowed. It was as if he were disemboweled, made empty, like an empty shell. He felt himself as nothing, a shadow creeping under the sunshine. And, thirsty as he was, he could scarcely drink, feeling the Captain near him. He would not take off his helmet to wipe his wet hair. He wanted to stay in shadow, not to be forced into consciousness. Starting, he saw the light heel of the officer prick the belly of the horse; the Captain cantered away, and he himself could relapse into vacancy.

Nothing, however, could give him back his living place in the hot, bright morning. He felt like a gap among it all. Whereas the Captain was prouder, overriding. A hot flash went through the young servant's body. The Captain was firmer and prouder with life, he himself was empty as a shadow. Again the flash went through him, dazing him out. But his heart ran a little firmer.

The company turned up the hill, to make a loop for the return. Below, from among the trees, the farm-bell clanged. He saw the laborers, mowing barefoot at the thick grass, leave off their work and go downhill, their scythes hanging over their shoulders, like long, bright claws curving down behind them. They seemed like dream-people, as if they had no relation to himself. He felt as in a blackish dream: as if all the other things were there and had form, but he himself was only a consciousness, a gap that could think and perceive.

The soldiers were tramping silently up the glaring hillside. Gradually his head began to revolve, slowly, rhythmically. Sometimes it was dark before his eyes, as if he saw this world through a smoked glass, frail shadows and unreal. It gave him a pain in his head to walk.

The air was too scented, it gave no breath. All the lush green-stuff seemed to be issuing its sap, till the air was deathly, sickly with the smell of greenness. There was the perfume of clover, like pure honey and bees. Then there grew a faint acrid tang—they were near the beeches; and then a queer clattering noise, and a suffocating, hideous smell; they were passing a flock of sheep, a shepherd in a black smock, holding his crook. Why should the sheep huddle together under this fierce sun? He felt that the shepherd would not see him, though he could see the shepherd.

At last there was the halt. They stacked rifles in a conical stack, put down their kit in a scattered circle around it, and dispersed a little, sitting on a small knoll high on the hillside. The chatter began. The soldiers were steaming with heat, but were lively. He sat still, seeing the blue mountains rising upon the land, twenty kilometers away. There was a blue fold in the ranges, then out of that, at the foot, the broad, pale bed of the river, stretches of whity-green water between pinkish-gray shoals among the dark pine woods. There it was, spread out a long way off. And it seemed to come downhill, the river. There was a raft being steered, a mile away. It was a strange country. Nearer, a red-roofed, broad farm with white base and square dots of windows crouched beside the wall of beech foliage on the wood's edge. There were long strips of rye and clover and pale green corn. And just at his feet, below the knoll, was a darkish bog, where globe flowers stood breathless still on their slim stalks. And some of the pale gold bubbles were burst, and a broken fragment hung in the air. He thought he was going to sleep.

Suddenly something moved into this colored mirage before his eyes. The Captain, a small, light-blue and scarlet figure, was trotting evenly between the strips of corn, along the level brow of the hill. And the man making flag-signals was coming on. Proud and sure moved the horseman's figure, the quick, bright thing, in which was concentrated all the light of this morning, which for the rest lay a fragile, shining shadow. Submissive, apathetic, the young soldier sat and stared. But as the horse slowed to a walk, coming up the last steep path, the great flash flared over the body and soul of the orderly. He sat waiting. The back of his head felt as if it were weighted with a heavy piece of fire. He did not want to eat. His hands trembled slightly as he moved them. Meanwhile the officer

on horseback was approaching slowly and proudly. The tension grew in the orderly's soul. Then again, seeing the Captain ease himself on the saddle, the flash blazed through him.

The Captain looked at the patch of light blue and scarlet, and dark heads, scattered closely on the hillside. It pleased him. The command pleased him. And he was feeling proud. His orderly was among them in common subjection. The officer rose a little on his stirrups to look. The young soldier sat with averted, dumb face. The Captain relaxed on his seat. His slim-legged, beautiful horse, brown as a beech nut, walked proudly uphill. The Captain passed into the zone of the company's atmosphere: a hot smell of men, of sweat, of leather. He knew it very well. After a word with the lieutenant, he went a few paces higher, and sat there, a dominant figure, his sweat-marked horse swishing its tail, while he looked down on his men, on his orderly, a nonentity among the crowd.

The young soldier's heart was like fire in his chest, and he breathed with difficulty. The officer, looking downhill, saw three of the young soldiers, two pails of water between them, staggering across a sunny green field. A table had been set up under a tree, and there the slim lieutenant stood, importantly busy. Then the Captain summoned himself to an act of courage. He called his orderly.

The flame leapt into the young soldier's throat as he heard the command, and he rose blindly, stifled. He saluted, standing below the officer. He did not look up. But there was the flicker in the Captain's voice.

"Go to the inn and fetch me . . ." the officer gave his commands. "Quick!" he added.

At the last word, the heart of the servant leapt with a flash, and he felt the strength come over his body. But he turned in mechanical obedience, and set off at a heavy run downhill, looking almost like a bear, his trousers bagging over his military boots. And the officer watched this blind, plunging run all the way.

But it was only the outside of the orderly's body that was obeying so humbly and mechanically. Inside had gradually accumulated a core into which all the energy of that young life was compact and concentrated. He executed his commission, and plodded quickly back uphill. There was a pain in his head, as he walked, that made him twist his features unknowingly. But hard there in the center of his chest was himself, himself, firm, and not to be plucked to pieces.

The Captain had gone up into the wood. The orderly plodded through the hot, powerfully smelling zone of the company's atmosphere. He had a curious mass of energy inside him now. The Captain was less real than himself. He approached the green entrance to the wood. There, in the half-shade, he saw the horse standing, the sunshine and the flickering shadow of leaves dancing over his brown body. There was a clearing where timber had lately been felled. Here, in the gold-green shade beside the brilliant cup of sunshine, stood two figures, blue and pink, the bits of pink showing out plainly. The Captain was talking to his lieutenant.

The orderly stood on the edge of the bright clearing, where great trunks of trees, stripped and glistening, lay stretched like naked, brown-skinned bodies. Chips of wood littered the trampled floor, like splashed light, and the bases of the felled trees stood here and there, with their raw, level tops. Beyond was the brilliant, sunlit green of a beech

"Then I will ride forward," the orderly heard his Captain say. The lieutenant saluted and strode away. He himself went forward. A hot flash passed through his belly, as he tramped towards his officer.

The Captain watched the rather heavy figure of the young soldier stumble forward, and his veins, too, ran hot. This was to be man to man between them. He yielded before the solid, stumbling figure with bent head. The orderly stooped and put the food on a level-sawn tree-base. The Captain watched the glistening, sun-inflamed, naked hands. He wanted to speak to the young soldier, but could not. The servant propped a bottle against his thigh, pressed open the cork, and poured out the beer into the mug. He kept his head bent. The Captain accepted the mug.

"Hot!" he said, as if amiably.

The flame sprang out of the orderly's heart, nearly suffocating him.

"Yes, sir," he replied, between shut teeth.

And he heard the sound of the Captain's drinking, and he clenched his fists, such a strong torment came into his wrists. Then came the faint clang of the closing of the pot-lid. He looked up. The Captain was watching him. He glanced swiftly away. Then he saw the officer stoop and take a piece of bread from the tree-base. Again the flash of flame went through the young soldier, seeing the stiff body stoop beneath him, and his hands jerked. He looked away. He could feel the officer was nervous. The bread fell as it was being broken. The officer ate the other piece. The two

men stood tense and still, the master laboriously chewing his bread, the servant staring with averted face, his fist clenched.

Then the young soldier started. The officer had pressed open the lid of the mug again. The orderly watched the lid of the mug, and the white hand that clenched the handle, as if he were fascinated. It was raised. The youth followed it with his eyes. And then he saw the thin, strong throat of the elder man moving up and down as he drank, the strong jaw working. And the instinct which had been jerking at the young man's wrist suddenly jerked free. He jumped, feeling as if it were rent in two by a strong flame.

The spur of the officer caught in a tree-root, he went down backwards with a crash, the middle of his back thudding sickeningly against a sharp-edged tree-base, the pot flying away. And in a second the orderly, with serious, earnest young face, and underlip between his teeth, had got his knee in the officer's chest and was pressing the chin backward over the farther edge of the tree-stump, pressing, with all his heart behind in a passion of relief, the tension of his wrists exquisite with relief. And with the base of his palms he shoved at the chin, with all his might. And it was pleasant, too, to have that chin, that hard jaw already slightly rough with beard, in his hands. He did not relax one hair's breadth, but, all the force of all his blood exulting in his thrust, he shoved back the head of the other man, till there was a little "cluck" and a crunching sensation. Then he felt as if his head went to vapor. Heavy convulsions shook the body of the officer, frightening and horrifying the young soldier. Yet it pleased him, too, to repress them. It pleased him to keep his hands pressing back the chin, to feel the chest of the other man yield in expiration to the weight of his strong, young knees, to feel the hard twitchings of the prostrate body jerking his own whole frame, which was pressed down on it.

But it went still. He could look into the nostrils of the other man, the eyes he could scarcely see. How curiously the mouth was pushed out, exaggerating the full lips, and the mustache bristling up from them. Then, with a start, he noticed the nostrils gradually filled with blood. The red brimmed, hesitated, ran over and went in a thin trickle down the face to the eyes.

It shocked and distressed him. Slowly, he got up. The body twitched and sprawled there, inert. He stood and looked at it in silence. It was a pity *it* was broken. It represented more than the thing which had kicked and bullied him. He was afraid to look at the eyes. They were hideous now, only the whites showing, and the blood running to them. The face of the orderly was drawn with horror at the sight. Well, it was so. In his heart he was satisfied. He had hated the face of the Captain. It was extinguished now. There was a heavy relief in the orderly's soul. That was as it should be. But he could not bear to see the long, military body lying broken over the tree-base, the fine fingers crisped. He wanted to hide it away.

Quickly, busily, he gathered it up and pushed it under the felled tree-trunks, which rested their beautiful, smooth length either end on logs. The face was horrible with blood. He covered it with the helmet. Then he pushed the limbs straight and decent, and brushed the dead leaves off the fine cloth of the uniform. So, it lay quite still in the shadow under there. A little strip of sunshine ran along the breast, from a chink between the logs. The orderly sat by it for a few moments. Here his own life also ended.

Then, through his daze, he heard the lieutenant, in a loud voice, explaining to the men outside the wood, that they were to suppose the bridge on the river below was held by the enemy. Now they were to march to the attack in such and such a manner. The lieutenant had no gift of expression. The orderly, listening from habit, got muddled. And when the lieutenant began it all again he ceased to hear.

He knew he must go. He stood up. It surprised him that the leaves were glittering in the sun, and the chips of wood reflecting white from the ground. For him a change had come over the world. But for the rest it had not—all seemed the same. Only he had left it. And he could not go back. It was his duty to return with the beer-pot and the bottle. He could not. He had left all that. The lieutenant was still hoarsely explaining. He must go, or they would overtake him. And he could not bear contact with any one now.

He drew his fingers over his eyes, trying to find out where he was. Then he turned away. He saw the horse standing in the path. He went up to it and mounted. It hurt him to sit in the saddle. The pain of keeping his seat occupied him as they cantered through the wood. He would not have minded anything, but he could not get away from the sense of being divided from the others. The path led out of the trees. On the edge of the wood he pulled up and stood watching. There in the spacious sunshine of the valley soldiers were moving in a little swarm. Every now and then, a man harrowing on a strip of fallow shouted to his oxen,

at the turn. The village and the white-towered church was small in the sunshine. And he no longer belonged to it—he sat there, beyond, like a man outside in the dark. He had gone out from everyday life into the unknown, and he could not, he even did not want to go back.

Turning from the sun-blazing valley, he rode deep into the wood. Tree-trunks, like people standing gray and still, took no notice as he went. A doe, herself a moving bit of sunshine and shadow, went running through the flecked shade. There were bright green rents in the foliage. Then it was all pine wood, dark and cool. And he was sick with pain, he had an intolerable great pulse in his head, and he was sick. He had never been ill in his life. He felt lost, quite dazed with all this.

Trying to get down from the horse, he fell, astonished at the pain and his lack of balance. The horse shifted uneasily. He jerked its bridle and sent it cantering jerkily away. It was his last connection with the rest of things.

But he only wanted to lie down and not be disturbed. Stumbling through the trees, he came on a quiet place where beeches and pine trees grew on a slope. Immediately he had lain down and closed his eyes, his consciousness went racing on without him. A big pulse of sickness beat in him as if it throbbed through the whole earth. He was burning with dry heat. But he was too busy, too tearingly active in the incoherent race of delirium to observe.

III

He came to with a start. His mouth was dry and hard, his heart beat heavily, but he had not the energy to get up. His heart beat heavily. Where was he?—the barracks—at home? There was something knocking. And, making an effort, he looked round—trees, and litter of greenery, and reddish, bright, still pieces of sunshine on the floor. He did not believe he was himself, he did not believe what he saw. Something was knocking. He made a struggle towards consciousness, but relapsed. Then he struggled again. And gradually his surroundings fell into relationship with himself. He knew, and a great pang of fear went through his heart. Somebody was knocking. He could see the heavy, black rags of a fir tree overhead. Then everything went black. Yet he did not believe he had closed his eyes. He had not. Out of the blackness sight slowly emerged again. And some one was knocking. Quickly, he saw the blood-disfigured face of his Captain, which he hated. And he held himself still with horror. Yet, deep inside him, he knew that it was so, the Captain should be dead. But the physical delirium got hold of him. Some one was knocking. He lay perfectly still, as if dead, with fear. And he went unconscious.

When he opened his eyes again, he started, seeing something creeping swiftly up a tree-trunk. It was a little bird. And the bird was whistling overhead. Tap-tap-tap—it was the small, quick bird rapping the tree-trunk with its beak, as if its head were a little round hammer. He watched it curiously. It shifted sharply, in its creeping fashion. Then, like a mouse, it slid down the bare trunk. Its swift creeping sent a flash of revulsion through him. He raised his head. It felt a great weight. Then, the little bird ran out of the shadow across a still patch of sunshine, its little head bobbing swiftly, its white legs twinkling brightly for a moment. How neat it was in its build, so compact, with pieces of white on its wings. There were several of them. They were so pretty—but they crept like swift, erratic mice, running here and there among the beech-mast.

He lay down again exhausted, and his consciousness lapsed. He had a horror of the little creeping birds. All his blood seemed to be darting and creeping in his head. And yet he could not move.

He came to with a further ache of exhaustion. There was the pain in his head, and the horrible sickness, and his inability to move. He had never been ill in his life. He did not know where he was or what he was. Probably he had got sunstroke. Or what else?—he had silenced the Captain forever—some time ago—oh, a long time ago. There had been blood on his face, and his eyes had turned upwards. It was all right, somehow. It was peace. But now he had got beyond himself. He had never been here before. Was it life, or not life? He was by himself. They were in a big, bright place, those others, and he was outside. The town, all the country, a big bright place of light: and he was outside, here, in the darkened open beyond, where each thing existed alone. But they would all have to come out there sometime, those others. Little, and left behind him, they all were. There had been father and mother and sweetheart. What did they all matter? This was the open land.

He sat up. Something scuffled. It was a little, brown squirrel running in lovely, undulating bounds over the floor, its red tail completing the undulation of its body—and then, as it sat up, furling and unfurling. He watched it, pleased. It ran on again, friskily, enjoying itself. It flew wildly

at another squirrel, and they were chasing each other, and making little scolding, chattering noises. The soldier wanted to speak to them. But only a hoarse sound came out of his throat. The squirrels burst away—they flew up the trees. And then he saw the one peeping round at him, halfway up a tree-trunk. A start of fear went through him, though, in so far as he was conscious, he was amused. It still stayed, its little, keen face staring at him halfway up the tree-trunk, its little ears pricked up, its clawy little hands clinging to the bark, its white breast reared. He started from it in panic.

Struggling to his feet, he lurched away. He went on walking, walking, looking for something—for a drink. His brain felt hot and inflamed for want of water. He stumbled on. Then he did not know anything. He went unconscious as he walked. Yet he stumbled on, his mouth open.

When, to his dumb wonder, he opened his eyes on the world again, he no longer tried to remember what it was. There was thick, golden light behind golden-green glitterings, and tall gray-purple shafts, and darknesses further off, surrounding him, growing deeper. He was conscious of a sense of arrival. He was amid the reality, on the real, dark bottom. But there was the thirst burning in his brain. He felt lighter, not so heavy. He supposed it was newness. The air was muttering with thunder. He thought he was walking wonderfully swiftly and was coming straight to relief—or was it to water?

Suddenly he stood still with fear. There was a tremendous flare of gold, immense—just a few dark trunks like bars between him and it. All the young level wheat was burnished gold glaring on its silky green. A woman, full-skirted, a black cloth on her head for head-dress, was passing like a block of shadow through the glistening, green corn, into the full glare. There was a farm, too, pale blue in shadow, and the timber black. And there was a church spire, nearly fused away in the gold. The woman moved on, away from him. He had no language with which to speak to her. She was the bright, solid unreality. She would make a noise of words that would confuse him, and her eyes would look at him without seeing him. She was crossing there to the other side. He stood against a tree.

When at last he turned, looking down the long, bare grove whose flat bed was already filling dark, he saw the mountains in a wonder-light, not far away, and radiant. Behind the soft, gray ridge of the nearest range the further mountains stood golden and pale gray, the snow all radiant like pure, soft gold. So still, gleaming in the sky, fashioned pure out of the ore of the sky, they shone in their silence. He stood and looked at them, his face illuminated. And like the golden, lustrous gleaming of the snow he felt his own thirst bright in him. He stood and gazed, leaning against a tree. And then everything slid away into space.

During the night the lightning fluttered perpetually, making the whole sky white. He must have walked again. The world hung livid round him for moments, fields a level sheen of gray-green light, trees in dark bulk, and the range of clouds black across a white sky. Then the darkness fell like a shutter, and the night was whole. A faint flutter of a half-revealed world, that could not quite leap out of the darkness!—Then there again stood a sweep of pallor for the land, dark shapes looming, a range of clouds hanging overhead. The world was a ghostly shadow, thrown for a moment upon the pure darkness, which returned ever whole and complete.

And the mere delirium of sickness and fever went on inside him—his brain opening and shutting like the night—then sometimes convulsions of terror from something with great eyes that stared round a tree—then the long agony of the march, and the sun decomposing his blood—then the pang of hate for the Captain, followed by a pang of tenderness and ease. But everything was distorted, born of an ache and resolving into an ache.

In the morning he came definitely awake. Then his brain flamed with the sole horror of thirstiness! The sun was on his face, the dew was steaming from his wet clothes. Like one possessed, he got up. There, straight in front of him, blue and cool and tender, the mountains ranged across the pale edge of the morning sky. He wanted them—he wanted them alone—he wanted to leave himself and be identified with them. They did not move, they were still and soft, with white, gentle markings of snow. He stood still, mad with suffering, his hands crisping and clutching. Then he was twisting in a paroxysm on the grass.

He lay still, in a kind of dream of anguish. His thirst seemed to have separated itself from him, and to stand apart, a single demand. Then the pain he felt was another single self. Then there was the clog of his body, another separate thing. He was divided among all kinds of separate beings. There was some strange, agonized connection between them, but they were drawing further apart. Then they would all split. The sun, drilling down on him, was drilling through the bond. Then they

would all fall, fall through the everlasting lapse of space. Then again, his consciousness reasserted itself. He roused on to his elbow and stared at the gleaming mountains. There they ranked, all still and wonderful between earth and heaven. He stared till his eyes went black, and the mountains, as they stood in their beauty, so clean and cool, seemed to have it, that which was lost in him.

IV

When the soldiers found him, three hours later, he was lying with his face over his arm, his black hair giving off heat under the sun. But he was still alive. Seeing the open, black mouth the young soldiers dropped him in horror.

He died in the hospital at night, without having seen again.

The doctors saw the bruises on his legs, behind, and were silent.

The bodies of the two men lay together, side by side, in the mortuary, the one white and slender, but laid rigidly at rest, the other looking as if every moment it must rouse into life again, so young and unused, from a slumber. (1914)

Lytton Strachey

(1880-1932)

The classic preface to Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* was the trumpet call of a carefully planned revolt. In it the author mocked "those two fat volumes" of the nineteenth century life-and-letters school "with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style . . . their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design." He proposed to "lower . . . a little bucket" instead of trying to swallow "the great ocean of material," "to preserve . . . a becoming brevity—a brevity which excludes everything that is redundant and nothing that is significant." He illustrated his text by compressing the crowded lives of Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Arnold, and General "Chinese" Gordon into a single slender volume.

It was not Strachey's first book. Educated in France as well as at Trinity College, Cambridge, he had already earned a reputation as an ironic literary critic with a small volume entitled *Landmarks of French Literature* (1912). But *Eminent Victorians,* published in 1918, came at a time when disillusioned English and American readers were ready for an impudent iconoclast to shatter their Victorian idols. And when the first short studies were followed three years later by the more ambitious *Queen Victoria* (1921), Strachey's role as the "father of the new biography" was assured. He was to beget scores of offspring who, without his talent for artistic selection and brilliant irony, were to flood the twenties and thirties with pretentious exercises in debunkery.

He followed his Victorian studies with *Books and Characters* (1922), a collection of short sketches and reviews, mainly of eighteenth-century figures; *Pope* (1926), a lecture on the eighteenth-century satirist; *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928), a popular success in which he etched powerful portraits of Elizabeth, her lover, and Francis Bacon; and *Portraits in Miniature* (1931) and *Characters and Commentaries* (1933), in which he returned to the realm of compact critical portraiture.

Few readers will deny that Strachey succeeded in his main purpose of replacing the ponderous panegyrics of the Victorian deities with readable sketches of credible human beings. The pallid "Lady with a Lamp"—as bloodless as a portrait by Rossetti—is transformed into an unyielding, hard-driving crusader whom the reader can understand and admire, if not love. A calculating master of epigram and epithet, antithesis and anticlimax and all-pervading irony, Strachey replaced a romantic portrait with a realistic five-act drama. Similarly, in *Queen Victoria* he reduced the sainted Widow of Windsor to a stubborn little woman as absurd as she is admirable. But one can hardly take seriously

Strachey's vow to "lay bare the facts . . . dispassionately, impartially, and without ulterior intentions." His borrowed motto—*"Je n'impose rien; je ne propose rien; j'expose"*—is too neat to be true. In his more acid sketches—those of Cardinal Manning, Thomas Arnold, and Prince Albert, for example—he was obviously murdering reputations with malice aforethought.

Florence Nightingale

Everyone knows the popular conception of Florence Nightingale. The saintly, self-sacrificing woman, the delicate maiden of high degree who threw aside the pleasures of life of ease to succour the afflicted, the Lady with the Lamp, gliding through the horrors of the hospital at Scutari, and consecrating with the radiance of her goodness the dying soldier's couch—the vision is familiar to all. But the truth was different. The Miss Nightingale of fact was not as facile fancy painted her. She worked in another fashion, and towards another end; she moved under the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination. A Demon possessed her. Now demons, whatever else they may be, are full of interest. And so it happens that in the real Miss Nightingale there was more that was interesting than in the legendary one; there was also less that was agreeable.

Her family was extremely well-to-do, and connected by marriage with a spreading circle of other well-to-do families. There was a large country house in Derbyshire; there was another in the New Forest; there were Mayfair rooms for the London season and all its finest parties; there were tours on the Continent with even more than the usual number of Italian operas and glimpses at the celebrities of Paris. Brought up among such advantages, it was only natural to suppose that Florence would show a proper appreciation of them by doing her duty in that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call her—in other words, by marrying, after a fitting number of dances and dinner-parties, an eligible gentleman, and living happily ever afterwards. Her sister, her cousins, all the young ladies of her acquaintance, were either getting ready to do this or had already done it. It was inconceivable that Florence should dream of anything else; yet dream she did. Ah! To do her duty in that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call her! Assuredly she would not be behindhand in doing her duty; but unto what state of life *had* it pleased God to call her? That was the question. God's calls are many, and they are strange. Unto what state of life had it pleased Him to call Charlotte Corday,[1] or Elizabeth of Hungary?[2] What was that secret voice in her ear, if it was not a call? Why had she felt, from her earliest years, those mysterious promptings towards . . . she hardly knew what but certainly towards something very different from anything around her? Why, as a child in the nursery, when her sister had shown a healthy pleasure in tearing her dolls to pieces, had *she* shown an almost morbid one in sewing them up again? Why was she driven now to minister to the poor in their cottages, to watch by sick-beds, to put her dog's wounded paw into elaborate splints as if it was a human being? Why was her head filled with queer imaginations of the country house at Embley turned, by some enchantment, into a hospital, with herself as matron moving about among the beds? Why was even her vision of heaven itself filled with suffering patients to whom she was being useful? So she dreamed and wondered, and, taking out her diary, she poured into it the agitations of her soul. And then the bell rang, and it was time to go and dress for dinner.

As the years passed, a restlessness began to grow upon her. She was unhappy, and at last she knew it. Mrs. Nightingale, too, began to notice that there was something wrong. It was very odd; what could be the matter with dear Flo? Mr. Nightingale suggested that a husband might be advisable; but the curious thing was that she seemed to take no interest in husbands. And with her attractions, and her accomplishments, too! There was nothing in the world to prevent her making a really brilliant match. But no! She would think of nothing but how to satisfy that singular craving of hers to be *doing* something. As if there was not plenty to do in any case, in the ordinary way, at home. There was the china to look after, and there was her father to be read to after dinner. Mrs. Nightingale could not understand it; and then one day her perplexity was changed to consternation and alarm. Florence announced an extreme desire to go to

[1] See p. 657.

[2] St. Elizabeth, wife of Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia (1207-31).

Salisbury Hospital for several months as a nurse; and she confessed to some visionary plan of eventually setting up in a house of her own in a neighboring village, and there founding "something like a Protestant Sisterhood, without vows, for women of educated feelings." The whole scheme was summarily brushed aside as preposterous; and Mrs. Nightingale, after the first shock of terror, was able to settle down again more or less comfortably to her embroidery. But Florence, who was now twenty-five and felt that the dream of her life had been shattered, came near to desperation.

And, indeed, the difficulties in her path were great. For not only was it an almost unimaginable thing in those days for a woman of means to make her own way in the world and to live in independence, but the particular profession for which Florence was clearly marked out both by her instincts and her capacities was at that time a peculiarly disreputable one. A "nurse" meant then a coarse old woman, always ignorant, usually dirty, often brutal, a Mrs. Gamp,[3] in bunched-up sordid garments, tippling at the brandy-bottle or indulging in worse irregularities. The nurses in the hospitals were especially notorious for immoral conduct; sobriety almost unknown among them; and they could hardly be trusted to carry out the simplest medical duties. Certainly, things have changed since those days; and that they *have* changed is due, far more than to any other human being, to Miss Nightingale herself. It is not to be wondered at that her parents should have shuddered at the notion of their daughter devoting her life to such an occupation. "It was as if," she herself said afterward, "I had wanted to be a kitchen-maid." Yet the want, absurd, impracticable as it was, not only remained fixed immovably in her heart, but grew in intensity day by day. Her wretchedness deepened into a morbid melancholy. Everything about her was vile, and she herself, it was clear, to have deserved such misery, was even viler than her surroundings. Yes, she had sinned—"standing before God's judgment seat." "No one," she declared, "has so grieved the Holy Spirit"; of that she was quite certain. It was in vain that she prayed to be delivered from vanity and hypocrisy, and she could not bear to smile or to be gay, "because she hated God to hear her laugh, as if she had not repented of her sin."

A weaker spirit would have been overwhelmed by the load of such distresses—would have yielded or snapped. But this extraordinary young woman held firm, and fought her way to victory. With an amazing persistency, during the eight years that followed her rebuff over Salisbury Hospital, she struggled and worked and planned. While superficially she was carrying on the life of a brilliant girl in high society, while internally she was a prey to the tortures of regret and of remorse, she yet possessed the energy to collect the knowledge and to undergo the experience which alone could enable her to do what she had determined she would do in the end. In secret she devoured the reports of medical commissions, the pamphlets of sanitary authorities, the histories of hospitals and homes. She spent the intervals of the London season in ragged schools and workhouses. When she went abroad with her family, she used her spare time so well that there was hardly a great hospital in Europe with which she was not acquainted, hardly a great city whose slums she had not passed through. She managed to spend some days in a convent school in Rome, and some weeks as a "Sœur de Charité" in Paris. Then, while her mother and sister were taking the waters at Carlsbad, she succeeded in slipping off to a nursing institution at Kaiserswerth, where she remained for more than three months. This was the critical event of her life. The experience which she gained as a nurse at Kaiserswerth formed the foundation of all her future action and finally fixed her in her career.

But one other trial awaited her. The allurements of the world she had brushed aside with disdain and loathing; she had resisted the subtler temptation which, in her weariness, had sometimes come upon her, of devoting her baffled energies to art or literature; the last ordeal appeared in the shape of a desirable young man. Hitherto, her lovers had been nothing to her but an added burden and a mockery; but now— For a moment, she wavered. A new feeling swept over her—a feeling which she had never known before, which she was never to know again. The most powerful and the profoundest of all the instincts of humanity laid claim upon her. But it rose before her, that instinct, arrayed—how could it be otherwise?—in the inevitable habiliments of a Victorian marriage; and she had the strength to stamp it underfoot.

> I have an intellectual nature which requires satisfaction [she noted], and that would find it in him. I have a passional nature which requires satisfaction, and that would find it in him I have a moral, an active nature which requires satisfaction, and that would not find it in his life. Sometimes I think that I will satisfy my passional nature at all events. . . .

[3] Sarah Gamp, disreputable old nurse in Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4).

But no, she knew in her heart that it could not be. "To be nailed to a continuation and exaggeration of my present life . . . to put it out of my power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true and rich life"—that would be a suicide. She made her choice, and refused what was at least a certain happiness for a visionary good which might never come to her at all. And so she returned to her old life of waiting and bitterness.

The thoughts and feelings that I have now [she wrote] I can remember since I was six years old. A profession, a trade, a necessary occupation, something to fill and employ all my faculties, I have always felt essential to me, I have always longed for. The first thought I can remember, and the last, was nursing work; and in the absence of this, education work, but more the education of the bad than of the young. . . . Everything has been tried, foreign travel, kind friends, everything. My God! What is to become of me?

A desirable young man? Dust and ashes! What was there desirable in such a thing as that? "In my thirty-first year," she noted in her diary, "I see nothing desirable but death."

Three more years passed, and then at last the pressure of time told; her family seemed to realize that she was old enough and strong enough to have her way; and she became the superintendent of a charitable nursing home in Harley Street. She had gained her independence, though it was in a meagre sphere enough; and her mother was still not quite resigned: surely Florence might at least spend the summer in the country. At times, indeed, among her intimates, Mrs. Nightingale almost wept. "We are ducks," she said with tears in her eyes, "who have hatched a wild swan." But the poor lady was wrong; it was not a swan that they had hatched; it was an eagle.

Miss Nightingale had been a year in her nursing-home in Harley Street, when Fate knocked at the door. The Crimean War broke out; the battle of the Alma[4] was fought; and the terrible condition of our military hospitals at Scutari began to be known in England. It sometimes happens that the plans of Providence are a little difficult to follow, but on this occasion all was plain; there was a perfect co-ordination of events. For years Miss Nightingale had been getting ready; at last she was prepared—experienced, free, mature, yet still young—she was thirty-four—desirous to serve, accustomed to command: at that precise moment the desperate need of a great nation came, and she was there to satisfy it. If the war had fallen a few years earlier, she would have lacked the knowledge, perhaps even the power, for such a work; a few years later and she would, no doubt, have been fixed in the routine of some absorbing task, and, moreover, she would have been growing old. Nor was it only the coincidence of Time that was remarkable. It so fell out that Sidney Herbert was at the War Office and in the Cabinet; and Sidney Herbert was an intimate friend of Miss Nightingale's, convinced, from personal experience in charitable work, of her supreme capacity. After such premises, it seems hardly more than a matter of course that her letter, in which she offered her services for the East, and Sidney Herbert's letter, in which he asked for them, should actually have crossed in the post. Thus it all happened, without a hitch. The appointment was made, and even Mrs. Nightingale, overawed by the magnitude of the venture, could only approve. A pair of faithful friends offered themselves as personal attendants; thirty-eight nurses were collected; and within a week of the crossing of the letters Miss Nightingale, amid a great burst of popular enthusiasm, left for Constantinople.

Among the numerous letters which she received on her departure was one from Dr. Manning, who at that time was working in comparative obscurity as a Catholic priest in Bayswater. "God will keep you," he wrote, "and my prayer for you will be that your one object of Worship, Pattern of Imitation, and source of consolation and strength may be the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord."

To what extent Dr. Manning's prayer was answered must remain a matter of doubt; but this much is certain, that, if ever a prayer was needed, it was needed then for Florence Nightingale. For dark as had been the picture of the state of affairs at Scutari, revealed to the English public in the dispatches of the *Times* correspondent and in a multitude of private letters, yet the reality turned out to be darker still. What had occurred was, in brief, the complete breakdown of our medical arrangements at the seat of war. The origins of this awful failure were complex and manifold; they stretched back through long years of peace and carelessness in England; they could be traced through endless ramifications of administrative incapacity—from the inherent faults of confused systems to the petty bunglings of minor officials,

[4] 1854

from the inevitable ignorance of Cabinet Ministers to the fatal exactitudes of narrow routine. In the inquiries which followed it was clearly shown that the evil was in reality that worst of all evils—one which has been caused by nothing in particular and for which no one in particular is to blame. The whole organisation of the war machine was incompetent and out of date. The old Duke[5] had sat for a generation at the Horse Guards repressing innovations with an iron hand. There was an extraordinary overlapping of authorities, an almost incredible shifting of responsibilities to and fro. As for such a notion as the creation and the maintenance of a really adequate medical service for the army—in that atmosphere of aged chaos, how could it have entered anybody's head? Before the war, the easy-going officials at Westminster were naturally persuaded that all was well—or at least as well as could be expected; when someone, for instance, actually had the temerity to suggest the formation of a corps of army nurses, he was at once laughed out of court. When the war had begun, the gallant British officers in control of affairs had other things to think about than the petty details of medical organisation. Who had bothered with such trifles in the Peninsula?[6] And surely, on that occasion, we had done pretty well. Thus the most obvious precautions were neglected, the most necessary preparations put off from day to day. The principal medical officer of the army, Dr. Hall, was summoned from India at a moment's notice, and was unable to visit England before taking up his duties at the front. And it was not until after the battle of the Alma, when we had been at war for many months, that we acquired hospital accommodations at Scutari for more than a thousand men. Errors, follies, and vices on the part of individuals there doubtless were; but, in the general reckoning, they were of small account—insignificant symptoms of the deep disease of the body politic—the enormous calamity of administrative collapse.

Miss Nightingale arrived at Scutari—a suburb of Constantinople, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus—on November 4th, 1854; it was ten days after the battle of Balaclava, and the day before the battle of Inkerman. The organisation of the hospitals, which had already given way under the stress of the battle of the Alma, was now to be subjected to the further pressure which these two desperate and bloody engagements implied. Great detachments of wounded were already beginning to pour in. The men, after receiving such summary treatment as could be given them at the smaller hospitals in the Crimea itself, were forthwith shipped in batches of two hundred across the Black Sea to Scutari. This voyage was in normal times one of four days and a half; but the times were no longer normal, and now the transit often lasted for a fortnight or three weeks. It received, not without reason, the name of "the middle passage." Between, and sometimes on the decks, the wounded, the sick, and the dying were crowded—men who had just undergone the amputation of limbs, men in the clutches of fever or of frostbite, men in the last stages of dysentery and cholera—without beds, sometimes without blankets, often hardly clothed. The one or two surgeons on board did what they could; but medical stores were lacking, and the only form of nursing available was that provided by a handful of invalid soldiers, who were usually themselves prostrate by the end of the voyage. There was no other food besides the ordinary salt rations of ship diet; and even the water was sometimes so stored that it was out of reach of the weak. For many months, the average of deaths during these voyages was seventy-four in the thousand; the corpses were shot out into the waters; and who shall say that they were the most unfortunate? At Scutari, the landing-stage, constructed with all the perverseness of Oriental ingenuity, could only be approached with great difficulty, and, in rough weather, not at all. When it was reached, what remained of the men in the ships had first to be disembarked, and then conveyed up a steep slope of a quarter of a mile to the nearest of the hospitals. The most serious cases might be put upon stretchers—for there were far too few for all; the rest were carried or dragged up the hill by such convalescent soldiers as could be got together, who were not too obviously infirm for the work. At last the journey was accomplished; slowly, one by one, living or dying, the wounded were carried up into the hospital. And in the hospital what did they find?

Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate:[7] the delusive doors bore no such inscription; and yet behind them Hell yawned. Want, neglect, confusion, misery—in every shape and in every degree of intensity—filled the endless corridors and the

[5] the Duke of Wellington (1769-1852).

[6] Peninsular War (1808-14), in which the British, Spanish, and Portuguese, chiefly under Wellington, defeated the French.

[7] "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." On the gate through which Dante enters Hell, *Inferno*, 3.9.

vast apartments of the gigantic barrack-house, which, without forethought or preparation, had been hurriedly set aside as the chief shelter for the victims of the war. The very building itself was radically defective. Huge sewers underlay it, and cess-pools loaded with filth wafted their poison into the upper rooms. The floors were in so rotten a condition that many of them could not be scrubbed; the walls were thick with dirt; incredible multitudes of vermin swarmed everywhere. And, enormous as the building was, it was yet too small. It contained four miles of beds, crushed together so close that there was but just room to pass between them. Under such conditions, the most elaborate system of ventilation might well have been at fault; but here there was no ventilation. The stench was indescribable. "I have been well acquainted," said Miss Nightingale, "with the dwellings of the worst parts of most of the great cities in Europe, but have never been in any atmosphere which I could compare with that of the Barrack Hospital at night." The structural defects were equalled by the deficiencies in the commonest objects of hospital use. There were not enough bedsteads; the sheets were of canvas, and so coarse that the wounded men recoiled from them, begging to be left in their blankets; there was no bedroom furniture of any kind, and empty beer-bottles were used for candlesticks. There were no basins, no towels, no soap, no brooms, no mops, no trays, no plates; there were neither slippers nor scissors, neither shoebrushes nor blacking; there were no knives or forks or spoons. The supply of fuel was constantly deficient. The cooking arrangements were preposterously inadequate, and the laundry was a farce. As for purely medical materials, the tale was no better. Stretchers, splints, bandages—all were lacking; and so were the most ordinary drugs.

To replace such wants, to struggle against such difficulties, there was a handful of men overburdened by the strain of ceaseless work, bound down by the traditions of official routine, and enfeebled either by old age or inexperience or sheer incompetence. They had proved utterly unequal to their task. The principal doctor was lost in the imbecilities of a senile optimism. The wretched official whose business it was to provide for the wants of the hospital was tied fast hand and foot by red tape. A few of the younger doctors struggled valiantly, but what could they do? Unprepared, disorganised, with such help only as they could find among the miserable band of convalescent soldiers drafted off to tend their sick comrades, they were faced with disease, mutilation, and death in all their most appalling forms, crowded multitudinously about them in an ever-increasing mass. They were like men in a shipwreck, fighting, not for safety, but for the next moment's bare existence—to gain, by yet another frenzied effort, some brief respite from the waters of destruction.

In these surroundings, those who had been long inured to scenes of human suffering—surgeons with a world-wide knowledge of agonies, soldiers familiar with fields of carnage, missionaries with remembrances of famine and of plague—yet found a depth of horror which they had never known before. There were moments, there were places in the Barrack Hospital at Scutari, where the strongest hand was struck with trembling, and the boldest eye would turn away its gaze.

Miss Nightingale came, and she, at any rate, in that Inferno, did not abandon hope. For one thing, she brought material succour. Before she left London she had consulted Dr. Andrew Smith, the head of the Army Medical Board, as to whether it would be useful to take out stores of any kind to Scutari; and Dr. Andrew Smith had told her that "nothing was needed." Even Sidney Herbert had given her similar assurances; possibly, owing to an oversight, there might have been some delay in the delivery of the medical stores, which, he said, had been sent out from England "in profusion," but "four days would have remedied this." She preferred to trust her own instincts, and at Marseilles purchased a large quantity of miscellaneous provisions, which were of the utmost use at Scutari. She came, too, amply provided with money—in all, during her stay in the East, about £7000 reached her from private sources; and, in addition, she was able to avail herself of another valuable means of help. At the same time as herself, Mr. Macdonald, of the *Times*, had arrived at Scutari, charged with the duty of administering the large sums of money collected through the agency of that newspaper in aid of the sick and wounded; and Mr. Macdonald had the sense to see that the best use he could make of the *Times* Fund was to put it at the disposal of Miss Nightingale.

I cannot conceive [wrote an eye-witness], as I now calmly look back on the first three weeks after the arrival of the wounded from Inkerman, how it could have been possible to have avoided a state of things too disastrous to contemplate, had not Miss Nightingale been there, with the means placed at her disposal by Mr. Macdonald.

But the official view was different. What! Was the public service to admit, by accepting outside charity, that it was unable to discharge its own duties without the assistance of private and irregular benevolence? Never! And accordingly when Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, our Ambassador at Constantinople, was asked by Mr. Macdonald to indicate how the *Times* Fund could best be employed, he answered that there was indeed one object to which it might very well be devoted—the building of an English Protestant Church at Pera.[8]

Mr. Macdonald did not waste further time with Lord Stratford, and immediately joined forces with Miss Nightingale. But, with such a frame of mind in the highest quarters, it is easy to imagine the kind of disgust and alarm with which the sudden intrusion of a band of amateurs and females must have filled the minds of the ordinary officers and the ordinary military surgeon. They could not understand it; what had women to do with war? Honest Colonels relieved their spleen by the cracking of heavy jokes about "the Bird"; while poor Dr. Hall, a rough terrier of a man, who had worried his way to the top of his profession, was struck speechless with astonishment, and at last observed that Miss Nightingale's appointment was extremely droll.

Her position was, indeed, an official one, but it was hardly the easier for that. In the hospitals it was her duty to provide the services of herself and her nurses when they were asked for by the doctors, and not until then. At first some of the surgeons would have nothing to say to her, and, though she was welcomed by others, the majority were hostile and suspicious. But gradually she gained ground. Her good will could not be denied, and her capacity could not be disregarded. With consummate tact, with all the gentleness of supreme strength, she managed at last to impose her personality upon the susceptible, overwrought, discouraged, and helpless group of men in authority who surrounded her. She stood firm; she was a rock in the angry ocean; with her alone was safety, comfort, life. And so it was that hope dawned at Scutari. The reign of chaos and old night began to dwindle; order came upon the scene, and common sense, and forethought, and decision, radiating out from the little room off the great gallery in the Barrack Hospital where, day and night, the Lady Superintendent was at her task. Progress might be slow, but it was sure. The first sign of a great change came with the appearance of some of those necessary objects with which the hospitals had been unprovided for months. The sick men began to enjoy the use of towels and soap, knives and forks, combs and toothbrushes. Dr. Hall might snort when he heard of it, asking, with a growl, what a soldier wanted with a tooth-brush; but the good work went on. Eventually the whole business of purveying to the hospitals was, in effect, carried out by Miss Nightingale. She alone, it seemed, whatever the contingency, knew where to lay her hands on what was wanted; she alone could dispense her stores with readiness; above all, she alone possessed the art of circumventing the pernicious influences of official etiquette. This was her greatest enemy, and sometimes even she was baffled by it. On one occasion 27,000 shirts, sent out at her instance by the Home Government, arrived, were landed, and were only waiting to be unpacked. But the official "Purveyor" intervened; "he could not unpack them," he said, "without a Board." Miss Nightingale pleaded in vain; the sick and wounded lay half-naked, shivering for want of clothing; and three weeks elapsed before the Board released the shirts. A little later, however, on a similar occasion, Miss Nightingale felt that she could assert her own authority. She ordered a Government consignment to be forcibly opened, while the miserable "Purveyor" stood by, wringing his hands in departmental agony.

Vast quantities of valuable stores sent from England lay, she found, engulfed in the bottomless abyss of the Turkish Customs House. Other shiploads, buried beneath munitions of war destined for Balaclava, passed Scutari without a sign, and thus hospital materials were sometimes carried to and fro three times over the Black Sea, before they reached their destination. The whole system was clearly at fault, and Miss Nightingale suggested to the home authorities that a Government Store House should be instituted at Scutari for the reception and distribution of the consignments. Six months after her arrival this was done.

In the meantime she had reorganised the kitchens and the laundries in the hospitals. The ill-cooked hunks of meat, vilely served at irregular intervals, which had hitherto been the only diet for the sick men, were replaced by punctual meals, well-prepared and appetising, while strengthening extra foods—soups and wines, and jellies ("preposterous luxuries" snarled Dr. Hall)—were distributed to those who needed them. One thing, however, she could not effect. The separation of the bones from the meat was no part of official

[8] part of Constantinople.

cookery: the rule was that the food must be divided into equal portions, and if some of the portions were all bone—well, every man must take his chance. The rule, perhaps, was not a very good one; but there it was. "It would require a new Regulation of the Service," she was told, "to bone the meat." As for the washing arrangements, they were revolutionised. Up to the time of Miss Nightingale's arrival the number of shirts which the authorities had succeeded in washing was seven. The hospital bedding, she found, was "washed" in cold water. She took a Turkish house, had boilers installed, and employed soldiers' wives to do the laundry work. The expenses were defrayed from her own funds and that of the *Times*; and henceforward the sick and wounded had the comfort of clean linen.

Then she turned her attention to their clothing. Owing to military exigencies the greater number of the men had abandoned their kits; their knapsacks were lost forever; they possessed nothing but what was on their persons, and that was usually only fit for speedy destruction. The "Purveyor," of course, pointed out that, according to the regulations, all soldiers should bring with them into hospital an adequate supply of clothing, and he declared that it was no business of his to make good their deficiencies. Apparently, it was the business of Miss Nightingale. She procured socks, boots, and shirts in enormous quantities; she had trousers made, she rigged up dressing-gowns. "The fact is," she told Sidney Herbert, "I am now clothing the British Army."

All at once, word came from the Crimea that a great new contingent of sick and wounded might shortly be expected. Where were they to go? Every available inch in the wards was occupied; the affair was serious and pressing, and the authorities stood aghast. There were some dilapidated rooms in the Barrack Hospital, unfit for human habitation, but Miss Nightingale believed that if measures were promptly taken they might be made capable of accommodating several hundred beds. One of the doctors agreed with her; the rest of the officials were irresolute: it would be a very expensive job, they said; it would involve building; and who could take the responsibility? The proper course was that a representation should be made to the Director-General of the Army Medical Department in London; then the Director-General would apply to the Horse Guards, the Horse Guards would move the Ordnance, the Ordnance would lay the matter before the Treasury, and if the Treasury gave its consent, the work might be correctly carried through, several months after the necessity for it had disappeared. Miss Nightingale, however, had made up her mind, and she persuaded Lord Stratford—or thought she had persuaded him—to give his sanction to the required expenditure. A hundred and twenty-five workmen were immediately engaged, and the work was begun. The workmen struck; whereupon Lord Stratford washed his hands of the whole business. Miss Nightingale engaged two hundred other workmen on her own authority, and paid the bill out of her own resources. The wards were ready by the required date; five hundred sick men were received in them; and all the utensils, including knives, forks, spoons, cans and towels, were supplied by Miss Nightingale.

This remarkable woman was in truth performing the function of an administrative chief. How had this come about? Was she not in reality merely a nurse? Was it not her duty simply to tend to the sick? And indeed, was it not as a ministering angel, a gentle "lady with a lamp" that she actually impressed the minds of her contemporaries? No doubt that was so; and yet it is no less certain that, as she herself said, the specific business of nursing was "the least important of the functions into which she had been forced." It was clear that in the state of disorganisation into which the hospitals at Scutari had fallen the most pressing, the really vital, need was for something more than nursing; it was for the necessary elements of civilised life—the commonest material objects, the most ordinary cleanliness, the rudimentary habits of order and authority. "Oh, dear Miss Nightingale," said one of her party as they were approaching Constantinople, "when we land, let there be no delays, let us get straight to nursing the poor fellows!" "The strongest will be wanted at the wash-tub," was Miss Nightingale's answer. And it was upon the wash-tub, and all that the wash-tub stood for, that she expended her greatest energies. Yet to say that is perhaps to say too much. For to those who watched her at work among the sick, moving day and night from bed to bed, with that unflinching courage, with that indefatigable vigilance, it seemed as if the concentrated force of an undivided and unparalleled devotion could hardly suffice for that portion of her task alone. Wherever, in those vast wards, suffering was at its worst and the need for help was greatest, there, as if by magic, was Miss Nightingale. Her superhuman equanimity would, at the moment of some

ghastly operation, nerve the victim to endure and almost to hope. Her sympathy would assuage the pangs of dying and bring back to those still living something of the forgotten charm of life. Over and over again her untiring efforts rescued those whom the surgeons had abandoned as beyond the possibility of cure. Her mere presence brought with it a strange influence. A passionate idolatry spread among the men: they kissed her shadow as it passed. They did more. "Before she came," said a soldier, "there was cussin' and swearin', but after that it was as 'oly as a church." The most cherished privilege of the fighting man was abandoned for the sake of Miss Nightingale. In those "lowest sinks of human misery," as she herself put it, she never heard the use of one expression "which could distress a gentlewoman."

She was heroic; and these were the humble tributes paid by those of grosser mould to that high quality. Certainly, she was heroic. Yet her heroism was not of that simple sort so dear to the readers of novels and the compilers of hagiologies —the romantic sentimental heroism with which mankind loves to invest its chosen darlings: it was made of sterner stuff. To the wounded soldier on his couch of agony she might well appear in the guise of a gracious angel of mercy; but the military surgeons, and the orderlies, and her own nurses, and the "Purveyor," and Dr. Hall, and even Lord Stratford himself could tell a different story. It was not by gentle sweetness and womanly self-abnegation that she had brought order out of chaos in the Scutari Hospitals, that, from her own resources, she had clothed the British Army, that she had spread her dominion over the serried and reluctant powers of the official world; it was by strict method, by stern discipline, by rigid attention to detail, by ceaseless labour, by the fixed determination of an indomitable will. Beneath her cool and calm demeanour lurked fierce and passionate fires. As she passed through the wards in her plain dress, so quiet, so unassuming, she struck the casual observer simply as the pattern of a perfect lady; but the keener eye perceived something more than that—the serenity of high deliberation in the scope of the capacious brow, the sign of power in the dominating curve of the thin nose, and the traces of a harsh and dangerous temper—something peevish, something mocking, and yet something precise—in the small and delicate mouth. There was humour in the face; but the curious watcher might wonder whether it was humour of a very pleasant kind; might ask himself, even as he heard the laughter and marked the jokes with which she cheered the spirits of her patients, what sort of sardonic merriment this same lady might not give vent to, in the privacy of her chamber. As for her voice, it was true of it, even more than her countenance, that it "had that in it one must fain call master." Those clear tones were in no need of emphasis: "I never heard her raise her voice," said one of her companions. Only, when she had spoken, it seemed as if nothing could follow but obedience. Once, when she had given some direction, a doctor ventured to remark that the thing could not be done. "But it must be done," said Miss Nightingale. A chance bystander, who heard the words, never forgot through all his life the irresistible authority of them. And they were spoken quietly—very quietly indeed.

Late at night, when the long miles of beds lay wrapped in darkness, Miss Nightingale would sit at work in her little room, over her correspondence. It was one of the most formidable of all her duties. There were hundreds of letters to be written to the friends and relations of soldiers; there was the enormous mass of official documents to be dealt with; there were her own private letters to be answered; and, most important of all, there was the composition of her long and confidential reports to Sidney Herbert. These were by no means official communications. Her soul, pent up all day in the restraint and reserve of a vast responsibility, now at last poured itself out in these letters with all its natural vehemence, like a swollen torrent through an open sluice. Here, at least, she did not mince matters. Here she painted in her darkest colours the hideous scenes which surrounded her; here she tore away remorselessly the last veils still shrouding the abominable truth. Then she would fill pages with recommendations and suggestions, with criticism of the minutest details of organisation, with elaborate calculations of contingencies, with exhaustive analyses and statistical statements piled up in breathless eagerness one on top of the other. And then her pen, in the virulence of its volubility, would rush on to the discussion of individuals, to the denunciation of an incompetent surgeon or the ridicule of a self-sufficient nurse. Her sarcasm searched the ranks of the officials with the deadly and unsparing precision of a machine-gun. Her nicknames were terrible. She respected no one: Lord Stratford, Lord Raglan, Lady Stratford, Dr. Andrew

Smith, Dr. Hall, the Commissary-General, the Purveyor—she fulminated against them all. The intolerable futility of mankind obsessed her like a nightmare, and she gnashed her teeth against it. "I do well to be angry," was the burden of her cry. How many just men were there at Scutari? How many who cared at all for the sick, or had done anything for their relief? Were there ten? Were there five? Was there even one? She could not be sure.

At one time, during several weeks, her vituperations descended upon the head of Sidney Herbert himself. He had misinterpreted her wishes, he had traversed her positive instructions, and it was not until he had admitted his error and apologised in abject terms that he was allowed again into favour. While this misunderstanding was at its height an aristocratic young gentleman arrived at Scutari with a recommendation from the Minister. He had come out from England filled with a romantic desire to render homage to the angelic heroine of his dreams. He had, he said, cast aside his life of ease and luxury; he would devote his days and nights to the service of that gentle lady; he would perform the most menial offices, he would "fag" for her, he would be her footman—and feel requited by a single smile. A single smile, indeed, he had, but it was of an unexpected kind. Miss Nightingale at first refused to see him, and then, when she consented, believing that he was an emissary sent by Sidney Herbert to put her in the wrong over their dispute, she took notes of her conversation with him, and insisted on his signing them at the end of it. The young gentleman returned to England by the next ship.

This quarrel with Sidney Herbert was, however, an exceptional incident. Alike by him, and by Lord Panmure, his successor at the War Office, she was firmly supported; and the fact that during the whole of her stay at Scutari she had the Home Government at her back, was her trump card in her dealings with the hospital authorities. Nor was it only the Government that was behind her: public opinion in England early recognised the high importance of her mission, and its enthusiastic appreciation of her work soon reached an extraordinary height. The Queen herself was deeply moved. She made repeated inquiries as to the welfare of Miss Nightingale; she asked to see her accounts of the wounded, and made her the intermediary between the throne and the troops.

Let Mrs. Herbert know [she wrote to the War Minister] that I wish Miss Nightingale and the ladies would tell these poor noble, wounded, and sick men that *no one* takes a warmer interest or feels *more* for their sufferings or admires their courage and heroism *more* than their Queen. Day and night she thinks of her beloved troops. So does the Prince. Beg Mrs. Herbert to communicate these last words to those ladies, as I know that *our* sympathy is much valued by these noble fellows.

The letter was read aloud in the wards by the Chaplain. "It is a very feeling letter," said the men.

And so the months passed, and that fell winter which had begun with Inkerman and had dragged itself out through the long agony of the investment of Sebastopol, at last was over. In May, 1855, after six months of labour, Miss Nightingale could look with something like satisfaction at the condition of the Scutari hospitals. Had they done nothing more than survive the terrible strain which had been put upon them, it would have been a matter for congratulation; but they had done much more than that; they had marvellously improved. The confusion and the pressure in the wards had come to an end: order reigned in them, and cleanliness; the supplies were bountiful and prompt; important sanitary works had been carried out. One simple comparison of figures was enough to reveal the extraordinary change: the rate of mortality among the cases treated had fallen from 42 per cent. to 22 per thousand. But still the indefatigable lady was not satisfied. The main problem had been solved—the physical needs of the men had been provided for; their mental and spiritual needs remained. She set up and furnished reading-rooms and recreation-rooms. She started classes and lectures. Officers were amazed to see her treating their men as if they were human beings, and assured her that she would only end by "spoiling the brutes." But that was not Miss Nightingale's opinion, and she was justified. The private soldier began to drink less, and even—though that seemed impossible—to save his pay. Miss Nightingale became a banker for the army, receiving and sending home large sums of money every month. At last, reluctantly, the Government followed suit, and established machinery of its own for the remission of money. Lord Panmure, however, remained sceptical; "It will do no good," he pronounced; "the British soldier is not a remitting animal." But, in fact, during the next six months, £71,000 was sent home.

Amid all these activities, Miss Nightingale took up the further task of inspecting the hospitals in the Crimea itself. The labour was extreme, and the

conditions of life were almost intolerable. She spent whole days in the saddle, or was driven over those bleak and rocky heights in a baggage cart. Sometimes she stood for hours in the heavily falling snow, and would only reach her hut at dead of night after walking for miles through perilous ravines. Her powers of resistance seemed incredible, but at last they were exhausted. She was attacked by fever, and for a moment came very near to death. Yet she worked on; if she could not move, she could at least write; and write she did until her mind had left her; and after it had left her, in what seemed the delirious trance of death itself, she still wrote. When, after many weeks, she was strong enough to travel, she was to return to England, but she utterly refused. She would not go back, she said, before the last of the soldiers had left Scutari.

This happy moment had almost arrived, when suddenly the smouldering hostilities of the medical authorities burst out into a flame. Dr. Hall's labours had been rewarded by a K.C.B.[9]—letters which, as Miss Nightingale told Sidney Herbert, she could only suppose to mean "Knight of the Crimean Burial-grounds"—and the honour had turned his head. He was Sir John, and he would be thwarted no longer. Disputes had lately arisen between Miss Nightingale and some of the nurses in the Crimean hospitals. The situation had been embittered by rumours of religious dissensions, for, while the Crimean nurses were Roman Catholics, many of those at Scutari were suspected of a regrettable propensity towards the tenets of Dr. Pusey.[10] Miss Nightingale was by no means disturbed by these sectarian differences, but any suggestion that her supreme authority over all the nurses with the Army was in doubt was enough to rouse her to fury; and it appeared that Mrs. Bridgeman, the Reverend Mother in the Crimea, had ventured to call that authority in question. Sir John Hall thought that his opportunity had come, and strongly supported Mrs. Bridgeman—or, as Miss Nightingale preferred to call her, the "Reverend Brickbat." There was a violent struggle; Miss Nightingale's rage was terrible. Dr. Hall, she declared, was doing his best to "root her out of the Crimea." She would bear it no longer; the War Office was playing her false; there was only one thing to be done—Sidney Herbert must move for the production of papers in the House of Commons, so that the public might be able to judge between her and her enemies. Sidney Herbert with great difficulty calmed her down. Orders were immediately dispatched putting her supremacy beyond doubt, and the Reverend Brickbat withdrew from the scene. Sir John, however, was more tenacious. A few weeks later, Miss Nightingale and her nurses visited the Crimea for the last time, and the brilliant idea occurred to him that he could crush her by a very simple expedient—he would starve her into submission; and he actually ordered that no rations of any kind should be supplied to her. He had already tried this plan with great effect upon an unfortunate medical man whose presence in the Crimea he had considered an intrusion; but he was now to learn that such tricks were thrown away upon Miss Nightingale. With extraordinary foresight, she had brought with her a great supply of food; she succeeded in obtaining more at her own expense and by her own exertions; and thus for ten days, in that inhospitable country, she was able to feed herself and twenty-four nurses. Eventually the military authorities intervened in her favour, and Sir John had to confess that he was beaten.

It was not until July, 1856—four months after the Declaration of Peace—that Miss Nightingale left Scutari for England. Her reputation was now enormous, and the enthusiasm of the public was unbounded. The Royal approbation was expressed by the gift of a brooch, accompanied by a private letter.

> You are, I know, well aware [wrote Her Majesty] of the high sense I entertain of the Christian devotion which you have displayed during this great and bloody war, and I need hardly repeat to you how warm my admiration is for your services, which are fully equal to those of my dear and brave soldiers, whose sufferings you have had the *privilege* of alleviating in so merciful a manner. I am, however, anxious of marking my feelings in a manner which I trust will be agreeable to you, and therefore send you with this letter a brooch, the form and emblems of which commemorate your great and blessed work, and which I hope you will wear as a mark of the high approbation of your Sovereign!

"It will be a very great satisfaction to me," Her Majesty added, "to make the acquaintance of one who has set so bright an example to our sex."

The brooch, which was designed by the Prince Consort, bore a St. George's cross in red enamel, and the Royal cypher surmounted by diamonds. The whole was encircled by the inscription, "Blessed are the Merciful."

[9] Knight Commander of (the Order of) the Bath.

[10] Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-82), leader of the Oxford Movement, see p. 437.

The name of Florence Nightingale lives in the memory of the world by virtue of the lurid and heroic adventure of the Crimea. Had she died—as she nearly did—upon her return to England, her reputation would hardly have been different; her legend would have come down to us almost as we know it to-day—that gentle vision of female virtue which first took shape before the adoring eyes of the sick soldiers at Scutari. Yet, as a matter of fact, she lived for more than half a century after the Crimean War; and during the greater part of that long period all the energy and all the devotion of her extraordinary nature were working at their highest pitch. What she accomplished in those years of unknown labour could, indeed, hardly have been more glorious than her Crimean triumphs; but it was certainly more important. The true history was far stranger even than the myth. In Miss Nightingale's own eyes the adventure of the Crimea was a mere incident—scarcely more than a useful stepping-stone in her career. It was the fulcrum with which she hoped to move the world; but it was only the fulcrum. For more than a generation she was to sit in secret, working her lever: and her real life began at the very moment when, in the popular imagination, it had ended.

She arrived in England in a shattered state of health. The hardships and the ceaseless effort of the last two years had undermined her nervous system; her heart was pronounced to be affected; she suffered constantly from fainting-fits and terrible attacks of utter physical prostration. The doctors declared that one thing alone would save her—a complete and prolonged rest. But that was also the one thing with which she would have nothing to do. She had never been in the habit of resting; why should she begin now? Now, when her opportunity had come at last; now, when the iron was hot, and it was time to strike? No; she had work to do; and, come what might, she would do it. The doctors protested in vain; in vain her family lamented and entreated, in vain her friends pointed out to her the madness of such a course. Madness? Mad—possessed—perhaps she was. A demoniac frenzy had seized upon her. As she lay upon her sofa, gasping, she devoured blue-books, dictated letters, and, in the intervals of her palpitations, cracked her febrile jokes. For months at a stretch she never left her bed. For years she was in daily expectation of Death. But she would not rest. At this rate, the doctors assured her, even if she did not die, she would become an invalid for life. She could not help that; there was the work to be done; and, as for rest, very likely she might rest . . . when she had done it.

Wherever she went, in London or in the country, in the hills of Derbyshire, or among the rhododendrons at Embley, she was haunted by a ghost. It was the spectre of Scutari—the hideous vision of the organisation of a military hospital. She would lay that phantom, or she would perish. The whole system of the Army Medical Department, the education of the Medical Officer, the regulations of hospital procedure . . . *rest*? How could she rest while these things were as they were, while, if the like necessity were to arise again, the like results would follow? And, even in peace and at home, what was the sanitary condition of the Army? The mortality in the barracks was, she found, nearly double the mortality in civil life. "You might as well take 1100 men every year out upon Salisbury Plain and shoot them," she said. After inspecting the hospitals at Chatham, she smiled grimly. "Yes, this is one more symptom of the system which, in the Crimea, put to death 16,000 men." Scutari had given her knowledge; and it had given her power too: her enormous reputation was at her back—an incalculable force. Other works, other duties, might lie before her; but the most urgent, the most obvious of all was to look to the health of the Army.

One of her very first steps was to take advantage of the invitation which Queen Victoria had sent her to the Crimea, together with the commemorative brooch. Within a few weeks of her return, she visited Balmoral, and had several interviews both with the Queen and the Prince Consort. "She put before us," wrote the Prince in his diary, "all the defects of our present military hospital system and the reforms that are needed." She related the whole story of her experiences in the East; and, in addition, she managed to have some long and confidential talks with His Royal Highness on metaphysics and religion. The impression which she created was excellent. "Sie gefällt uns sehr," noted the Prince, "ist sehr bescheiden."[11] Her Majesty's comment was different—"Such a *head*! I wish we had her at the War Office."

But Miss Nightingale was not at the War Office, and for a very simple reason: she was a woman. Lord Panmure, however, *was* (though indeed the reason for that was not quite so simple); and it was upon Lord Panmure that the issue of Miss

[11] She pleases us very much, is very unassuming.

Nightingale's efforts for reform must primarily depend. That burly Scottish nobleman had not, in spite of his most earnest endeavours, had a very easy time of it as Secretary of State for War. He had come into office in the middle of the Sebastopol campaign, and had felt himself very well fitted for the position, since he had acquired in former days an inside knowledge of the Army —as a Captain of Hussars. It was this inside knowledge which had enabled him to inform Miss Nightingale with such authority that "the British soldier is not a remitting animal." And perhaps it was this same consciousness of a command of his subject which had impelled him to write a dispatch to Lord Raglan, blandly informing the Commander-in-Chief in the Field just how he was neglecting his duties, and pointing out to him that if he would only try he really might do a little better next time. Lord Raglan's reply, calculated as it was to make its recipient sink into the earth, did not quite have that effect upon Lord Panmure, who, whatever might have been his faults, had never been accused of being supersensitive. However, he allowed the matter to drop; and a little later Lord Raglan died—worn out, some people said, by work and anxiety. He was succeeded by an excellent red-nosed old gentleman, General Simpson, whom nobody had ever heard of, and who took Sebastopol. But Lord Panmure's relations with him were hardly more satisfactory than his relations with Lord Raglan; for, while Raglan had been too independent, poor General Simpson erred in the opposite direction, perpetually asked advice, suffered from lumbago, doubted, his nose growing daily redder and redder, whether he was fit for his post, and, by alternate mails, sent in and withdrew his resignation. Then, too, both the General and the Minister suffered acutely from that distressingly useful new invention, the electric telegraph. On one occasion General Simpson felt obliged actually to expostulate.

> I think, my Lord [he wrote], that some telegraphic messages reach us that cannot be sent under due authority, and are perhaps unknown to you, although under the protection of your Lordship's name. For instance, I was called up last night, a dragoon having come express with a telegraphic message in these words, "Lord Panmure to General Simpson—Captain Jarvis has been bitten by a centipede. How is he now?"

General Simpson might have put up with this, though to be sure it did seem "rather too trifling an affair to call for a dragoon to ride a couple of miles in the dark that he may knock up the Commander of the Army out of the very small allowance of sleep permitted him"; but what was really more than he could bear was to find "upon sending in the morning another mounted dragoon to inquire after Captain Jarvis, four miles off, that he never has been bitten at all, but has had a boil, from which he is fast recovering." But Lord Panmure had troubles of his own. His favourite nephew, Captain Dowbiggan, was at the front, and to one of his telegrams to the Commander-in-Chief the Minister had taken occasion to append the following carefully qualified sentence—"I recommend Dowbiggan to your notice, should you have a vacancy, and if he is fit." Unfortunately, in those early days, it was left to the discretion of the telegraphist to compress the messages which passed through his hands; so that the result was that Lord Panmure's delicate appeal reached its destination in the laconic form of "Look after Dowb." The Headquarters Staff were at first extremely puzzled; they were at last extremely amused. The story spread; and "Look after Dowb" remained for many years the familiar formula for describing official hints in favour of deserving nephews.

And now that all this was over, now that Sebastopol had been, somehow or another, taken; now that peace was, somehow or another, made; now that the troubles of office might surely be expected to be at an end at last—here was Miss Nightingale breaking in upon the scene, with her talk about the state of the hospitals and the necessity for sanitary reform. It was most irksome; and Lord Panmure almost began to wish that he was engaged upon some more congenial occupation—discussing, perhaps, the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland—a question in which he was profoundly interested. But no; duty was paramount; and he set himself, with a sigh of resignation, to the task of doing as little of it as he possibly could.

"The Bison" his friends called him; and the name fitted both his physical demeanour and his habit of mind. That large low head seemed to have been created for butting rather than for anything else. There he stood, four square and menacing, in the doorway of reform; and it remained to be seen whether the bulky mass, upon whose solid hide even the barbed arrows of Lord Raglan's scorn had made no mark, would prove amenable to the pressure of Miss Nightingale. Nor was he alone in the doorway. There loomed behind him

the whole phalanx of professional conservatism, the stubborn supporters of the out-of-date, the worshippers and the victims of War Office routine. Among these it was only natural that Dr. Andrew Smith, the head of the Army Medical Department, should have been pre-eminent—Dr. Andrew Smith, who had assured Miss Nightingale before she left England that "nothing was wanted at Scutari." Such were her opponents; but she too was not without allies. She had gained the ear of Royalty—which was something; at any moment that she pleased she could gain the ear of the public—which was a great deal. She had a host of admirers and friends; and—to say nothing of her personal qualities—her knowledge, her tenacity, her tact—she possessed, too, one advantage which then, far more even than now, carried an immense weight—she belonged to the highest circle of society. She moved naturally among Peers and Cabinet Ministers—she was one of their own set; and in those days their set was a very narrow one. What kind of attention would such persons have paid to some middle-class woman with whom they were not acquainted, who possessed great experience of army nursing and had decided views upon hospital reform? They would have politely ignored her; but it was impossible to ignore Flo Nightingale. When she spoke, they were obliged to listen; and, when they had once begun to do that—what might not follow? She knew her power, and she used it. She supported her weightiest minutes with familiar witty little notes. The Bison began to look grave. It might be difficult—it might be damned difficult—to put down one's head against the white hand of a lady.

Of Miss Nightingale's friends, the most important was Sidney Herbert. He was a man upon whom the good fairies seemed to have showered, as he lay in his cradle, all their most enviable gifts. Well born, handsome, rich, the master of Wilton—one of those great country-houses, clothed with the glamour of a historic past, which are the peculiar glory of England—he possessed, besides all these advantages, so charming, so lively, so gentle a disposition that no one who had once come near him could ever be his enemy. He was, in fact, a man of whom it was difficult not to say that he was a perfect English gentleman. For his virtues were equal even to his good fortune. He was religious—deeply religious: "I am more and more convinced every day," he wrote, when he had been for some years a Cabinet Minister, "that in politics, as in everything else, nothing can be right which is not in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel." No one was more unselfish; he was charitable and benevolent to a remarkable degree; and he devoted the whole of his life with an unwavering conscientiousness to the public service. With such a character, with such opportunities, what high hopes must have danced before him, what radiant visions of accomplished duties, of ever-increasing usefulness, of beneficent power, of the consciousness of disinterested success! Some of those hopes and visions were, indeed, realised; but, in the end, the career of Sidney Herbert seemed to show that, with all their generosity, there was some gift or other—what was it?—some essential gift—which the good fairies had withheld, and that even the qualities of a perfect English gentleman may be no safeguard against anguish, humiliation, and defeat.

That career would certainly have been very different if he had never known Miss Nightingale. The alliance between them, which had begun with her appointment to Scutari, which had grown closer and closer while the war lasted, developed, after her return, into one of the most extraordinary of friendships. It was the friendship of a man and a woman intimately bound together by their devotion to a public cause; mutual affection, of course, played a part in it, but it was an incidental part; the whole soul of the relationship was a community of work. Perhaps out of England such an intimacy could hardly have existed—an intimacy so utterly untinctured not only by passion itself but by the suspicion of it. For years Sidney Herbert saw Miss Nightingale almost daily, for long hours together, corresponding with her incessantly when they were apart; and the tongue of scandal was silent; and one of the most devoted of her admirers was his wife. But what made the connection still more remarkable was the way in which the parts that were played in it were divided between the two. The man who acts, decides, and achieves; the woman who encourages, applauds, and—from a distance—inspires:—the combination is common enough; but Miss Nightingale was neither an Aspasia nor an Egeria. In her case it is almost true to say that the *rôles* were reversed; the qualities of pliancy and sympathy fell to the man, those of command and initiative to the woman. There was one thing only which Miss Nightingale lacked in her equipment for public life; she had not—she never could have—the public power and authority which belong to the successful politician. That power and authority Sidney Herbert possessed; the fact was obvious, and the conclusion no less so: it

was through the man that the woman must work her will. She took hold of him, taught him, shaped him, absorbed him, dominated him through and through. He did not resist—he did not wish to resist; his natural inclination lay along the same path as hers; only that terrific personality swept him forward at her own fierce pace and with her own relentless stride. Swept him—where to? Ah! Why had he ever known Miss Nightingale? If Lord Panmure was a bison, Sidney Herbert, no doubt, was a stag—a comely, gallant creature springing through the forest; but the forest is a dangerous place. One has the image of those wide eyes fascinated suddenly by something feline, something strong; there is a pause; and then the tigress has her claws in the quivering haunches; and then—!

Besides Sidney Herbert, she had other friends who, in a more restricted sphere, were hardly less essential to her. If, in her condition of bodily collapse, she were to accomplish what she was determined that she should accomplish, the attentions and the services of others would be absolutely indispensable. Helpers and servers she must have; and accordingly there was soon formed about her a little group of devoted disciples upon whose affections and energies she could implicitly rely. Devoted, indeed, these disciples were, in no ordinary sense of the term; for certainly she was no light task-mistress, and he who set out to be of use to Miss Nightingale was apt to find, before he had gone very far, that he was in truth being made use of in good earnest—to the very limit of his endurance and his capacity. Perhaps, even beyond those limits; why not? Was she asking of others more than she was giving herself? Let them look at her lying there pale and breathless on the couch; could it be said that she spared herself? Why, then, should she spare others? And it was not for her own sake that she made these claims. For her own sake, indeed! No! They all knew it! it was for the sake of the work. And so the little band, bound body and soul in that strange servitude, laboured on ungrudgingly. Among the most faithful was her "Aunt Mai," her father's sister, who from the earliest days had stood beside her, who had helped her to escape from the thraldom of family life, who had been with her at Scutari, and who now acted almost the part of mother to her, watching over her with infinite care in all the movements and uncertainties which her state of health involved. Another constant attendant was her brother-in-law, Sir Harry Verney, whom she found particularly valuable in parliamentary affairs. Arthur Clough,[12] the poet, also a connection by marriage, she used in other ways. Ever since he had lost his faith at the time of the Oxford Movement, Clough had passed his life in a condition of considerable uneasiness, which was increased rather than diminished by the practice of poetry. Unable to decide upon the purpose of an existence whose savour had fled together with his belief in the Resurrection, his spirits lowered still further by ill-health, and his income not all that it should be, he had determined to seek the solution of his difficulties in the United States of America. But, even there, the solution was not forthcoming; and when, a little later, he was offered a post in a government department at home, he accepted it, came to live in London, and immediately fell under the influence of Miss Nightingale. Though the purpose of existence might be still uncertain and its nature still unsavoury, here, at any rate, under the eye of this inspired woman, was something real, something earnest: his only doubt was—could he be of any use? Certainly he could. There were a great number of miscellaneous little jobs which there was nobody handy to do. For instance, when Miss Nightingale was travelling, there were the railways-tickets to be taken; and there were proof-sheets to be corrected; and then there were parcels to be done up in brown paper, and carried to the post. Certainly he could be useful. And so, upon such occupations as these, Arthur Clough was set to work. "This that I see, is not all," he comforted himself by reflecting, "and this that I do is but little! nevertheless it is good, though there is better than it."

As time went on, her "Cabinet," as she called it, grew larger. Officials with whom her work brought her into touch and who sympathised with her objects, were pressed into her service; and old friends of the Crimean days gathered round her when they returned to England. Among these the most indefatigable was Dr. Sutherland, a sanitary expert, who for more than thirty years acted as her confidential private secretary, and surrendered to her purposes literally the whole of his life. Thus sustained and assisted, thus slaved for and adored, she prepared to beard the Bison.

Two facts soon emerged, and all that followed turned upon them. It became clear, in the first place, that that imposing mass was not immovable, and in the second, that its movement, when it did move, would be exceedingly slow. The Bison was no match for the lady. It was in vain that he put

[12] See p. 568.

down his head and planted his feet in the earth; he could not withstand her; the white hand forced him back. But the process was an extraordinarily gradual one. Dr. Andrew Smith and all his War Office phalanx stood behind, blocking the way; the poor Bison groaned inwardly, and cast a wistful eye towards the happy pastures of the Free Church of Scotland; then slowly, with infinite reluctance, step by step, he retreated, disputing every inch of the ground.

The first great measure, which, supported as it was by the Queen, the Cabinet, and the united opinion of the country, it was impossible to resist, was the appointment of a Royal Commission to report upon the health of the Army. The question of the composition of the Commission then immediately arose; and it was over this matter that the first hand-to-hand encounter between Lord Panmure and Miss Nightingale took place. They met, and Miss Nightingale was victorious; Sidney Herbert was appointed Chairman; and, in the end the only member of the Commission opposed to her views was Dr. Andrew Smith. During the interview, Miss Nightingale made an important discovery: she found that "the Bison was bullyable"—the hide was the hide of a Mexican buffalo, but the spirit was the spirit of an Alderney calf. And there was one thing above all others which the huge creature dreaded—an appeal to public opinion. The faintest hint of such a terrible eventuality made his heart dissolve within him; he would agree to anything—he would cut short his grouse-shooting—he would make a speech in the House of Lords—he would even overrule Dr. Andrew Smith—rather than that. Miss Nightingale held the fearful threat in reserve—she would speak out what she knew; she would publish the truth to the whole world, and let the whole world judge between them. With supreme skill, she kept this sword of Damocles poised above the Bison's head, and more than once she was actually on the point of really dropping it. For his recalcitrancy grew and grew. The *personnel* of the Commission once determined upon, there was a struggle, which lasted for six months, over the nature of its powers. Was it to be an efficient body, armed with the right of full inquiry and wide examination, or was it to be a polite official contrivance for exonerating Dr. Andrew Smith? The War Office phalanx closed its ranks, and fought tooth and nail; but it was defeated: the Bison was bullyable.

Three months from this day [Miss Nightingale had written at last] I publish my experience of the Crimean Campaign, and my suggestions for improvement, unless there has been a fair and tangible pledge by that time for reform.

Who could face that?

And, if the need came, she meant to be as good as her word. For she had now determined, whatever might be the fate of the Commission, to draw up her own report upon the questions at issue. The labour involved was enormous; her health was almost desperate; but she did not flinch, and after six months of incredible industry she had put together and written with her own hand her "Notes affecting the Health, Efficiency, and Hospital Administration of the British Army." This extraordinary composition, filling more than eight hundred closely printed pages, laying down vast principles of far-reaching reform, discussing the minutest details of a multitude of controversial subjects, containing an enormous mass of information of the most varied kinds—military, statistical, sanitary, architectural—was never given to the public, for the need never came; but it formed the basis of the Report of the Royal Commission; and it remains to this day the leading authority on the medical administration of armies.

Before it had been completed the struggle over the powers of the Commission had been brought to a victorious close. Lord Panmure had given way once more; he had immediately hurried to the Queen to obtain her consent; and only then, when her Majesty's initials had been irrevocably affixed to the fatal document, did he dare to tell Dr. Andrew Smith what he had done. The Commission met, and another immense load fell upon Miss Nightingale's shoulders. To-day she would, of course, have been one of the Commission herself; but at that time the idea of a woman appearing in such a capacity was unheard of; and no one even suggested the possibility of Miss Nightingale's doing so. The result was that she was obliged to remain behind the scenes throughout, to coach Sidney Herbert in private at every important juncture, and to convey to him and to her other friends upon the Commission the vast funds of her expert knowledge—so essential in the examination of witnesses—by means of innumerable consultations, letters, and memoranda. It was even doubtful whether the proprieties would admit of her giving evidence; and at last as a compromise, her modesty only allowed her to do so in the form of written answers to written questions. At length the grand

affair was finished. The Commission's Report, embodying almost word for word the suggestions of Miss Nightingale, was drawn up by Sidney Herbert. Only one question remained to be answered —would anything, after all, be done? Or would the Royal Commission, like so many other Royal Commissions before and since, turn out to have achieved nothing but the concoction of a very fat blue-book on a very high shelf?

And so the last and the deadliest struggle with the Bison began. Six months had been spent in coercing him into granting the Commission effective powers; six more months were occupied by the work of the Commission; and now yet another six were to pass in extorting from him the means whereby the recommendations of the Commission might be actually carried out. But, in the end, the thing was done. Miss Nightingale seemed indeed, during these months, to be upon the very brink of death. Accompanied by the faithful Aunt Mai, she moved from place to place—to Hampstead, to Highgate, to Derbyshire, to Malvern—in what appeared to be a last desperate effort to find health somewhere; but she carried that with her which made health impossible. Her desire for work could now scarcely be distinguished from mania. At one moment she was writing a "last letter" to Sidney Herbert; at the next she was offering to go out to India to nurse the sufferers in the Mutiny. When Dr. Sutherland wrote, imploring her to take a holiday, she raved. Rest!—

> I am lying without my head, without my claws, and you all peck at me. It is *de rigueur, d'obligation*, like the saying something to one's hat, when one goes into church, to say to me all that has been said to me 110 times a day during the last three months. It is the *obbligato* on the violin, and the twelve violins all practise it together, like the clocks striking 12 o'clock at night all over London, till I say like Xavier de Maistre,[13] *Assez, je le sais, je le sais que trop.* I am not a penitent; but you are like the R. C. confessor, who says what is *de rigueur*. . . .

Her wits began to turn, and there was no holding her. She worked like a slave in a mine. She began to believe, as she had begun to believe at Scutari, that none of her fellow-workers had their hearts in the business; if they had, why did they not work as she did? She could only see slackness and stupidity around her. Dr. Sutherland, of course, was grotesquely muddle-headed; and Arthur Clough incurably lazy. Even Sidney Herbert . . . oh yes, he had simplicity and candour and quickness of perception, no doubt; but he was an eclectic; and what could one hope for from a man who went away to fish in Ireland just when the Bison most needed bullying? As for the Bison himself he had fled to Scotland, where he remained buried for many months. The fate of the vital recommendation in the Commission's Report—the appointment of four Sub-Commissions charged with the duty of determining upon the details of the proposed reforms and of putting them into execution—still hung in the balance. The Bison consented to everything; and then, on a flying visit to London, withdrew his consent and hastily returned to Scotland. Then for many weeks all business was suspended; he had gout—gout in the hands, so that he could not write. "His gout was always handy," remarked Miss Nightingale. But eventually it was clear even to the Bison that the game was up, and the inevitable surrender came.

There was, however, one point in which he triumphed over Miss Nightingale. The building of Netley Hospital had been begun, under his orders, before her return to England. Soon after her arrival she examined the plans, and found that they reproduced all the worst faults of an out-of-date and mischievous system of hospital construction. She therefore urged that the matter should be reconsidered, and in the meantime building stopped. But the Bison was obdurate; it would be very expensive, and in any case it was too late. Unable to make any impression on him, and convinced of the extreme importance of the question, she determined to appeal to a higher authority. Lord Palmerston was Prime Minister; she had known him from her childhood; he was a near neighbour of her father's in the New Forest. She went down to the New Forest, armed with the plans of the proposed hospital and all the relevant information, stayed the night at Lord Palmerston's house, and convinced him of the necessity of rebuilding Netley.

> It seems to me [Lord Palmerston wrote to Lord Panmure] that at Netley all consideration of what would best tend to the comfort and recovery of the patients has been sacrificed to the vanity of the architect, whose sole object has been to make a building which should cut a dash when looked at from the Southampton river. . . . Pray, therefore, stop all further progress in the work until the matter can be duly considered.

But the Bison was not to be moved by one peremp-

[13] French essayist and novelist (1763-1852). "Enough, I know it, I know it only too well."

tory letter, even if it was from the Prime Minister. He put forth all his powers of procrastination, Lord Palmerston lost interest in the subject, and so the chief military hospital in England was triumphantly completed on unsanitary principles, with unventilated rooms, and with all the patients' windows facing northeast.

But now the time had come when the Bison was to trouble and to be troubled no more. A vote in the House of Commons brought about the fall of Lord Palmerston's Government, and Lord Panmure found himself at liberty to devote the rest of his life to the Free Church of Scotland. After a brief interval, Sidney Herbert became Secretary of State for War. Great was the jubilation in the Nightingale Cabinet; the day of achievement had dawned at last. The next two and a half years (1859-61) saw the introduction of the whole system of reforms for which Miss Nightingale had been struggling so fiercely—reforms which make Sidney Herbert's tenure of power at the War Office an important epoch in the history of the British Army. The four Sub-Commissions, firmly established under the immediate control of the Minister, and urged forward by the relentless perseverance of Miss Nightingale, set to work with a will. The barracks and the hospitals were remodelled; they were properly ventilated and warmed and lighted for the first time; they were given a water supply which actually supplied water, and kitchens where, strange to say, it was possible to cook. Then the great question of the Purveyor—that portentous functionary whose powers and whose lack of powers had weighed like a nightmare upon Scutari—was taken in hand, and new regulations were laid down, accurately defining his responsibilities and his duties. One Sub-Commission reorganised the medical statistics of the Army. Another established—in spite of the last convulsive efforts of the Department—an Army Medical School. Finally the Army Medical Department itself was completely reorganised; an administrative code was drawn up; and the great and novel principle was established that it was as much a part of the duty of the authorities to look after the soldier's health as to look after his sickness. Besides this, it was at last officially admitted that he had a moral and intellectual side. Coffee-rooms and reading-rooms, gymnasiums and workshops were instituted. A new era did in truth appear to have begun. Already by 1861 the mortality in the Army had decreased by one half since the days of the Crimea. It was no wonder that even vaster possibilities began now to open out before Miss Nightingale. One thing was still needed to complete and to assure her triumphs. The Army Medical Department was indeed reorganised; but the great central machine was still untouched. The War Office itself—! If she could remould *that* nearer to her heart's desire—there indeed would be a victory! And until that final act was accomplished, how could she be certain that all the rest of her achievements might not, by some capricious turn of Fortune's wheel—a change of Ministry, perhaps, replacing Sidney Herbert by some puppet of the permanent official gang—be swept to limbo in a moment?

Meanwhile, still ravenous for more and yet more work, her activities had branched out into new directions. The army in India claimed her attention. A Sanitary Commission, appointed at her suggestion, and working under her auspices, did for our troops there what the four Sub-Commissions were doing for those at home. At the same time, these very years which saw her laying the foundations of the whole modern system of medical work in the army, saw her also beginning to bring her knowledge, her influence, and her activity into the service of the country at large. Her *Notes on Hospitals* (1859) revolutionised the theory of hospital construction and hospital management. She was immediately recognised as the leading expert upon all the questions involved; her advice flowed unceasingly and in all directions, so that there is no great hospital to-day which does not bear upon it the impress of her mind. Nor was this all. With the opening of the Nightingale Training School for Nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital (1860), she became the founder of modern nursing.

But a terrible crisis was now fast approaching. Sidney Herbert had consented to undertake the root and branch reform of the War Office. He had sallied forth into that tropical jungle of festooned obstructiveness, of intertwisted irresponsibilities, of crouching prejudices, of abuses grown stiff and rigid with antiquity, which for so many years to come was destined to lure reforming ministers to their doom.

> The War Office [said Miss Nightingale] is a very slow office, an enormously expensive office, and one in which the Minister's intentions can be entirely negatived by all his sub-departments, and those of each of the sub-departments by every other.

It was true; and, of course, at the first rumour of

a change, the old phalanx of reaction was bristling with its accustomed spears. At its head stood no longer Dr. Andrew Smith, who, some time since, had followed the Bison into outer darkness, but a yet more formidable figure, the permanent Under-Secretary himself, Sir Benjamin Hawes—Ben Hawes the Nightingale Cabinet irreverently dubbed him—a man remarkable even among civil servants for adroitness in baffling inconvenient inquiries, resource in raising false issues, and, in short, a consummate command of all the arts of officially sticking in the mud. "Our scheme will probably result in Ben Hawes's resignation," Miss Nightingale said; "and that is another of its advantages." Ben Hawes himself, however, did not quite see it in that light. He set himself to resist the wishes of the Minister by every means in his power. The struggle was long and desperate; and, as it proceeeded, it gradually became evident to Miss Nightingale that something was the matter with Sidney Herbert. What was it? His health, never very strong, was, he said, in danger of collapsing under the strain of his work. But, after all, what is illness, when there is a War Office to be reorganised? Then he began to talk of retiring altogether from public life. The doctors were consulted, and declared that, above all things, what was necessary was rest. Rest! She grew seriously alarmed. Was it possible that, at the last moment, the crowning wreath of victory was to be snatched from her grasp? She was not to be put aside by doctors; they were talking nonsense; the necessary thing was not rest but the reform of the War Office; and, besides, she knew very well from her own case what one could do even when one was on the point of death. She expostulated vehemently, passionately: the goal was so near, so very near; he could not turn back now! At any rate, he could not resist Miss Nightingale. A compromise was arranged. Very reluctantly, he exchanged the turmoil of the House of Commons for the dignity of the House of Lords, and he remained at the War Office. She was delighted. "One fight more, the best and the last," she said.

For several more months the fight did indeed go on. But the strain upon him was greater even than she perhaps could realise. Besides the intestine war in his office, he had to face a constant battle in the Cabinet with Mr. Gladstone—a more redoubtable antagonist even than Ben Hawes—over the estimates. His health grew worse and worse. He was attacked by fainting-fits; and there were some days when he could only just keep himself going by gulps of brandy. Miss Nightingale spurred him forward with her encouragements and her admonitions, her zeal and her example. But at last his spirit began to sink as well as his body. He could no longer hope; he could no longer desire; it was useless, all useless; it was utterly impossible. He had failed. The dreadful moment came when the truth was forced upon him: he would never be able to reform the War Office. But a yet more dreadful moment lay behind; he must go to Miss Nightingale and tell her that he was a failure, a beaten man.

Blessed are the merciful! What strange ironic prescience had led Prince Albert, in the simplicity of his heart, to choose that motto for the Crimean brooch? The words hold a double lesson; and, alas! when she brought herself to realise at length what was indeed the fact and what there was no helping, it was not in mercy that she turned upon her old friend.

> Beaten! [she exclaimed]. Can't you see that you've simply thrown away the game? And with all the winning cards in your hands! And so noble a game! Sidney Herbert beaten! And beaten by Ben Hawes! It is a worse disgrace. . . . [her full rage burst out at last] . . . a worse disgrace than the hospitals at Scutari.

He dragged himself away from her, dragged himself to Spa, hoping vainly for a return of health, and then, despairing, back again to England, to Wilton, to the majestic house standing there resplendent in the summer sunshine, among the great cedars, which had lent their shade to Sir Philip Sidney[14] and all those familiar, darling haunts of beauty which he loved, each one of them, "as if they were persons"; and at Wilton he died. After having received the Eucharist he had become perfectly calm; then, almost unconscious, his lips were seen to be moving. Those about him bent down. "Poor Florence! Poor Florence!" they just caught. ". . . Our joint work . . . unfinished . . . tried to do . . ." and they could hear no more.

When the onward rush of a powerful spirit sweeps a weaker one to its destruction, the commonplaces of the moral judgment are better left unmade. If Miss Nightingale had been less ruthless, Sidney Herbert would not have perished; but then, she would not have been Miss Nightingale. The force that created was the force that destroyed. It was her Demon that was responsible. When the

[14] See I, p. 320.

fatal news reached her, she was overcome by agony. In the revulsion of her feelings, she made a worship of the dead man's memory; and the facile instrument which had broken in her hand she spoke of for ever after as her "Master." Then, almost at the same moment, another blow fell upon her. Arthur Clough, worn out by labours very different from those of Sidney Herbert, died too: never more would he tie up her parcels. And yet a third disaster followed. The faithful Aunt Mai did not, to be sure, die; no, she did something almost worse: she left Miss Nightingale. She was growing old, and she felt that she had closer and more imperative duties with her own family. Her niece could hardly forgive her. She poured out, in one of her enormous letters, a passionate diatribe upon the faithlessness, the lack of sympathy, the stupidity, the ineptitude of women. Her doctrines had taken no hold among them; she had never known one who had *appris à apprendre*;[15] she could not even get a woman secretary; "they don't know the names of the Cabinet Ministers—they don't know which of the Churches has Bishops and which not." As for the spirit of self-sacrifice, well—Sidney Herbert and Arthur Clough were men, and they indeed had shown their devotion; but women—! She would mount three widow's caps "for a sign." The first two would be for Clough and for her Master; but the third, "the biggest widow's cap of all"—would be for Aunt Mai. She did well to be angry; she was deserted in her hour of need; and, after all, could she be sure that even the male sex was so impeccable? There was Dr. Sutherland, bungling as usual. Perhaps even he intended to go off, one of these days, too? She gave him a look, and he shivered in his shoes. No!—she grinned sardonically; she would always have Dr. Sutherland. And then she reflected that there was one thing more that she would always have—her work.

Sidney Herbert's death finally put an end to Miss Nightingale's dream of a reformed War Office. For a moment, indeed, in the first agony of her disappointment, she had wildly clutched at a straw; she had written to Mr. Gladstone to beg him to take up the burden of Sidney Herbert's work. And Mr. Gladstone had replied with a sympathetic account of the funeral.

Succeeding Secretaries of State managed between them to undo a good deal of what had been accomplished, but they could not undo it all; and for ten years more (1862-72) Miss Nightingale remained a potent influence at the War Office. After that, her direct connection with the army came to an end, and her energies began to turn more and more completely towards more general objects. Her work upon hospital reform assumed enormous proportions; she was able to improve the conditions in infirmaries and workhouses; and one of her most remarkable papers forestalls the recommendations of the Poor Law Commission of 1909. Her training school for nurses, with all that it involved in initiative, control, responsibility, and combat, would have been enough in itself to have absorbed the whole efforts of at least two lives of ordinary vigour. And at the same time her work in connection with India, which had begun with the Sanitary Commission on the Indian Army, spread and ramified in a multitude of directions. Her tentacles reached the India Office and succeeded in establishing a hold even upon those slippery high places. For many years it was *de rigueur* for the newly appointed Viceroy, before he left England, to pay a visit to Miss Nightingale.

After much hesitation, she had settled down in a small house in South Street, where she remained for the rest of her life. That life was a very long one; the dying woman reached her ninety-first year. Her ill-health gradually diminished; the crises of extreme danger became less frequent, and at last, altogether ceased; she remained an invalid, but an invalid of a curious character—an invalid who was too weak to walk downstairs and who worked far harder than most Cabinet Ministers. Her illness, whatever it may have been, was certainly not inconvenient. It involved seclusion; and an extraordinary, an unparalleled seclusion was, it might almost have been said, the mainspring of Miss Nightingale's life. Lying on her sofa in the little upper room in South Street, she combined the intense vitality of a dominating woman of the world with the mysterious and romantic quality of a myth. She was a legend in her lifetime, and she knew it. She tasted the joys of power, like those Eastern Emperors whose autocratic rule was based upon invisibility, with the mingled satisfactions of obscurity and fame. And she found the machinery of illness hardly less effective as a barrier against the eyes of men than the ceremonial of a palace. Great statesmen and renowned generals were obliged to beg for audiences; admiring princesses from foreign countries found that they must see her at her own time, or not at all; and the ordinary mortal had no hope of

[15] learned for the sake of learning.

ever getting beyond the downstairs sitting-room and Dr. Sutherland. For that indefatigable disciple did, indeed, never desert her. He might be impatient, he might be restless, but he remained. His "incurable looseness of thought," for so she termed it, continued at her service to the end. Once, it is true, he had actually ventured to take a holiday; but he was recalled, and he did not repeat the experiment. He was wanted downstairs. There he sat, transacting business, answering correspondence, interviewing callers, and exchanging innumerable notes with the unseen power above. Sometimes word came down that Miss Nightingale was just well enough to see one of her visitors. The fortunate man was led up, was ushered, trembling, into the shaded chamber, and, of course, could never afterwards forget the interview. Very rarely, indeed, once or twice a year, perhaps, but nobody could be quite certain, in deadly secrecy, Miss Nightingale went out for a drive in the Park. Unrecognised, the living legend flitted for a moment before the common gaze. And the precaution was necessary; for there were times when, at some public function, the rumour of her presence was spread abroad; and ladies, mistaken by the crowd for Miss Nightingale, were followed, pressed upon and vehemently supplicated—"Let me touch your shawl,"—"Let me stroke your arm"; such was the strange adoration in the hearts of the people. That vast reserve of force lay there behind her; she could use it, if she would. But she preferred never to use it. On occasions, she might hint or threaten; she might balance the sword of Damocles over the head of the Bison; she might, by a word, by a glance, remind some refractory minister, some unpersuadable viceroy, sitting in audience with her in the little upper room, that she was something more than a mere sick woman, that she had only, so to speak, to go to the window and wave her handkerchief for . . . dreadful things to follow. But that was enough; they understood; the myth was there—obvious, portentous, impalpable; and so it remained to the last.

With statesmen and governors at her beck and call, with her hands on a hundred strings, with mighty provinces at her feet, with foreign governments agog for her counsel, building hospitals, training nurses—she still felt that she had not enough to do. She sighed for more worlds to conquer—more, and yet more. She looked about her—what was there left? Of course! Philosophy! After the world of action, the world of thought. Having set right the health of the British Army, she would now do the same good service for the religious convictions of mankind. She had long noticed—with regret—the growing tendency towards free-thinking among artisans. With regret, but not altogether with surprise; the current teaching of Christianity was sadly to seek; nay, Christianity itself was not without its defects. She would rectify these errors. She would correct the mistakes of the Churches; she would point out just where Christianity was wrong; and she would explain to the artisans what the facts of the case really were. Before her departure for the Crimea, she had begun this work; and now, in the intervals of her other labours, she completed it. Her "Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers after Truth among the Artisans of England" (1860) unravels, in the course of three portly volumes, the difficulties—hitherto, curiously enough, unsolved—connected with such matters as Belief in God, the Plan of Creation, the Origin of Evil, the Future Life, Necessity and Free Will, Law, and the Nature of Morality. The Origin of Evil, in particular, held no perplexities for Miss Nightingale. "We cannot conceive," she remarks, "that Omnipotent Righteousness would find satisfaction in *solitary existence.*" This being so, the only question remaining to be asked is, "What beings should we then conceive that God would create?" Now, He cannot create perfect beings, "since, essentially, perfection is one"; if He did so, He would only be adding to Himself. Thus the conclusion is obvious: He *must* create *im*perfect ones. Omnipotent Righteousness, faced by the intolerable *impasse* of a solitary existence, finds itself bound, by the very nature of the case, to create the hospitals at Scutari. Whether this argument would have satisfied the artisans, was never discovered, for only a very few copies of the book were printed for private circulation. One copy was sent to Mr. Mill,[16] who acknowledged it in an extremely polite letter. He felt himself obliged, however, to confess that he had not been altogether convinced by Miss Nightingale's proof of the existence of God. Miss Nightingale was surprised and mortified; she had thought better of Mr. Mill; for surely her proof of the existence of God could hardly be improved upon. "A law," she had pointed out, "implies a lawgiver." Now the Universe is full of laws—the law of gravitation, the law of the excluded middle, and many others; hence it follows that the Uni-

[16] John Stuart Mill, political economist (1806-73).

verse has a lawgiver—and what would Mr. Mill be satisfied with if he was not satisfied with that?

Perhaps Mr. Mill might have asked why the argument had not been pushed to its logical conclusion. Clearly, if we are to trust the analogy of human institutions, we must remember that laws are, as a matter of fact, not dispensed by lawgivers, but passed by Act of Parliament. Miss Nightingale, however, with all her experience of public life, never stopped to consider the question whether God might not be a Limited Monarchy.

Yet her conception of God was certainly not orthodox. She felt towards Him as she might have felt towards a glorified sanitary engineer; and in some of her speculations she seems hardly to distinguish between the Deity and the Drains. As one turns over these singular pages, one has the impression that Miss Nightingale has got the Almighty too into her clutches, and that, if He is not careful, she will kill Him with overwork.

Then, suddenly, in the very midst of the ramifying generalities of her metaphysical disquisitions there is an unexpected turn, and the reader is plunged all at once into something particular, something personal, something impregnated with intense experience—a virulent invective upon the position of women in the upper ranks of society. Forgetful alike of her high argument and of the artisans, the bitter creature rails through a hundred pages of close print at the falsities of family life, the ineptitudes of marriage, the emptiness of convention, in the spirit of an Ibsen[17] or a Samuel Butler.[18] Her fierce pen, shaking with intimate anger, depicts in biting sentences the fearful fate of an unmarried girl in a wealthy household. It is a *cri du cœur*; and then, as suddenly, she returns once more to instruct the artisans upon the nature of Omnipotent Righteousness.

Her mind was, indeed, better qualified to dissect the concrete and distasteful fruits of actual life than to construct a coherent system of abstract philosophy. In spite of her respect for Law, she was never at home with a generalisation. Thus, though the great achievement of her life lay in the immense impetus which she gave to the scientific treatment of sickness, a true comprehension of the scientific method itself was alien to her spirit. Like most great men of action—perhaps like all—she was simply an empiricist. She believed in what she saw, and she acted accordingly; beyond that she would not go. She had found in Scutari that fresh air and light played an effective part in the prevention of the maladies with which she had to deal; and that was enough for her; she would not inquire further; what were the general principles underlying that fact—or even whether there were any—she refused to consider. Years after the discoveries of Pasteur and Lister, she laughed at what she called the "germ-fetish." There was no such thing as "infection"; she had never seen it, therefore it did not exist. But she *had* seen the good effects of fresh air; therefore there could be no doubt about them; and therefore it was essential that the bedrooms of patients should be well ventilated. Such was her doctrine; and in those days of hermetically sealed windows it was a very valuable one. But it was a purely empirical doctrine, and thus it led to some unfortunate results. When, for instance, her influence in India was at its height, she issued orders that all hospital windows should be invariably kept open. The authorities, who knew what an open window in the hot weather meant, protested, but in vain; Miss Nightingale was incredulous. She knew nothing of the hot weather, but she did know the value of fresh air—from personal experience; the authorities were talking nonsense and the windows must be kept open all the year round. There was a great outcry from all the doctors in India, but she was firm; and for a moment it seemed possible that her terrible commands would have to be put into execution. Lord Lawrence, however, was Viceroy, and he was able to intimate to Miss Nightingale, with sufficient authority, that he himself had decided upon the question, and that his decision must stand, even against her own. Upon that, she gave way, but reluctantly and quite unconvinced; she was only puzzled by the unexpected weakness of Lord Lawrence. No doubt, if she had lived to-day, and if her experience had lain, not among cholera cases at Scutari but among yellow-fever cases in Panama, she would have declared fresh air a fetish, and would have maintained to her dying day that the only really effective way of dealing with disease was by the destruction of mosquitoes.

Yet her mind, so positive, so realistic, so ultra-practical, had its singular revulsions, its mysterious moods of mysticism and of doubt. At times, lying sleepless in the early hours, she fell into long strange agonised meditations, and then, seizing a pencil, she would commit to paper the confessions

[17] Norwegian dramatist (1828-1906).

[18] See p. 873.

of her soul. The morbid longings of her pre-Crimean days came over her once more; she filled page after page with self-examination, self-criticism, self-surrender. "O Father," she wrote, "I submit, I resign myself, I accept with all my heart this stretching out of Thy hand to save me. . . . O how vain it is, the vanity of vanities, to live in men's thoughts instead of God's!" She was lonely, she was miserable. "Thou knowest that through all these horrible twenty years, I have been supported by the belief that I was working with Thee who wert bringing everyone, even our poor nurses, to perfection,"—and yet, after all, what was the result? Had not even she been an unprofitable servant? One night, waking suddenly, she saw, in the dim light of the night-lamp, tenebrous shapes upon the wall. The past rushed back upon her. "Am I she who once stood on that Crimean height?" she wildly asked—"'The Lady with a lamp shall stand. . . .' The lamp shows me only my utter shipwreck."

She sought consolation in the writings of the Mystics and in a correspondence with Mr. Jowett. For many years the Master of Balliol acted as her spiritual adviser. He discussed with her in a series of enormous letters the problems of religion and philosophy; he criticised her writings on those subjects with the tactful sympathy of a cleric who was also a man of the world, and he even ventured to attempt at times to instil into her rebellious nature some of his own peculiar suavity. "I sometimes think," he told her, "that you ought seriously to consider how your work may be carried on, not with less energy, but in a calmer spirit. I am not blaming the past. . . . But I want the peace of God to settle on the future." He recommended her to spend her time no longer in "conflicts with Government offices," and to take up some literary work. He urged her to "work out her notion of Divine Perfection," in a series of essays for *Fraser's Magazine*. She did so; and the result was submitted to Mr. Froude,[19] who pronounced the second essay to be "even more pregnant than the first. I cannot tell," he said, "how sanitary, with disordered intellects, the effects of such papers will be." Mr. Carlyle,[20] indeed, used different language, and some remarks of his about a lost lamb bleating on the mountains having been unfortunately repeated to Miss Nightingale, all Mr. Jowett's suavity was required to keep the peace.

[19] James Anthony Froude, see p. 638.
[20] See p. 636.

In a letter of fourteen sheets, he turned her attention from the painful topic towards a discussion of Quietism. "I don't see why," said the Master of Balliol, "active life might not become a sort of passive life too." And then, he added, "I sometimes fancy there are possibilities of human character much greater than have been realised." She found such sentiments helpful, underlining them in blue pencil; and, in return, she assisted her friend with a long series of elaborate comments upon the Dialogues of Plato, most of which he embodied in the second edition of his translation. Gradually her interest became more personal; she told him never to work again after midnight, and he obeyed her. Then she helped him to draw up a special form of daily service for the College Chapel, with selections from the Psalms, under the heads of "God the Lord, God the Judge, God the Father, and God the Friend,"—though, indeed, this project was never realised; for the Bishop of Oxford disallowed the alterations, exercising his legal powers, on the advice of Sir Travers Twiss.

Their relations became intimate. 'The spirit of the twenty-third psalm and the spirit of the nineteenth psalm should be united in our lives," Mr. Jowett said. Eventually, she asked him to do her a singular favour. Would he, knowing what he did of her religious views, come to London and administer to her the Holy Sacrament? He did not hesitate, and afterwards declared that he would always regard the occasion as a solemn event in his life. He was devoted to her; though the precise nature of his feelings towards her never quite transpired. Her feelings towards him were more mixed. At first, he was "that great and good man" —"that trûe saint, Mr. Jowett"; but, as time went on, some gall was mingled with the balm; the acrimony of her nature asserted itself. She felt that she gave more sympathy than she received; she was exhausted, she was annoyed, by his conversation. Her tongue, one day, could not refrain from shooting out at him. "He comes to me, and he talks to me," she said, "as if I were someone else."

At one time she had almost decided to end her life in retirement, as a patient at St. Thomas's Hospital. But partly owing to the persuasions of Mr. Jowett, she changed her mind; for forty-five years she remained in South Street; and in South Street she died. As old age approached, though her influence with the official world gradually

diminished, her activities seemed to remain as intense and widespread as before. When hospitals were to be built, when schemes of sanitary reform were in agitation, when wars broke out, she was still the adviser of all Europe. Still, with a characteristic self-assurance, she watched from her Mayfair bedroom over the welfare of India. Still, with an indefatigable enthusiasm, she pushed forward the work, which, perhaps, was nearer to her heart, more completely her own, than all the rest—the training of nurses. In her moments of deepest depression, when her greatest achievements seemed to lose their lustre, she thought of her nurses, and was comforted. The ways of God, she found, were strange indeed. "How inefficient I was in the Crimea," she noted. "Yet He has raised up from it trained nursing."

At other times she was better satisfied. Looking back, she was amazed by the enormous change which, since her early days, had come over the whole treatment of illness, the whole conception of public and domestic health—a change in which, she knew, she had played her part. One of her Indian admirers, the Aga Khan, came to visit her. She expatiated on the marvellous advances she had lived to see in the management of hospitals, in drainage, in ventilation, in sanitary work of every kind. There was a pause; and then, "Do you think you are improving?" asked the Aga Khan. She was a little taken aback, and said, "What do you mean by 'improving'?" He replied, "Believing more in God." She saw that he had a view of God which was different from hers. "A most interesting man," she noted after the interview; "but you could never teach him sanitation."

When old age actually came, something curious happened. Destiny, having waited very patiently, played a queer trick on Miss Nightingale. The benevolence and public spirit of that long life had only been equalled by its acerbity. Her virtue had dwelt in hardness, and she had poured forth her unstinted usefulness with a bitter smile upon her lips. And now the sarcastic years brought the proud woman her punishment. She was not to die as she had lived. The sting was to be taken out of her: she was to be made soft; she was to be reduced to compliance and complacency. The change came gradually, but at last it was unmistakable. The terrible commander who had driven Sidney Herbert to his death, to whom Mr. Jowett had applied the words of Homer, ἄμοτον μεμανῖα—raging insatiably—now accepted small compliments with gratitude, and indulged in sentimental friendships with young girls. The author of "*Notes on Nursing*"—that classical compendium of the besetting sins of the sisterhood, drawn up with the detailed acrimony, the vindictive relish, of a Swift—now spent long hours in composing sympathetic Addresses to Probationers, whom she petted and wept over in turn. And, at the same time there appeared a corresponding alteration in her physical mould. The thin, angular woman, with her haughty eye and her acrid mouth had vanished; and in her place was the rounded bulky form of a fat old lady, smiling all day long. Then something else became visible. The brain which had been steeled at Scutari was indeed, literally, growing soft. Senility—an ever more and more amiable senility—descended. Towards the end, consciousness itself grew lost in a roseate haze, and melted into nothingness. It was just then, three years before her death, when she was eighty-seven years old (1907), that those in authority bethought them that the opportune moment had come for bestowing a public honour on Florence Nightingale. She was offered the Order of Merit. That Order, whose roll contains, among other distinguished names, those of Sir Laurence Alma Tadema,[21] and Sir Edward Elgar,[22] is remarkable chiefly for the fact that, as its title indicates, it is bestowed because its recipient deserves it, and for no other reason. Miss Nightingale's representatives accepted the honour, and her name, after a lapse of many years, once more appeared in the Press. Congratulations from all sides came pouring in. There was a universal burst of enthusiasm—a final revivification of the ancient myth. Among her other admirers, the German Emperor took this opportunity of expressing his feelings towards her. "His Majesty," wrote the German Ambassador, "having just brought to a close a most enjoyable stay in the beautiful neighbourhood of your old home near Romsey, has commanded me to present you with some flowers as a token of his esteem." Then by Royal command, the Order of Merit was brought to South Street, and there was a little ceremony of presentation. Sir Douglas Dawson, after a short speech, stepped forward, and handed the insignia of the Order to Miss Nightingale. Propped up by pillows, she dimly recognised that some compliment was being paid her. "Too kind—too kind," she murmured; and she was not ironical.

(1918)

[21] Belgian-born English painter (1836-1912).
[22] English composer (1857-1934).

James Joyce

(1882-1941)

Despite the complexity of his later work, the main outline of James Joyce's prodigious achievement is simple and symmetrical. His early poems (*Chamber Music,* 1907) are conventional lyrics, and his one play (*Exiles,* 1918), is more important for its autobiographical overtones than as an effective drama. His reputation rests almost entirely on four major prose works: a collection of short stories—*Dubliners* (1914)—and three "novels"—*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). They reveal the evolution of his life and attitudes from his troubled schooldays in Ireland to almost the end of his long exile; they present the development of a style from clear-cut naturalism to obscure symbolism, from an orthodox Irish idiom to a unique polyglot jargon of his own creation.

The pattern of the first twenty years can be clearly discerned beneath the thin veil of fiction in *A Portrait of the Artist.* Joyce was born in Dublin of a "large, shabby-genteel" family which was steeped in Irish politics. A frail, sensitive youth with eyes weak almost to blindness, he suffered through a rigorous Catholic schooling. At University College, Dublin, while other students were learning Gaelic to play their roles in the Irish Renaissance, Joyce taught himself Norwegian to read the plays of Henrik Ibsen in the original. At seventeen he published a precocious essay on Ibsen in the *Fortnightly Review,* and at nineteen he and a fellow-student produced a bellicose pamphlet, *The Day of Rabblement,* in which they opposed the movement for a National Theater. On taking his degree in 1902, he left Dublin for Paris. Stephen Dedalus, at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist,* liberated from the restricting influences of his mother and his boyhood religion, takes his leave with a bold gesture in his journal:

> Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

Joyce was to return to Dublin briefly in 1904 on the death of his mother and again in 1912 in an effort to get his short stories published, but his voluntary exile was virtually complete. After brief interludes of studying medicine and attempting to train his fine tenor voice for the concert stage, he settled down to write. The rest of his life was spent in London, Trieste—where he kept his family going by teaching languages in a Berlitz school—Zurich—where he later returned to die—Rome—where he drudged for a time as a bank clerk—and Paris—where *Ulysses* was completed and *Finnegans Wake* laboriously contrived.

Joyce's early rebellion against the city of his birth is mirrored not only in his compact first novel but in his early collection of short stories. *Dubliners* had been ready for the press in 1906, but twenty-two publishers and printers turned it down; and when it finally was issued, "some very kind person" (the irony is Joyce's) bought and burned the entire edition because of certain presumably treasonable passages. The book is a series of case studies of representative Dublin citizens, most of whom, despite the beauty of their poetic speech, lead drab, frustrated lives in a world of pettiness and squalor. The stories are told in an objective, naturalistic manner which gives little promise of Joyce's later virtuosity. But they served his purpose of writing "a chapter of the moral history of Ireland" with Dublin as the "centre of paralysis."

Infinitely greater than the squabble over treason in *Dubliners* was the furor heard around the world when *Ulysses,* seven years in the making, finally appeared in Paris in 1922. Publication of a section in the *Little Review* had already put the censors on their guard, and immediately the shipments to both Great Britain and the United States were seized and burned by customs authorities. It was not until 1933 that United States District Judge John M. Woolsey issued his historic decree lifting the American ban. He argued that, after viewing Joyce's method and scheme as a whole and not in isolated passages, he could find no evidence of "dirt for dirt's sake."

Ulysses begins with Stephen Dedalus' return to Dublin to be present at his mother's deathbed. It is eight o'clock on the morning of June 16, 1904. When the long book ends, it is 2:45 the following morning. Joyce concentrates on the physical and mental wanderings of Leopold Bloom, the Jewish advertisement canvasser who plays Ulysses in this modern *Odyssey;* Stephen, who is Telemachus (Ulysses' son) in search of a spiritual father; and Molly Bloom, a lecherous, adulterous Penelope. The satirical portraiture of the Dubliners is mixed with the personal confession of *A Portrait of the Artist;* the colloquial dialogue of the short stories is blended with long passages of internal monologue and generous sections of masterful parody; naturalism is fused with symbolism; what was originally projected as a short story—"Mr. Bloom's Day in Dublin"—has been expanded into an allusive allegorical novel of astounding scope, a book which T. S. Eliot has called "the most considerable work of imagination in English in our time."

In 1929 appeared a small volume compiled by members of the fast-growing Joyce cult: *Our Exagmination round his factification for incamination of Work in Progress.* It threw some light on the project on which Joyce had been engaged since the publication of *Ulysses.* An intermittent series of chips from his workshop throughout the thirties—*Anna Livia Plurabelle* (1930), *Haveth Childer Everywhere* (1931), and others—hailed by admirers ever ready with "keys" to their meaning, kept the flame of interest burning. But only the most loyal Joyceites would maintain that the *opus* that finally emerged was worth seventeen long years of either work or waiting. In *Dubliners* Joyce had depicted certain types in the Irish metropolis; in *A Portrait of the Artist* he had portrayed Joyce; in *Ulysses* he had mercilessly X-rayed the common man; now in *Finnegans Wake* "H. C. Earwicker's subconscious mind," as Harry Levin asserts, was "the historical consciousness of the human race." In his last great experiment Joyce turned from analyzing the waking consciousness to exploring the mysterious twilight zone between waking and sleeping; he virtually abandoned naturalism for symbolism; and—not content with the incredibly rich vocabulary of *Ulysses* (a book that contains 29,899 different words)—he plunged into a fascinating semantic jungle of portmanteau words, intentional malapropisms, and macaronic puns. Word lovers have swum happily in *Finnegans Wake* as if wallowing in a giant cross-word puzzle. But most critics would agree that Joyce's more moderate experiment, *Ulysses,* is his masterpiece.

From *Ulysses*

The following selection contains about half of Leopold Bloom's third adventure, the funeral of Paddy Dignam. The event takes place at 11 A.M. and corresponds roughly to Ulysses' descent into Hades. With three of his acquaintances, including Simon Dedalus, father of Stephen, Bloom rides from the southeast corner of Dublin through the center of the city to the northwest suburb where the church is located. As the carriage bumps along from landmark to landmark, the internal monologue of the lonely wanderer is intertwined with strands of dialogue and description. The passage illustrates the disarming ease with which Joyce slips in and out of Bloom's meandering mind. A building, a statue, a man or woman on the sidewalk, a banal remark by one of his companions—any of these is enough to start the delicate mechanism of his mind on another wayward revery.

Martin Cunningham, first, poked his silkhatted head into the creaking carriage and, entering deftly, seated himself. Mr. Power stepped in after him, curving his height with care.

—Come on, Simon.

—After you, Mr. Bloom said.

Mr. Dedalus covered himself quickly and got in, saying:

—Yes, yes.

—Are we all here now? Martin Cunningham asked. Come along, Bloom.

Mr. Bloom entered and sat in the vacant place. He pulled the door to after him and slammed it tight till it shut tight. He passed an arm through the armstrap and looked seriously from the open carriage window at the lowered blinds of the avenue. One dragged aside: an old woman peeping. Nose whiteflattened against the pane. Thanking her stars she was passed over. Extraordinary the interest they take in a corpse. Glad to see us go we give them such trouble coming. Job seems to suit them. Huggermugger[1] in corners. Slop about in slipperslappers for fear he'd wake. Then getting it ready. Laying it out. Molly[2] and Mrs. Fleming[3] making the bed. Pull it more to your side. Our windingsheet. Never know who will touch you dead. Wash and shampoo. I believe they clip the nails and the hair. Keep a bit in an envelope. Grow all the same after. Unclean job.

All waited. Nothing was said. Stowing in the wreaths probably. I am sitting on something hard. Ah, that soap in my hip pocket. Better shift it out of that. Wait for an opportunity.

All waited. Then wheels were heard from in front turning: then nearer: then horses' hoofs. A jolt. Their carriage began to move, creaking and swaying. Other hoofs and creaking wheels started behind. The blinds of the avenue passed and number nine with its craped knocker, door ajar. At walking pace.

They waited still, their knees jogging, till they had turned and were passing along the tramtracks. Tritonville road. Quicker. The wheels rattled rolling over the cobbled causeway and the crazy glasses shook rattling in the doorframes.

—What way is he taking us? Mr. Power asked through both windows.

—Irishtown, Martin Cunningham said. Ringsend. Brunswick street.

Mr. Dedalus nodded, looking out.

—That's a fine old custom, he said. I am glad to see it has not died out.

All watched awhile through their windows caps and hats lifted by passers. Respect. The carriage swerved from the tramtrack to the smoother road past Watery lane. Mr. Bloom at gaze saw a lithe young man, clad in mourning, a wide hat.

—There's a friend of yours gone by, Dedalus, he said.

—Who is that?

—Your son and heir.

—Where is he? Mr. Dedalus said, stretching over, across.

The carriage, passing the open drains and mounds of ripped-up roadway before the tenement houses, lurched round the corner and, swerving back to the tramtrack, rolled on noisily with chattering wheels. Mr. Dedalus fell back, saying:

—Was that Mulligan cad with him? His *fidus Achates*?[4]

—No, Mr. Bloom said. He was alone.

—Down with his aunt Sally, I suppose, Mr. Dedalus said, the Goulding faction, the drunken little costdrawer and Crissie, papa's little lump of dung, the wise child that knows her own father.

Mr. Bloom smiled joylessly on Ringsend road. Wallace Bros. the bottleworks. Dodder bridge.

Richie Goulding and the legal bag. Goulding, Collis and Ward he calls the firm. His jokes are getting a bit damp. Great card he was. Waltzing in Stamer street with Ignatius Gallaher on a Sunday morning, the landlady's two hats pinned on his head. Out on the rampage allnight. Beginning to tell on him now: that backache of his, I fear. Wife ironing his back. Thinks he'll cure it with pills. All breadcrumbs they are. About six hundred per cent profit.

—He's in with a lowdown crowd, Mr. Dedalus snarled. That Mulligan is a contaminated bloody doubledyed ruffian by all accounts. His name stinks all over Dublin. But with the help of God and His blessed mother I'll make it my business to write a letter one of those days to his mother or his aunt or whatever she is that will open her eyes as wide as a gate. I'll tickle his catastrophe, believe you me.

He cried above the clatter of the wheels.

—I won't have her bastard of a nephew ruin my son. A counterjumper's son. Selling tapes in my cousin, Peter Paul M'Swiney's. Not likely.

He ceased. Mr. Bloom glanced from his angry moustache to Mr. Power's mild face and Martin

[1] secretly.

[2] Bloom's wife.

[3] Molly Bloom's maid, remembered at the deathbed of Bloom's son, Rudy.

[4] Buck Mulligan, the ribald medical student, is faithful to Stephen Dedalus as Achates was to Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Cunningham's eyes and beard, gravely shaking. Noisy selfwilled man. Full of his son. He is right. Something to hand on. If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house. Walking beside Molly in an Eton suit. My son. Me in his eyes. Strange feeling it would be. From me. Just a chance. Must have been that morning in Raymond terrace she was at the window, watching the two dogs at it by the wall of the cease to do evil. And the sergeant grinning up. She had that cream gown on with the rip she never stitched. Give us a touch, Poldy. God, I'm dying for it. How life begins.

Got big then. Had to refuse the Greystones concert. My son inside her. I could have helped him on in life. I could. Make him independent. Learn German too.

—Are we late? Mr. Power asked.

—Ten minutes, Martin Cunningham said, looking at his watch.

Molly. Milly.[5] Same thing watered down. Her tomboy oaths. O jumping Jupiter! Ye gods and little fishes! Still, she's a dear girl. Soon be a woman. Mullingar.[6] Dearest Papli.[7] Young student. Yes, yes: a woman too. Life. Life.

The carriage heeled over and back, their four trunks swaying.

—Corny[8] might have given us a more commodious yoke, Mr. Power said.

—He might, Mr. Dedalus said, if he hadn't that squint troubling him. Do you follow me?

He closed his left eye. Martin Cunningham began to brush away crustcrumbs from under his thighs.

—What is this, he said, in the name of God? Crumbs?

—Someone seems to have been making a picnic party here lately, Mr. Power said.

All raised their thighs, eyed with disfavour the mildewed buttonless leather of the seats. Mr. Dedalus, twisting his nose, frowned downward and said:

—Unless I'm greatly mistaken. What do you think, Martin?

—It struck me too, Martin Cunningham said.

Mr. Bloom set his thigh down. Glad I took that bath. Feel my feet quite clean. But I wish Mrs. Fleming had darned these socks better.

Mr. Dedalus sighed resignedly.

—After all, he said, it's the most natural thing in the world.

—Did Tom Kernan turn up? Martin Cunningham asked, twirling the peak of his beard gently.

—Yes, Mr. Bloom answered. He's behind with Ned Lambert and Hynes.

—And Corny Kelleher himself? Mr. Power asked.

—At the cemetery, Martin Cunningham said.

—I met M'Coy this morning, Mr. Bloom said. He said he'd try to come.

The carriage halted short.

—What's wrong?

—We're stopped.

—Where are we?

Mr. Bloom put his head out of the window.

—The grand canal, he said.

Gas works. Whooping cough they say it cures. Good job Milly never got it. Poor children! Doubles them up black and blue in convulsions. Shame really. Got off lightly with illness compared. Only measles. Flaxseed tea. Scarlatina influenza epidemics. Canvassing for death. Don't miss this chance. Dog's home over there. Poor old Athos!' Be good to Athos, Leopold, is my last wish. Thy will be done. We obey them in the grave. A dying scrawl. He took it to heart, pined away. Quiet brute. Old men's dogs usually are.

A raindrop spat on his hat. He drew back and saw an instant of shower spray dots over the grey flags. Apart. Curious. Like through a colander. I thought it would. My boots were creaking I remember now.

—The weather is changing, he said quietly.

—A pity it did not keep up fine, Martin Cunningham said.

—Wanted for the country, Mr. Power said. There's the sun again coming out.

Mr. Dedalus peering through his glasses towards the veiled sun, hurled a mute curse at the sky.

—It's as uncertain as a child's bottom, he said.

—We're off again.

The carriage turned again its stiff wheels and their trunks swayed gently. Martin Cunningham twirled more quickly the peak of his beard.

—Tom Kernan was immense last night, he said. And Paddy Leonard taking him off to his face.

—O draw him out, Martin, Mr. Power said eagerly. Wait till you hear him, Simon, on Ben Dollards' singing of *The Croppy Boy*.

—Immense, Martin Cunningham said pompously. *His singing of that simple ballad, Martin,*

[5] Bloom's fifteen-year-old daughter Millicent.
[6] place where Millicent is employed.
[7] her baby nickname for Bloom.
[8] Corny Kelleher, the undertaker's assistant.
[9] Bloom's father's dog.

is the most trenchant rendering I ever heard in the whole course of my experience.

—Trenchant, Mr. Power said laughing. He's dead nuts on that. And the retrospective arrangement.

—Did you read Dan Dawson's speech? Martin Cunningham asked.

—I did not then, Mr. Dedalus said. Where is it?

—In the paper this morning.

Mr. Bloom took the paper from his inside pocket. That book I must change for her.

—No, no, Mr. Dedalus said quickly. Later on, please.

Mr. Bloom's glance travelled down the edge of the paper, scanning the deaths. Callan, Coleman, Dignam, Fawcett, Lowry, Naumann, Peake, what Peake is that? is it the chap was in Crosbie and Alleyne's? No, Sexton, Urbright. Inked characters fast fading on the frayed breaking paper. Thanks to the Little Flower. Sadly missed. To the inexpressible grief of his. Aged 88 after a long and tedious illness. Month's mind Quinlan. On whose soul Sweet Jesus have mercy.

It is now a month since dear Henry fled
To his home up above in the sky
While his family weeps and mourns his loss
Hoping some day to meet him on high.

I tore up the envelope?[10] Yes. Where did I put her letter after I read it in the bath? He patted his waistcoat pocket. There all right. Dear Henry fled. Before my patience are exhausted.

National school. Meade's yard.[11] The hazard.[12] Only two there now. Nodding. Full as a tick. Too much bone in their skulls. The other trotting round with a fare. An hour ago I was passing there. The jarvies[13] raised their hats.

A pointsman's[14] back straightened itself upright suddenly against a tramway standard by Mr. Bloom's window. Couldn't they invent something automatic so that the wheel itself much handier? Well but that fellow would lose his job then? Well but then another fellow would get a job making the new invention?

Ancient concert rooms. Nothing on there. A man in a buff suit with a crape armlet. Not much grief there. Quarter mourning. People in law, perhaps.

They went past the bleak pulpit of Saint Mark's, under the railway bridge, past the Queen's theatre: in silence. Hoardings. Eugene Stratton. Mrs. Bandman Palmer. Could I go to see *Leah* tonight, I wonder. I said I. Or the *Lily of Killarney?* Elster Grimes Opera company. Big powerful change. Wet bright bills for next week. *Fun on the Bristol.* Martin Cunningham could work a pass for the Gaiety. Have to stand a drink or two. As broad as it's long.

He's coming in the afternoon. Her songs.

Plasto's. Sir Philip Crampton's memorial fountain bust. Who was he?

—How do you do? Martin Cunningham said, raising his palm to his brow in salute.

—He doesn't see us, Mr. Power said. Yes, he does. How do you do?

—Who? Mr. Dedalus asked.

—Blazes Boylan,[15] Mr. Power said. There he is airing his quiff.[16] Just that moment I was thinking.

Mr. Dedalus bent across to salute. From the door of the Red Bank the white disc of a straw hat flashed reply: passed.

Mr. Bloom reviewed the nails of his left hand, then those of his right hand. The nails, yes. Is there anything more in him that they she sees? Fascination. Worst man in Dublin. That keeps him alive. They sometimes feel what a person is. Instinct. But a type like that. My nails. I am just looking at them: well pared. And after: thinking alone. Body getting a bit softy. I would notice that from remembering. What causes that I suppose the skin can't contract quickly enough when the flesh falls off. But the shape is there. The shape is there still. Shoulders. Hips. Plump. Night of the dance dressing. Shift stuck between the cheeks behind.

He clasped his hands between his knees and, satisfied, sent his vacant glance over their faces.

Mr. Power asked:

—How is the concert tour getting on, Bloom?

—O very well, Mr. Bloom said. I hear great accounts of it. It's a good idea, you see . . .

—Are you going yourself?

—Well no, Mr. Bloom said. In point of fact I have to go down to the county Clare on some private business. You see the idea is to tour the chief towns. What you lose on one you can make up on the other.

—Quite so, Martin Cunningham said. Mary Anderson is up there now.

[10] Bloom recalls a letter from his secret correspondent, Martha Clifford, who addresses him as "Dear Henry."
[11] lumber yard.
[12] cabstand.
[13] cabbies.
[14] switchman.
[15] Molly's concert manager and current lover.
[16] oiled hair.

—Have you good artists?

—Louis Werner is touring her, Mr. Bloom said. O yes, we'll have all the topnobbers. J. C. Doyle and John MacCormack I hope and. The best, in fact.

—*And Madame*, Mr. Power said, smiling. Last but not least.

Mr. Bloom unclasped his hands in a gesture of soft politeness and clasped them. Smith O'Brien. Someone has laid a bunch of flowers there. Woman. Must be his deathday. For many happy returns. The carriage wheeling by Farrell's statue united noiselessly their unresisting knees.

Out: a dullgarbed old man from the curbstone tendered his wares, his mouth opening· oot.

—Four bootlaces for a penny.

Wonder why he was struck off the rolls. Had his office in Hume street. Same house as Molly's namesake.[17] Tweedy, crown solicitor for Waterford. Has that silk hat ever since. Relics of old decency. Mourning too. Terrible comedown, poor wretch! Kicked about like snuff at a wake. O'Callaghan on his last legs.

And *Madame*. Twenty past eleven. Up. Mrs. Fleming is in to clean. Doing her hair, humming: *voglio e non vorrei*. No: *vorrei e non*. Looking at the tips of her hairs to see if they are split. *Mi trema un poco il*. Beautiful on that *tre* her voice is. weeping tone. A thrush. A throstle. There is a word throstle that expressed that.

His eyes parsed lightly over Mr. Power's goodlooking face. Greyish over the ears. *Madame*: smiling. I smiled back. A smile goes a long way. Only politeness perhaps. Nice fellow. Who knows is that true about the woman he keeps? Not pleasant for the wife. Yet they say, who was it told me, there is no carnal. You would imagine that would get played out pretty quick. Yes, it was Crofton met him one evening bringing her a pound of rumpsteak. What is this she was? Barmaid in Jury's. Or the Moira, was it?

They passed under the hugecloaked Liberator's form.

Martin Cunningham nudged Mr. Power.

—Of the tribe of Reuben, he said.

A tall blackbearded figure, bent on a stick, stumping round the corner of Elvery's elephant house showed them a curved hand open on his spine.

—In all his pristine beauty, Mr. Power said.

Mr. Dedalus looked after the stumping figure and said mildly:

—The devil break the hasp of your back!

Mr. Power, collapsing in laughter, shaded his face from the window as the carriage passed Gray's statue.

—We have all been there, Martin Cunningham said broadly. His eyes met Mr. Bloom's eyes. He caressed his beard adding:

—Well, nearly all of us.

Mr. Bloom began to speak with sudden eagerness to his companion's faces.

—That's an awfully good one that's going the rounds about Reuben J. and the son.

—About the boatman? Mr. Power asked.

—Yes. Isn't it awfully good?

—What is that? Mr. Dedalus asked. I didn't hear it.

—There was a girl in the case, Mr. Bloom began, and he determined to send him to the isle of Man out of harm's way but when they were both. . . .

—What? Mr. Dedalus asked. That confirmed bloody hobbledehoy is it?

—Yes, Mr. Bloom said. They were both on the way to the boat and he tried to drown . . .

—Drown Barabbas! Mr. Dedalus cried. I wish to Christ he did!

Mr. Power sent a long laugh down his shaded nostrils.

—No, Mr. Bloom said, the son himself . . .

Martin Cunningham thwarted his speech rudely.

—Reuben J. and the son were piking it down the quay next the river on their way to the isle of Man boat and the young chiseller suddenly got loose and over the wall with him into the Liffey.

—For God's sake! Mr. Dedalus exclaimed in fright. Is he dead?

—Dead! Martin Cunningham cried. Not he! A boatman got a pole and fished him out by the slack of the breeches and he was landed up to the father on the quay. More dead than alive. Half the town was there.

—Yes, Mr. Bloom said. But the funny part is . . .

—And Reuben J., Martin Cunningham said, gave the boatman a florin for saving his son's life.

A stifled sigh came from under Mr. Power's hand.

—O, he did, Martin Cunningham affirmed. Like a hero. A silver florin.

—Isn't it awfully good? Mr. Bloom said eagerly.

—One and eightpence too much, Mr. Dedalus said drily.

Mr. Power's choked laugh burst quietly in the carriage.

Nelson's pillar.

—Eight plums a penny! Eight for a penny!

[17] Molly's middle name is Tweedy.

—We had better look a little serious, Martin Cunningham said.

Mr. Dedalus sighed.

—And then indeed, he said, poor little Paddy wouldn't grudge us a laugh. Many a good one he told himself.

—The Lord forgive me! Mr. Power said, wiping his wet eyes with his fingers. Poor Paddy! I little thought a week ago when I saw him last and he was in his usual health that I'd be driving after him like this. He's gone from us.

—As decent a little man as ever wore a hat, Mr. Dedalus said. He went very suddenly.

—Breakdown, Martin Cunningham said. Heart. He tapped his chest sadly.

Blazing face: redhot. Too much John Barleycorn. Cure for a red nose. Drink like the devil till it turns adelite. A lot of money he spent colouring it.

Mr. Power gazed at the passing houses with rueful apprehension.

—He had a sudden death, poor fellow, he said.

—The best death, Mr. Bloom said.

Their wide open eyes looked at him.

—No suffering, he said. A moment and all is over. Like dying in sleep. No-one spoke.

Dead side of the street this. Dull business by day, land agents, temperance hotel, Falconer's railway guide, civil service college, Gill's, catholic club, the industrious blind. Why? Some reason. Sun or wind. At night too. Chummies[18] and slaveys. Under the patronage of the late Father Mathew. Foundation stone for Parnell.[19] Breakdown. Heart.

White horses with white frontlet plumes came round the Rotunda corner, galloping. A tiny coffin flashed by. In a hurry to bury. A mourning coach. Unmarried. Black for the married. Piebald for bachelors. Dun for a nun.

—Sad, Martin Cunningham said. A child.

A dwarf's face mauve and wrinkled like little Rudy's was. Dwarf's body, weak as putty, in a whitelined deal box. Burial friendly society pays. Penny a week for a sod of turf. Our. Little. Beggar. Baby. Meant nothing. Mistake of nature. If it's healthy it's from the mother. If not the man. Better luck next time.

—Poor little thing, Mr. Dedalus said. It's well out of it.

The carriage climbed more slowly the hill of Rutland square. Rattle his bones. Over the stones. Only a pauper. Nobody owns.

[18] chimney sweeps' boys.

[19] Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), champion of home rule for Ireland.

—In the midst of life, Martin Cunningham said.

—But the worst of all, Mr. Power said, is the man who takes his own life.

Martin Cunningham drew out his watch briskly, coughed and put it back.

—The greatest disgrace to have in the family, Mr. Power added.

—Temporary insanity, of course, Martin Cunningham said decisively. We must take a charitable view of it.

—They say a man who does it is a coward, Mr. Dedalus said.

—It is not for us to judge, Martin Cunningham said.

Mr. Bloom, about to speak, closed his lips again. Martin Cunningham's large eyes. Looking away now. Sympathetic human man he is. Intelligent. Like Shakespeare's face. Always a good word to say. They have no mercy on that here or infanticide. Refuse christian burial. They used to drive a stake of wood through his heart in the grave. As if it wasn't broken already. Yet sometimes they repent too late. Found in the riverbed clutching rushes. He looked at me. And that awful drunkard of a wife of his.[20] Setting up house for her time after time and then pawning the furniture on him every Saturday almost. Leading him the life of the damned. Wear the heart out of a stone, that. Monday morning start afresh. Shoulder to the wheel. Lord, she must have looked a sight that night, Dedalus told me he was in there. Drunk about the place and capering with Martin's umbrella:

—And they call me the jewel of Asia,
Of Asia,
The getsha.

He looked away from me. He knows. Rattle his bones.

That afternoon of the inquest. The redlabelled bottle on the table. The room in the hotel with hunting pictures. Stuffy it was. Sunlight through the slats of the Venetian blinds. The coroner's ears, big and hairy. Boots giving evidence. Thought he was asleep first. Then saw like yellow streaks on his face. Had slipped down to the foot of the bed. Verdict: overdose. Death by misadventure. The letter. For my son Leopold.

No more pain. Wake no more. Nobody owns.

The carriage rattled swiftly along Blessington street. Over the stones.

—We are going the pace, I think, Martin Cunningham said.

[20] i.e. Cunningham's wife.

—God grant he doesn't upset us on the road, Mr. Power said.

—I hope not, Martin Cunningham said. That will be a great race tomorrow in Germany. The Gordon Bennett.

—Yes, by Jove, Mr. Dedalus said. That will be worth seeing, faith.

As they turned into Berkeley street a streetorgan near the Basin sent over and after them a rollicking rattling song of the halls. Has anybody here seen Kelly? Kay ee double ell wy. Dead march from *Saul*. He's as bad as old Antonio. He left me on my owndo. Pirouette! The *Mater Misericordiæ*. Eccles street. My house down there. Big place. Ward for incurables there. Very encouraging. Our Lady's Hospice for the dying. Deadhouse handy underneath. Where old Mrs. Riordan died. They look terrible the women. Her feeding cup and rubbing her mouth with the spoon. Then the screen round her bed for her to die. Nice young student that was dressed that bite the bee gave me. He's gone over to the lying-in hospital they told me. From one extreme to the other.

The carriage galloped round a corner: stopped.

—What's wrong now?

A divided drove of branded cattle passed the windows, lowing, slouching by on padded hoofs, whisking their tails slowly on their clotted bony croups. Outside them and through them ran raddled sheep bleating their fear.

—Emigrants, Mr. Power said.

—Huuuh! the drover's voice cried, his switch sounding on their flanks. Huuuh! Out of that!

Thursday of course. Tomorrow is killing day. Springers. Cuffe sold them about twenty-seven quid each. For Liverpool probably. Roast beef for old England. They buy up all the juicy ones. And then the fifth quarter is lost: all that raw stuff, hide, hair, horns. Comes to a big thing in a year. Dead meat trade. Byproducts of the slaughterhouses for tanneries, soap, margarine. Wonder if that dodge works now getting dicky meat[21] off the train at Clonsilla.

The carriage moved on through the drove.

—I can't make out why the corporation doesn't run a tramline from the parkgate to the quays, Mr. Bloom said. All those animals could be taken in trucks down to the boats.

—Instead of blocking up the thoroughfare, Martin Cunningham said. Quite right. They ought to.

—Yes, Mr. Bloom said, and another thing I often thought is to have municipal funeral trams like they have in Milan, you know. Run the line out to the cemetery gates and have special trams, hearse and carriage and all. Don't you see what I mean?

—O that be damned for a story, Mr. Dedalus said. Pullman car and saloon diningroom.

—A poor lookout for Corny, Mr. Power added.

—Why? Mr. Bloom asked, turning to Mr. Dedalus. Wouldn't it be more decent than galloping two abreast?

—Well, there's something in that, Mr. Dedalus granted.

—And, Martin Cunningham said, we wouldn't have scenes like that when the hearse capsized round Dunphy's and upset the coffin on to the road.

—That was terrible, Mr. Power's shocked face said, and the corpse fell about the road. Terrible!

—First round Dunphy's, Mr. Dedalus said, nodding. Gordon Bennett cup.

—Praises be to God! Martin Cunningham said piously.

Bom! Upset. A coffin bumped out on to the road. Burst open. Paddy Dignam shot out and rolling over stiff in the dust in a brown habit too large for him. Red face: grey now. Mouth fallen open. Asking what's up now. Quite right to close it. Looks horrid open. Then the insides decompose quickly. Much better to close up all the orifices. Yes, also. With wax. The sphincter loose. Seal up all.

—Dunphy's, Mr. Power announced as the carriage turned right.

Dunphy's corner. Mourning coaches drawn up drowning their grief. A pause by the wayside. Tiptop position for a pub. Expect we'll pull up here on the way back to drink his health. Pass round the consolation. Elixir of life.

But suppose now it did happen. Would he bleed if a nail say cut him in the knocking about? He would and he wouldn't, I suppose. Depends on where. The circulation stops. Still some might ooze out of an artery. It would be better to bury them in red: a dark red.

In silence they drove along Phibsborough road. An empty hearse trotted by, coming from the cemetery: looks relieved.

Crossguns bridge: the royal canal.

Water rushed roaring through the sluices. A man stood on his dropping barge between clamps of turf. On the towpath by the lock a slack-tethered horse. Aboard of the *Bugabu*.

Their eyes watched him. On the slow weedy waterway he had floated on his raft coastward over Ireland drawn by a haulage rope past beds of

[21] cheap meat.

reeds, over slime, mudchoked bottles, carrion dogs. Athlone, Mullingar, Moyvalley, I could make a walking tour to see Milly by the canal. Or cycle down. Hire some old crock, safety. Wren had one the other day at the auction but a lady's. Developing waterways. James M'Cann's hobby to row me o'er the ferry. Cheaper transit. By easy stages. Houseboats. Camping out. Also hearses. To heaven by water. Perhaps I will without writing. Come as a surprise, Leixlip, Clonsilla. Dropping down, lock by lock to Dublin. With turf from the midland bogs. Salute. He lifted his brown straw hat, saluting Paddy Dignam.

They drove on past Brain Boroimhe house. Near it now.

—I wonder how is our friend Fogarty getting on, Mr. Power said.

—Better ask Tom Kernan, Mr. Dedalus said.

—How is that? Martin Cunningham said. Left him weeping I suppose.

—Though lost to sight, Mr. Dedalus said, to memory dear.

The carriage steered left for Finglas road.

The stonecutter's yard on the right. Last lap. Crowded on the spit of land silent shapes appeared, white, sorrowful, holding out calm hands, knelt in grief, pointing. Fragments of shapes, hewn. In white silence: appealing. The best obtainable. Thos. H. Dennany, monumental builder and sculptor.

Passed.

On the curbstone before Jimmy Geary the sexton's an old tramp sat, grumbling, emptying the dirt and stones out of his huge dustbrown yawning boot. After life's journey.

Gloomy gardens then went by, one by one: gloomy houses.

Mr. Power pointed.

—That is where Childs was murdered, he said. The last house.

So it is, Dr. Dedalus said. A gruesome case. Seymour Bushe got him off. Murdered his brother. Or so they said.

—The crown had no evidence, Mr. Power said.

—Only circumstantial, Martin Cunningham said. That's the maxim of the law. Better for ninety-nine guilty to escape than for one innocent person to be wrongfully condemned.

They looked. Murderer's ground. It passed darkly. Shuttered, tenantless, unweeded garden. Whole place gone to hell. Wrongfully condemned. Murder. The murderer's image in the eye of the murdered. They love reading about it. Man's head found in a garden. Her clothing consisted of. How she met her death. Recent outrage. The weapon used. Murderer is still at large. Clues. A shoelace. The body to be exhumed. Murder will out.

Cramped in this carriage. She mightn't like me to come that way without letting her know. Must be careful about women. Catch them once with their pants down. Never forgive you after. Fifteen.

The high railings of Prospects rippled past their gaze. Dark poplars, rare white forms. Forms more frequent, white shapes thronged amid the trees, white forms and fragments streaming by mutely, sustaining vain gestures on the air.

The felly harshed against the curbstone: stopped. Martin Cunningham put out his arm and, wrenching back the handle, shoved the door open with his knee. He stepped out. Mr. Power and Mr. Dedalus followed.

Change that soap now.[22] Mr. Bloom's hand unbuttoned his hip pocket swiftly and transferred the paperstuck soap to his inner handkerchief pocket. He stepped out of the carriage, replacing the newspaper his other hand still held.

Paltry funeral: coach and three carriage. It's all the same. Pallbearers, gold reins, requiem mass, firing a volley. Pomp of death. Beyond the hind carriage a hawker stood by his barrow of cakes and fruit. Simnel cakes those are, stuck together: cakes for the dead. Dogbiscuits. Who ate them? Mourners coming out.

He followed his companions. Mr. Kernan and Ned Lambert followed, Hynes walking after them. Corny Kelleher stood by the opened hearse and took out the two wreaths. He handed one to the boy.

Where is that child's funeral disappeared to?

A team of horses passed from Finglas with toiling plodding tread, dragging through the funereal silence a creaking wagon on which lay a granite block. The waggoner marching at their head saluted.

Coffin now. Got here before us, dead as he is. Horse looking round at it with his plume skeowways. Dull eye: collar tight on his neck, pressing on a bloodvessel or something. Do they know what they cart out here every day? Must be twenty or thirty funerals every day. Then Mount Jerome for the protestants. Funerals all over the world everywhere every minute. Shovelling them under by the cartload doublequick. Thousands every hour. Too many in the world.

Mourners came out through the gates: woman and a girl. Leanjawed harpy, hard woman at a

[22] Bloom has previously bought a cake of soap for Molly.

bargain, her bonnet awry. Girl's face stained with dirt and tears, holding the woman's arm looking up at her for a sign to cry. Fish's face, bloodless and livid.

The mutes shouldered the coffin and bore it in through the gates. So much dead weight. Felt heavier myself stepping out of that bath. First the stiff: then the friends of the stiff. Corny Kelleher and the boy followed with their wreaths. Who is that beside them? Ah, the brother-in-law.

All walked after.

Martin Cunningham whispered:

—I was in mortal agony with you talking of suicide before Bloom.

—What? Mr. Power whispered. How so?

—His father poisoned himself, Martin Cunningham whispered. Had the Queen's hotel in Ennis. You heard him say he was going to Clare. Anniversary.

—O God! Mr. Power whispered. First I heard of it. Poisoned himself!

He glanced behind him to where a face with dark thinking eyes followed towards the cardinal's mausoleum. Speaking.

—Was he insured? Mr. Bloom asked.

—I believe so, Mr. Kernan answered, but the policy was heavily mortgaged. Martin is trying to get the youngster into Artane.

—How many children did he leave?

—Five. Ned Lambert says he'll try to get one of the girls into Todd's.

—A sad case, Mr. Bloom said gently. Five young children.

—A great blow to the poor wife, Mr. Kernan added.

—Indeed yes, Mr. Bloom agreed.

Has the laugh at him now.

He looked down at the boots he had blacked and polished. She had outlived him, lost her husband. More dead for her than for me. One must outlive the other. Wise men say. There are more women than men in the world. Condole with her. Your terrible loss. I hope you'll soon follow him. For Hindu widows only. She would marry another. Him? No. Yet who knows after? Widowhood not the thing since the old queen died. Drawn on a guncarriage. Victoria and Albert. Frogmore memorial mourning. But in the end she put a few violets in her bonnet. Vain in her heart of hearts. All for a shadow. Consort not even a king. Her son was the substance. Something new to hope for not like the past she wanted back, waiting. It never comes. One must go first: alone under the ground: and lie no more in her warm bed.

—How are you, Simon? Ned Lambert said softly, clasping hands. Haven't seen you for a month of Sundays.

—Never better. How are all in Cork's own town?

—I was down there for the Cork park races on Easter Monday, Ned Lambert said. Same old six and eightpence. Stopped with Dick Tivy.

—And how is Dick, the solid man?

—Nothing between himself and heaven, Ned Lambert answered.

—By the holy Paul! Mr. Dedalus said in subdued wonder. Dick Tivy bald?

—Martin is going to get up a whip for the youngsters, Ned Lambert said, pointing ahead. A few bob a skull. Just to keep them going till the insurance is cleared up.

—Yes, yes, Mr. Dedalus said dubiously. Is that the eldest boy in front?

—Yes, Ned Lambert said, with the wife's brother. John Henry Menton is behind. He put down his name for a quid.

—I'll engage he did, Mr. Dedalus said. I often told poor Paddy he ought to mind that job. John Henry is not the worst in the world.

—How did he lose it? Ned Lambert asked. Liquor, what?

—Many a good man's fault, Mr. Dedalus said with a sigh.

They halted about the door of the mortuary chapel. Mr. Bloom stood behind the boy with the wreath, looking down at his sleek combed hair and the slender furrowed neck inside his brandnew collar. Poor boy! Was he there when the father? Both unconscious. Lighten up at the last moment and recognize for the last time. All he might have done. I owe three shillings to O'Grady. Would he understand? The mutes bore the coffin into the chapel. Which end is his head?

After a moment he followed the others in, blinking in the screened light. The coffin lay on its bier before the chancel four tall yellow candles at its corners. Always in front of us. Corny Kelleher, laying a wreath at each fore corner, beckoned to the boy to kneel. The mourners knelt here and there in praying desks. Mr. Bloom stood behind near the font and, when all had knelt dropped carefully his unfolded newspaper from his pocket and knelt his right knee upon it. He fitted his black hat gently on his left knee and, holding its brim, bent over piously. . . . (1922)

Katherine Mansfield

(1888-1923)

Katherine Mansfield was born Katherine Beauchamp in Wellington, New Zealand. From 1902 to 1905 she was a student at Queen's College, London, and she returned in 1909 to continue her studies in music and literature. Her first collection of short stories, *In a German Pension* (1911), resulted from a trip to Germany to convalesce from one of the numerous attacks of illness which filled her short life with periodic despair. In 1912 she married John Middleton Murry, an Oxford undergraduate who was making his serious debut in the literary world as co-editor of a little magazine called *Rhythm*. The most important achievement of its short life was the publication of some of Katherine Mansfield's stories. She did not, however, begin to reach a wide reading public until 1919, the year in which her husband became editor of the *Athenaeum*. Between that date and her death from tuberculosis four years later, she wrote weekly book reviews for the magazine and published the three volumes of short stories on which her reputation firmly rests: *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920), *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), and *The Doves' Nest and Other Stories* (1923).

As her journal and letters reveal, Katherine Mansfield was a sensitive artist who tirelessly pursued perfection within the most exacting limits. Instead of intriguing her reader with eccentric personalities in unusual circumstances, she liked to pry behind the curtain which obscures the everyday lives of everyday people. Instead of entangling herself in a fishnet of plot, she was content to capture the elusive mood of a moment in the life of a single character. "Bliss" is a record of a happy wife's swift disillusionment about her husband. "The Garden Party" pictures the emotional crossroads where an adolescent girl becomes suddenly aware of both the evil of caste and the beauty and horror of sudden death. "Miss Brill" reveals the awakening of a lonely spinster when the thoughtless remarks of a pair of adolescent lovers shatter her delicate dream world. "The Fly" focuses a burning glass on an ordinary man in a mood of unconscious sadism.

Two of the commonest critical clichés about Katherine Mansfield have been refuted by her most ardent admirers. The generality about her great debt to Chekov they answer with the assertion that she would have written as she did if the Russian master had never lived. To the commonplace about the limitations of her art they reply that onto her miniature screens she projected a fuller grasp of the realities of life than appears in the lyrical novels of the aristocratic Virginia Woolf.

In summing up his wife's achievement, Murry emphasizes "one element in her nature which was essential to a peculiar quality of her work . . . a kind of *purity*. It is as though the glass through which she looked upon life were crystal clear." Two sentences from her own journal throw even more light on her stories: "I have a terribly sensitive mind which receives every impression." "I feel always trembling on the brink of poetry."

The Fly

"Y' are very snug in here," piped old Mr. Woodifield, and he peered out of the great, green leather arm-chair by his friend, the boss's desk, as a baby peers out of its pram. His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, since his . . . stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up in the house every day of the week except Tuesday. On Tuesday he was dressed up and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City for the day. Though what he did there the wife and girls couldn't imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to his friends, they

supposed. . . . Well, perhaps so. All the same, we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves. So there sat old Woodifield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he, and still going strong, still at the helm. It did one good to see him.

Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added, "It's snug in here, upon my word!"

"Yes, it's comfortable enough," agreed the boss, and he flipped *The Financial Times* with a paper-knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

"I've had it done up lately," he explained, as he had explained for the past—how many?—weeks. "New carpet," and he pointed to the bright red carpet with a pattern of large white rings. "New furniture," and he nodded towards the massive bookcase and the table with legs like twisted treacle. "Electric heating!" He waved almost exultantly towards the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing so softly in the tilted copper pan.

But he did not draw old Woodifield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.

"There was something I wanted to tell you," said old Woodifield, and his eyes grew dim remembering. "Now what was it? I had it in my mind when I started out this morning." His hands began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

Poor old chap, he's on his last pins, thought the boss. And, feeling kindly, he winked at the old man, and said jokingly, "I tell you what. I've got a little drop of something here that'll do you good before you go out into the cold again. It's beautiful stuff. It wouldn't hurt a child." He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. "That's the medicine," said he. "And the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q.T. it came from the cellars at Windsor Castle."

Old Woodifield's mouth fell open at the sight. He couldn't have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit.

"It's whisky, ain't it?" he piped, feebly.

The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whisky it was.

"D'you know," said he, peering up at the boss wonderingly, "they won't let me touch it at home." And he looked as though he was going to cry.

"Ah, that's where we know a bit more than the ladies," cried the boss, swooping across for two tumblers that stood on the table with the water-bottle, and pouring a generous finger into each. "Drink it down. It'll do you good. And don't put any water with it. It's sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this. Ah!" He tossed off his, pulled out his handkerchief, hastily wiped his moustaches, and cocked an eye at old Woodifield, who was rolling his in his chaps.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly, "It's nutty!"

But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain—he remembered.

"That was it," he said, heaving himself out of his chair. "I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They are quite near each other, it seems."

Old Woodifield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver of his eyelids showed that he heard.

"The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept," piped the old voice. "Beautifully looked after. Couldn't be better if they were at home. You've not been across, have yer?"

"No, no!" For various reasons the boss had not been across.

"There's miles of it," quavered old Woodifield, "and it's all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths." It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice broad path.

The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully.

"D'you know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?" he piped. "Ten francs! Robbery, I call it. It was a little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than a half-crown. And she hadn't taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought the pot away with her to teach 'em a lesson. Quite right, too; it's trading on our feelings. They think because we're over there having a look around we're ready to pay anything. That's what it is." And he turned towards the door.

"Quite right, quite right!" cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea. He came round by his desk, followed the shuffling

footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodifield was gone.

For a long moment the boss stayed, staring at nothing, while the grey-haired office messenger, watching him, dodged in and out of his cubby-hole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run: "I'll see nobody for half an hour, Macey," said the boss. "Understand? Nobody at all."

"Very good, sir."

The door shut, the firm, heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair, and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands. He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep. . . .

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodifield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever. "My son!" groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible? His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together; they had come back by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father! No wonder; he had taken to it marvellously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man jack of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoiled. No, he was just his bright, natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, "Simply splendid!"

But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. "Deeply regret to inform you . . ." And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in ruins.

Six years ago, six years . . . How quickly time passed! It might have happened yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face; he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph. But it wasn't a favourite photograph of his; the expression was unnatural. It was cold, even stern-looking. The boy had never looked like that.

At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his broad inkpot, and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Help! help! said those struggling legs. But the sides of the inkpot were wet and slippery; it fell back again and began to swim. The boss took up a pen, picked the fly out of the ink, and shook it on to a piece of blotting-paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that oozed round it. Then the front legs waved, took hold, and, pulling its small sodden body up, it began the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing, as the stone goes over and under the scythe. Then there was a pause, while the fly, seeming to stand on the tips of its toes, tried to expand first one wing and then the other. It succeeded at last, and, sitting down, it began, like a minute cat, to clean its face. Now one could imagine that the little front legs rubbed against each other lightly, joyfully. The horrible danger was over; it had escaped; it was ready for life again.

But just then the boss had an idea. He plunged his pen back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist on the blotting-paper, and as the fly tried its wings down came a great heavy blot. What would it make of that? What indeed! The little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.

He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of . . . But the fly had again finished its laborious task, and the boss had just time to refill his pen, to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? A painful moment of suspense followed. But be-

hold, the front legs were again waving; the boss felt a rush of relief. He leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly, "You artful little b. . . ." And he actually had the brilliant notion of breathing on it to help the drying process. All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as he dipped the pen into the inkpot.

It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

"Come on," said the boss. "Look sharp!" And he stirred it with his pen—in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket, but such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.

"Bring me some fresh blotting-paper," he said, sternly, "and look sharp about it." And while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was . . . He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember. (1923)

Virginia Woolf

(1882-1941)

It is not strange that Virginia Stephen, with her particular heredity and environment, should have grown up to be a brilliant writer. Her father was Sir Leslie Stephen, distinguished editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography,* and she was related to Charles Darwin, John Addington Symonds, and Lytton Strachey. On the calling cards at her childhood home were some of the great names in contemporary literature, both English and American: Meredith, Ruskin, Stevenson, Hardy, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and her godfather, James Russell Lowell. As she grew older, Virginia, with a sister and two brothers, formed the nucleus of the select Bloomsbury Group, which was to include such celebrities as her writer husband Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, Strachey, the economist John Maynard Keynes, the painter Roger Fry, and the art critic Clive Bell. In Bloomsbury, not far from the British Museum, she lived until early in the Second World War, when the Woolfs, already bombed out of two homes, fled to a summer residence near Lewes. Here, driven to distraction by her inability to concentrate on her writing, she drowned herself in the River Ouse.

Her first two novels, *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919) revealed little of the special quality which was to stamp her as a ceaseless experimenter in narrative technique. But in 1919, in a short critical essay entitled *Modern Fiction,* she announced her new credo. She pointed to the unreality of the novels of three successful "realists"—H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennett. In their solid, well-planned tales, she argued, "the writer seems constrained not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all the figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour." Life, she complained, was not like that. In a single moment on an ordinary day an ordinary mind was being constantly bombarded with impressions, "an incessant shower of innumerable atoms." The free writer would convey this flow of impressions untrammeled by conventions about plot or tragedy or comedy or love interest or Bond Street buttons or that great deceiver, time.

"Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."

When portions of Joyce's *Ulysses* were only beginning to appear in the *Little Review*, Virginia Woolf had clearly defined the so-called stream-of-consciousness, which was to flood English and American fiction for the next twenty years.

In 1924 she returned to her thesis in a controversial essay entitled *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. Meanwhile she had already published the first of a number of original novels which were to put it to the test. *Jacob's Room* (1922) is the plotless life of a young man told through its effect on the people and things which swim into his ken. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), clearly indebted to *Ulysses,* the reader floats through the mind of an ordinary woman on the single day when she is reunited with an old lover. In *To the Lighthouse* (1927), often considered her best novel, Mrs. Woolf expanded her scheme to include a group of more complex people centered in a summer house on the Scottish coast. In *The Waves* (1931) she revealed the lives of three men and three women by means of their intermingled soliloquies. With the publication of *The Years* in 1937 and the posthumous *Between the Acts* (1941), most critics had ceased to test her novels by any recognized touchstones of narrative art and were either expressing their apathy to the interminable flow of flotsam and jetsam or acclaiming her as a supremely gifted lyric prose stylist.

Virginia Woolf invaded other fields besides the novel. In *Orlando* (1929), ostensibly a biography of the novelist V. Sackville-West, she launched her central figure as a hero in Elizabethan times who is transformed into a heroine in 1928. *Flush* (1933) is a sprightly picture of Elizabeth Barrett Browning viewed through the watery eyes of her immortal cocker spaniel. In a long prose tract entitled *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Mrs. Woolf became the darling of the feminists by pleading the case of the literary career woman.

The fugitive pieces collected in *The Common Reader* (1925, 1932) have won acclaim from many critics who are frankly bored by the "constant twitter of words and notions" that dominates her more pretentious books. In them—finely etched profiles and trim essays on literature—she reveals herself as that most uncommon reader, an original and penetrating critic. *Miss Ormerod* illustrates in brief and modified form the lyrical, impressionistic style which pervades the novels. The reader has only to refer to the pedestrian entry on Eleanor Ormerod in the *Dictionary of National Biography* to get a sharp taste of Virginia Woolf's revolt.

Miss Ormerod[1]

The trees stood massively in all their summer foliage spotted and grouped upon a meadow which sloped gently down from the big white house. There were unmistakable signs of the year 1835 both in the trees and in the sky, for modern trees are not nearly so voluminous as these ones, and the sky of those days had a kind of pale diffusion in its texture which was different from the more concentrated tone of the skies we know.

Mr. George Ormerod stepped from the drawing-room window of Sedbury House, Gloucestershire, wearing a tall furry hat and white trousers strapped under his instep; he was closely, though deferentially, followed by a lady wearing a yellow-spotted dress over a crinoline, and behind her, singly and arm in arm, came nine children in nankeen jackets and long white drawers. They were going to see the water let out of a pond.

The youngest child, Eleanor, a little girl with a pale face, rather elongated features, and black hair, was left by herself in the drawing-room, a large sallow apartment with pillars, two chandeliers, for some reason enclosed in holland bags, and several octagonal tables, some of inlaid wood and others of greenish malachite. At one of these little Eleanor Ormerod was seated in a high chair.

"Now, Eleanor," said her mother, as the party assembled for the expedition to the pond, "here are

[1] founded upon *The Life of Eleanor Ormerod*, by Robert Wallace Murray, 1904.

some pretty beetles. Don't touch the glass. Don't get down from your chair, and when we come back little George will tell you all about it."

So saying, Mrs. Ormerod placed a tumbler of water containing about half a dozen great water grubs in the middle of the malachite table, at a safe distance from the child, and followed her husband down the slope of old-fashioned turf towards a cluster of extremely old-fashioned sheep; opening, directly she stepped on to the terrace, a tiny parasol of bottle green silk with a bottle green fringe, though the sky was like nothing so much as a flock bed covered with a counterpane of white dimity.

The plump pale grubs gyrated slowly round and round in the tumbler. So simple an entertainment must surely soon have ceased to satisfy. Surely Eleanor would shake the tumbler, upset the grubs, and scramble down from her chair. Why, even a grown person can hardly watch those grubs crawling down the glass wall, then floating to the surface, without a sense of boredom not untinged with disgust. But the child sat perfectly still. Was it her custom, then, to be entertained by the gyrations of grubs? Her eyes were reflective, even critical. But they shone with increasing excitement. She beat one hand upon the edge of the table. What was the reason? One of the grubs had ceased to float: he lay at the bottom; the rest, descending, proceeded to tear him to pieces.

"And how has little Eleanor enjoyed herself?" asked Mr. Ormerod, in rather a deep voice, stepping into the room and with a slight air of heat and of fatigue upon his face.

"Papa," said Eleanor, almost interrupting her father in her eagerness to impart her observation, "I saw one of the grubs fall down and the rest came and ate him!"

"Nonsense, Eleanor," said Mr. Ormerod. "You are not telling the truth." He looked severely at the tumbler in which the beetles were still gyrating as before.

"Papa, it was true!"

"Eleanor, little girls are not allowed to contradict their fathers," said Mrs. Ormerod, coming in through the window, and closing her green parasol with a snap.

"Let this be a lesson," Mr. Ormerod began, signing to the other children to approach, when the door opened, and the servant announced,

"Captain Fenton."

Captain Fenton "was at times thought to be tedious in his recurrence to the charge of the Scots Greys in which he had served at the battle of Waterloo."

But what is this crowd gathered round the door of the George Hotel in Chepstow? A faint cheer rises from the bottom of the hill. Up comes the mail coach, horses steaming, panels mud-splashed. "Make way! Make way!" cries the ostler and the vehicle dashes into the courtyard, pulls up sharp before the door. Down jumps the coachman, the horses are led off, and a fine team of spanking greys is harnessed with incredible speed in their stead. Upon all this—coachman, horses, coach, and passengers—the crowd looked with gaping admiration every Wednesday all through the year. But today, the twelfth of March, 1852, as the coachman settled his rug, and stretched his hands for the reins, he observed that instead of being fixed upon him, the eyes of the people of Chepstow darted this way and that. Heads were jerked. Arms flung out. Here a hat swooped in a semi-circle. Off drove the coach almost unnoticed. As it turned the corner all the outside passengers craned their necks, and one gentleman rose to his feet and shouted. "There! there! there!" before he was bowled into eternity. It was an insect—a red-winged insect. Out the people of Chepstow poured into the high road; down the hill they ran; always the insect flew in front of them; at length by Chepstow Bridge a young man, throwing his bandanna over the blade of an oar, captured it alive and presented it to a highly respectable elderly gentleman who now came puffing upon the scene—Samuel Budge, doctor, of Chepstow. By Samuel Budge it was presented to Miss Ormerod; by her sent to a professor at Oxford. And he, declaring it "a fine specimen of the rose underwinged locust," added the gratifying information that it "was the first of the kind to be captured so far west."

And so, at the age of twenty-four Miss Eleanor Ormerod was thought the proper person to receive the gift of a locust.

When Eleanor Ormerod appeared at archery meetings and croquet tournaments young men pulled their whiskers and young ladies looked grave. It was so difficult to make friends with a girl who could talk of nothing but black beetles and earwigs—"Yes, that's what she likes, isn't it queer?—Why, the other day Ellen, Mama's maid, heard from Jane, who's under-kitchenmaid at Sedbury House, that Eleanor tried to boil a beetle in the kitchen saucepan and he wouldn't die, and

swam round and round, and she got into a terrible state and sent the groom all the way to Gloucester to fetch chloroform—all for an insect, my dear!—and she gives the cottagers shillings to collect beetles for her—and she spends hours in her bedroom cutting them up—and she climbs trees like a boy to find wasps' nests—oh, you can't think what they don't say about her in the village—for she does look so odd, dressed anyhow, with that great big nose and those bright little eyes, so like a caterpillar herself, I always think—but of course she's wonderfully clever and very good, too, both of them. Georgiana has a lending library for the cottagers, and Eleanor never misses a service—but there she is—that short pale girl in the large bonnet. Do go and talk to her, for I'm sure I'm too stupid, but you'll find plenty to say—" But neither Fred nor Arthur, Henry nor William found anything to say—

". . . probably the lecturer would have been equally well pleased had none of her own sex put in an appearance."

This comment upon a lecture delivered in the year 1889 throws some light, perhaps, upon archery meetings in the 'fifties.

It being nine o'clock on a February night some time about 1862, all the Ormerods were in the library; Mr. Ormerod making architectural designs at a table; Mrs. Ormerod lying on a sofa making pencil drawings upon grey paper; Eleanor making a model of a snake to serve as a paper weight; Georgiana making a copy of the font in Tidenham Church; some of the others examining books with beautiful illustrations; while at intervals someone rose, unlocked the wire book case, took down a volume for instruction or entertainment, and perused it beneath the chandelier.

Mr. Ormerod required complete silence for his studies. His word was law, even to the dogs, who, in the absence of their master, instinctively obeyed the eldest male person in the room. Some whispered colloquy there might be between Mrs. Ormerod and her daughters—

"The draught under the pew was really worse than ever this morning, Mama—"

"And we could only unfasten the latch of the chancel because Eleanor happened to have her ruler with her—"

"—hm-m-m. Dr. Armstrong— Hm-m-m—"

"—Anyhow things aren't as bad with us as they are at Kinghampton. They say Mrs. Briscoe's Newfoundland dog follows her right up to the chancel rails when she takes the sacrament—"

"And the turkey is still sitting on its eggs in the pulpit."

—"The period of incubation for a turkey is between three and four weeks"—said Eleanor, thoughtfully looking up from her cast of the snake and forgetting, in the interest of her subject, to speak in a whisper.

"Am I to be allowed no peace in my own house?" Mr. Ormerod exclaimed angrily, rapping with his ruler on the table, upon which Mrs. Ormerod half shut one eye and squeezed a little blob of Chinese white on to her high light, and they remained silent until the servants came in, when everyone, with the exception of Mrs. Ormerod, fell on their knees. For she, poor lady, suffered from a chronic complaint and left the family forever a year or two later, when the green sofa was moved into the corner, and the drawings given to her nieces in memory of her. But Mr. Ormerod went on making architectural drawings at nine p.m. every night (save on Sundays when he read a sermon) until he too lay upon the green sofa, which had not been used since Mrs. Ormerod lay there, but still looked much the same. "We deeply felt the happiness of ministering to his welfare," Miss Ormerod wrote, "for he would not hear of our leaving him for even twenty-four hours and he objected to visits from my brothers excepting occasionally for a short time. They, not being used to the gentle ways necessary for an aged invalid, worried him . . . the Thursday following, the 9th October, 1873, he passed gently away at the mature age of eighty-seven years." Oh, graves in country churchyards—respectable burials—mature old gentlemen—D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., F.S.A.—lots of letters come after your names, but lots of women are buried with you!

There remained the Hessian Fly and the Bot—mysterious insects! Not, one would have thought, among God's most triumphant creations, and yet—if you see them under a microscope!—the Bot, obese, globular, obscene; the Hessian, booted, spurred, whiskered, cadaverous. Next slip under the glass an innocent grain; behold it pock-marked and livid; or take this strip of hide, and note those pullulating lumps—well, what does the landscape look like then?

The only palatable object for the eye to rest on in acres of England is a lump of Paris Green. But English people won't use microscopes; you can't

make them use Paris Green either—or if they do, they let it drip. Dr. Ritzema Bos is a great standby. For they won't take a woman's word. And indeed, though for the sake of the Ox Warble one must stretch a point, there are matters, questions of stock infestation, things one has to go into —things a lady doesn't even like to see, much less discuss, in print—"these, I say, I intend to leave entirely to the Veterinary surgeons. My brother—oh, he's dead now—a very good man—for whom I collected wasps' nests—lived at Brighton and wrote about wasps—he, I say, wouldn't let me learn anatomy, never liked me to do more than take sections of teeth."

Ah, but Eleanor, the Bot and the Hessian have more power over you than Mr. Edward Ormerod himself. Under the microscope you clearly perceive that these insects have organs, orifices, excrement; they do, most emphatically, copulate. Escorted on the one side by the Bot or Warble, on the other by the Hessian Fly, Miss Ormerod advanced statelily, if slowly, into the open. Never did her features show more sublime than when lit up by the candour of her avowal. "This is excrement; these, though Ritzema Bos is positive to the contrary, are the generative organs of the male. I've proved it." Upon her head the hood of Edinburgh most fitly descended; pioneer of purity even more than of Paris Green.

"If you're sure I'm not in your way," said Miss Lipscomb, unstrapping her paint box and planting her tripod firmly in the path, "—I'll try to get a picture of these lovely hydrangeas against the sky— What flowers you have in Penzance!"

The market gardener crossed his hands on his hoe, slowly twined a piece of bass round his finger, looked at the sky, said something about the sun, also about the prevalence of lady artists, and then, with a nod of his head, observed sententiously that it was to a lady that he owed everything he had.

"Ah?" said Miss Lipscomb, flattered, but already much occupied with her composition.

"A lady with a queer-sounding name," said Mr. Pascoe, "but that's the lady I've called my little girl after— I don't think there's such another in Christendom."

Of course it was Miss Ormerod, equally of course Miss Lipscomb was the sister of Miss Ormerod's family doctor; and so she did no sketching that morning, but left with a handsome bunch of grapes instead—for every flower had drooped, ruin had stared him in the face—he had written, not believing one bit what they told him—to the lady with the queer name, back there came a book, *In-ju-ri-ous In-sects*, with the page turned down, perhaps by her very hand, also a letter which he kept at home under the clock, but he knew every word by heart, since it was due to what she said there that he wasn't a ruined man—and the tears ran down his face and Miss Lipscomb, clearing a space on the lodging-house table, wrote the whole story to her brother.

"The prejudice against Paris Green certainly seems to be dying down," said Miss Ormerod when she read it.—"But now," she sighed rather heavily, being no longer young and much afflicted with the gout, "now it's the sparrows."

One might have thought that *they* would have left her alone—innocent dirt-grey birds, taking more than their share of the breakfast crumbs, otherwise inoffensive. But once you look through a microscope—once you see the Hessian and the Bot as they really are—there's no peace for an elderly lady pacing her terrace on a fine May morning. For example, why, when there are crumbs enough for all, do only the sparrows get them? Why not swallows or martins? Why—oh, here come the servants for prayers—

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. . . . For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen—"

"*The Times*, ma'am—"

"Thank you, Dixon. . . . The Queen's birthday! We must drink her Majesty's health in the old white port, Dixon. Home Rule—tut—tut—tut. All that madman Gladstone. My father would have thought the world was coming to an end, and I'm not at all sure that it isn't. I must talk to Dr. Lipscomb—"

Yet all the time in the tail of her eye she saw myriads of sparrows, and retiring to the study proclaimed in a pamphlet of which 36,000 copies were gratuitously distributed that the sparrow is a pest.

"When he eats an insect," she said to her sister Georgiana, "which isn't often, it's one of the few insects that one wants to keep—one of the very few," she added with a touch of acidity natural to one whose investigations have all tended to the discredit of the insect race.

"But there'll be some very unpleasant consequences to face," she concluded—"Very unpleasant indeed."

Happily the port was now brought in, the servants assembled; and Miss Ormerod, rising to her feet, gave the toast "Her Blessed Majesty." She was extremely loyal, and moreover she liked nothing better than a glass of her father's old white port. She kept his pigtail, too, in a box.

Such being her disposition it went hard with her to analyse the sparrow's crop, for the sparrow, she felt, symbolises something of the homely virtue of English domestic life, and to proclaim it stuffed with deceit was disloyal to much that she, and her fathers before her, held dear. Sure enough the clergy—the Rev. J. E. Walker—denounced her for her brutality; "God Save the Sparrow!" exclaimed the Animal's Friend; and Miss Carrington, of the Humanitarian League, replied in a leaflet described by Miss Ormerod as "spirity, discourteous, and inaccurate."

"Well," said Miss Ormerod to her sister, "it did me no harm before to be threatened to be shot at, also hanged in effigy, and other little attentions."

"Still it was very disagreeable, Eleanor—more disagreeable, I believe, to me than to you," said Georgiana. Soon Georgiana died. She had however finished the beautiful series of insect diagrams at which she worked every morning in the dining-room and they were presented to Edinburgh University. But Eleanor was never the same woman after that.

Dear forest fly—flour moths—weevils—grouse and cheese flies—beetles—foreign correspondents—eel worms—ladybirds—wheat midges—resignation from the Royal Agricultural Society—gall mites—boot beetles—announcement of honorary degree to be conferred—feelings of appreciation and anxiety—paper on wasps—last annual report—warnings of serious illness—proposed pension—gradual loss of strength—finally Death.

That is life, so they say.

"It does no good to keep people waiting for an answer," sighed Miss Ormerod, "though I don't feel as able as I did since that unlucky accident at Waterloo. And no one realises what the strain of the work is—often I'm the only lady in the room, and the gentlemen so learned, though I've always found them most helpful, most generous in every way. But I'm growing old, Miss Hartwell, that's what it is. That's what led me to be thinking of this difficult matter of flour infestation in the middle of the road so that I didn't see the horse until he had poked his nose into my ear. . . . Then there's this nonsense about a pension. What could possess Mr. Barron to think of such a thing? I should feel inexpressibly lowered if I accepted a pension. Why, I don't altogether like writing LL.D. after my name, though Georgie would have liked it. All I ask is to be let go on in my own quiet way. Now where is Messrs. Langridge's sample? We must take that first. 'Gentlemen, I have examined your sample and find . . .'"

"If anyone deserves a thorough rest it's you, Miss Ormerod," said Dr. Lipscomb, who had grown a little white over the ears. "I should say the farmers of England ought to set up a statue to you, bring offerings of corn and wine—make you a kind of Goddess, eh—what was her name?"

"Not a very shapely figure for a Goddess," said Miss Ormerod with a little laugh. "I should enjoy the wine though. You're not going to cut me off my one glass of port surely?"

"You must remember," said Dr. Lipscomb, shaking his head, "how much your life means to others."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Miss Ormerod, pondering a little. "To be sure, I've chosen my epitaph. 'She introduced Paris Green into England,' and there might be a word or two about the Hessian Fly—that, I do believe, was a good piece of work."

"No need to think about epitaphs yet," said Dr. Lipscomb.

"Our lives are in the hands of the Lord," said Miss Ormerod simply.

Dr. Lipscomb bent his head and looked out of the window. Miss Ormerod remained silent.

"English entomologists care little or nothing for objects of practical importance," she exclaimed suddenly. "Take this question of flour infestation—I can't say how many grey hairs that has grown me."

"Figuratively speaking, Miss Ormerod," said Dr. Lipscomb, for her hair was still raven black.

"Well, I do believe all good work is done in concert," Miss Ormerod continued. "It is often a great comfort to me to think that."

"It's beginning to rain," said Dr. Lipscomb. "How will your enemies like that, Miss Ormerod?"

"Hot or cold, wet or dry, insects always flourish!" cried Miss Ormerod energetically sitting up in bed.

"Old Miss Ormerod is dead," said Mr. Drummond, opening *The Times* on Saturday, July 20th, 1901.

"Old Miss Ormerod?" asked Mrs. Drummond.

(1932)

Aldous Huxley

(1894-)

Literature and science are united on Aldous Huxley's family tree. His paternal grandfather was Darwin's defender, Thomas Henry Huxley; Thomas Henry's gentlemanly adversary, Matthew Arnold, was his great-uncle; his father was the writer and educator Leonard Huxley; and his older brother is the distinguished biologist Julian Huxley. To these advantages of birth was added a gentleman's education at Eton and at Balliol College, Oxford. When his plans to study medicine were blasted in school by an eye disease that almost blinded him, he chose the hereditary alternative. While employed by the government after graduation from Oxford in 1915, he published his first volume of youthful poetry, *The Burning Wheel* (1916). It was quickly followed by three others. After a brief interlude in journalism he commenced to earn a reputation as a novelist of postwar disillusionment, one of the leading apostles of the cynicism that affected the "lost generation" on both sides of the Atlantic.

Crome Yellow (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923), and *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) are formless satires written by a witty young intellectual who was interested in ideas, not in the craft of fiction, and who, although he saw clearly through the hypocrisy and superficiality of the English upper classes, prescribed no carefully compounded antidote. In the more ambitious *Point Counter Point* (1928) the same themes are most ingeniously arranged, and in *Brave New World* (1932) the attack is concentrated on those "scientific-communist" utopias proclaimed by some scientists and Marxists as humanity's inevitable future. Aldous Huxley's burlesque Utopia is a variation on the theme of Forster's *The Machine Stops* (see p. 981)—an antiseptic world in which efficiency replaces emotion, *our Lord* becomes *our Ford*, and test-tube babies are conditioned by mass hypnosis to fill their roles as Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons.

Amid this sea of cynicism are a few champions of a more affirmative faith: Calamy, the meditative hero of *Those Barren Leaves*, and Mark Rampion, the double for the idealistic D. H. Lawrence in *Point Counter Point*. And in the more recent novels, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939), and *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), the satirist has been gradually replaced by the mystic, the novelist by the tractarian. In the late thirties the restless traveler, who had lived for extended periods in Italy, India, and France, settled in Southern California, where he has apparently found in yoga a safe harbor from the spiritual and intellectual tempests of his earlier years.

Although he is best known as a novelist, Huxley has been a prolific miscellaneous writer. He has written other books of verse; short stories—*Young Archimedes and Other Stories* (1924) and *Brief Candles* (1930); a number of volumes of critical and philosophical essays; biography—*Grey Eminence* (1941); an edition of the letters of his friend D. H. Lawrence (1932); a book explaining how he improved his eyesight—*The Art of Seeing* (1942); and a number of movie scenarios.

Huxley the essayist—and he is an essayist intermittently throughout his novels—is at his best in *Wordsworth in the Tropics*. Beginning as a witty exercise in debunkery, one of the favorite indoor sports of the twenties, it gradually emerges on the broad plain of philosophy.

Wordsworth in the Tropics

In the neighborhood of latitude fifty north and for the last hundred years or thereabouts, it has been an axiom that Nature is divine and morally uplifting. For good Wordsworthians—and most serious-minded people are now Wordsworthians, either by direct inspiration or at second hand—a walk in the country is the equivalent of going to church, a tour through Westmoreland is as good as

a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. To commune with the fields and waters, the woodlands and the hills, is to commune, according to our modern and Northern ideas, with the visible manifestations of the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe."

The Wordsworthian who exports this pantheistic worship of Nature to the tropics is liable to have his religious convictions somewhat rudely disturbed. Nature under a vertical sun, and nourished by the equatorial rains, is not at all like that chaste, mild deity who presides over the *gemutlichkeit*, the prettiness, the cosy sublimities of the Lake District. The worst that Wordsworth's goddess ever did to him was to make him hear

> Low breathings coming after me and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod;[1]

was to make him realize, in the shape of "a huge peak, black and huge," the existence of "unknown modes of being." He seems to have imagined that this was the worst nature *could* do. A few weeks in Malaya or Borneo would have undeceived him. Wandering in the hothouse darkness of the jungle, Wordsworth would not have felt so serenely certain of those "Presences of Nature," those "Souls of Lonely Places," which he was in the habit of worshipping on the shores of Windermere and Rydal. The sparse inhabitants of the equatorial forest are all believers in devils. When one has visited, in even the most superficial manner, the places where they live, it is difficult not to share their faith. The jungle is marvellous, fantastic, beautiful; but it is also terrifying, it is also profoundly sinister. There is something in what, for lack of a better word, we must call the character of great forests—even in those of temperate lands—which is foreign, appalling, fundamentally and utterly inimical to intruding man. The life of those vast masses of swarming vegetation is alien to the human spirit and hostile to it. Meredith, in his "Woods of Westermaine," has tried reassuringly to persuade us that our terrors are unnecessary, that the hostility of these vegetable forces is more apparent than real, and that if we will but trust Nature, we shall find our fears transformed into serenity, joy, and rapture. This may be sound philosophy in the neighborhood of Dorking; but it begins to be dubious even in the forests of Germany—there is too much of them for a human being to feel himself at ease within their enormous glooms; and when the woods of Borneo are substituted for those of Westermaine, Meredith's comforting doctrine becomes frankly ridiculous.

It is not the sense of solitude that distresses the wanderer in equatorial jungles. Loneliness is bearable enough—for a time, at least. There is something actually rather stimulating and exciting about being in an empty place where there is no life but one's own. Taken in reasonably small doses, the Sahara exhilarates, like alcohol. Too much of it, however, (I speak, at any rate, for myself) has the depressing effect of the second bottle of Burgundy. But in any case it is not loneliness that oppresses the equatorial traveller; it is too much company; it is the uneasy feeling that he is an alien in the midst of an innumerable throng of hostile beings. To us who live beneath a temperate sky and in the age of Henry Ford, the worship of Nature comes almost naturally. It is easy to love a feeble and already conquered enemy. But an enemy with whom one is still at war, an unconquered, unconquerable, ceaselessly active enemy—no; one does not, one should not love him. One respects him, perhaps; one has a salutary fear of him; and one goes on fighting. In our latitudes, the hosts of Nature have mostly been vanquished and enslaved. Some few detachments, it is true, still hold the field against us. There are wild woods and mountains, marshes and heaths, even in England. But they are there only on sufferance, because we have chosen, out of our good pleasure, to leave them their freedom. It has not been worth our while to reduce them to slavery. We love them because we are the masters, because we know that at any moment we can overcome them as we overcame their fellows. The inhabitants of the tropics have no such comforting reasons for adoring the sinister forces which hem them in on every side. For us, the notion "river" implies (how obviously!) the notion "bridge." When we think of a plain, we think of agriculture, towns, and good roads. The corollary of mountain is tunnel; of swamp, an embankment; of distance, a railway. At latitude zero, however, the obvious is not the same as with us. Rivers imply wading, swimming, alligators. Plains mean swamps, forests, fevers. Mountains are either dangerous or impassable. To travel is to hack one's way laboriously through a tangled, prickly, and venomous darkness. "God made the country," said Cowper. In New Guinea he would have had his doubts; he would have longed for the man-made town.

[1] *Prelude*, I, 323-5, see p. 156.

The Wordsworthian adoration of Nature has two principal defects. The first, as we have seen, is that it is only possible in a country where Nature has been nearly or quite enslaved to man. The second is that it is only possible for those who are prepared to falsify their immediate intuitions of Nature. For Nature, even in the temperate zone, is always alien and inhuman, and occasionally diabolic. Meredith explicitly invites us to explain any unpleasant experiences away. We are to interpret them, Pangloss[2] fashion, in terms of a preconceived philosophy; after which, all will surely be for the best in the best of all possible Westermaines. Less openly, Wordsworth asks us to make the same falsification of immediate experience. It is only very occasionally that he admits the existence in the world around him of those "unknown modes of being" of which our immediate intuitions of things make us so disquietingly aware. Normally what he does is to pump the dangerous Unknown out of Nature and re-fill the emptied forms of hills and woods, flowers and waters, with something more reassuringly familiar—with humanity, with Anglicanism. He will not admit that a yellow primrose is simply a yellow primrose —beautiful, but essentially strange, having its own alien life apart. He wants it to possess some sort of soul, to exist humanly, not simply flowerly. He wants the earth to be more than earthy, to be a divine person.

But the life of vegetation is radically unlike the life of man; the earth has a mode of being that is certainly not the mode of being of a person. "Let Nature be your teacher," says Wordsworth. The advice is excellent. But how strangely he himself puts it into practice! Instead of listening humbly to what the teacher says, he shuts his ears and himself dictates the lesson he desires to hear. The pupil knows better than his master; the worshipper substitutes his own oracles for those of the god. Instead of accepting the lesson as it is given to his immediate intuitions, he distorts it rationalistically into the likeness of a parson's sermon or a professorial lecture. Our direct intuitions of Nature tell us that the world is bottomlessly strange; alien, even when it is kind and beautiful; having innumerable modes of being that are not our modes; always mysteriously, not personal, not conscious, not moral; often hostile and sinister; sometimes even unimaginably, because inhumanly, evil. In his youth, it would seem, Wordsworth left his direct intuitions of the world unwarped.

> . . . The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.[3]

As the years passed, however, he began to interpret them in terms of a preconceived philosophy. Procrustes-like,[4] he tortured his feelings and perceptions until they fitted his system. By the time he was thirty,

> . . . the immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls . . . ,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

"Something far more deeply interfused" had made its appearance on the Wordsworthian scene. The god of Anglicanism had crept under the skin of things, and all the stimulatingly inhuman strangeness of Nature had become as flatly familiar as a page from a text-book of metaphysics or theology. As familiar and as safely simple. Pantheistically interpreted, our intuitions of Nature's endless varieties of impersonal mysteriousness lose all their exciting and disturbing quality. It makes the world seem delightfully cosy, if you can pretend that all the many alien things about you are really only manifestations of one person. It is fear of the laby-

[2] an optimistic philosopher in Voltaire's *Candide* who maintains all is for the best in this, the best of all possible worlds.

[3] *Tintern Abbey*, 76-83, see p. 154.

[4] Procrustes was a Greek robber who stretched travelers on a rack.

rinthine flux and complexity of phenomena that has driven men to philosophy, to science, to theology—fear of the complex reality driving them to invent a simpler, more manageable and, therefore, consoling fiction. For simple, in comparison with the external reality of which we have direct intuitions, childishly simple is even the most elaborate and subtle system devised by the human mind. Most of the philosophical systems hitherto popular have not been subtle and elaborate even by human standards. Even by human standards they have been crude, bald, preposterously straightforward. Hence their popularity. Their simplicity has rendered them instantly comprehensible. Weary with much wandering in the maze of phenomena, frightened by the inhospitable strangeness of the world, men have rushed into the systems prepared for them by philosophers and founders of religions, as they would rush from a dark jungle into the haven of a well-lit, commodious house. With a sigh of relief and a thankful feeling that here at last is their true home, they settle down in their snug metaphysical villa and go to sleep. And how furious they are when anyone comes rudely knocking at the door to tell them that their villa is jerry-built, dilapidated, unfit for human habitation, even non-existent! Men have been burnt at the stake for even venturing to criticise the color of the front door or the shape of the third-floor windows.

That man must build himself some sort of metaphysical shelter in the midst of the jungle of immediately apprehended reality is obvious. No practical activity, no scientific research, no speculation is possible without some preliminary hypothesis about the nature and the purpose of things. The human mind cannot deal with the universe directly, nor even with its own immediate intuitions of the universe. Whenever it is a question of thinking about the world, or of practically modifying it, men can only work on a symbolic plan of the universe, only on a simplified, two-dimensional map of things abstracted by the mind out of the complex and multifarious reality of immediate intuition. History shows that these hypotheses about the nature of things are valuable even when, as later experience reveals, they are false. Man approaches the unattainable truth through a succession of errors. Confronted by the strange complexity of things, he invents, quite arbitrarily, a simple hypothesis to explain and justify the world. Having invented, he proceeds to act and think in terms of this hypothesis, as though it were correct. Experience gradually shows him where his hypothesis is unsatisfactory and how it should be modified. Thus great scientific discoveries have been made by men seeking to verify quite erroneous theories about the nature of things. The discoveries have necessitated a modification of the original hypotheses, and further discoveries have been made in the effort to verify the modifications —discoveries which, in their turn, have led to yet further modifications. And so on, indefinitely.

Philosophical and religious hypotheses, being less susceptible of experimental verification than the hypotheses of science, have undergone far less modification. For example, the pantheistic hypothesis of Wordsworth is an ancient doctrine, which human experience has hardly modified throughout history. And rightly, no doubt. For it is obvious that there must be some sort of unity underlying the diversity of phenomena; for if there were not, the world would be quite unknowable. Indeed, it is precisely in the knowableness of things, in the very fact that they are known, that their fundamental unity consists. The world which we know, and which our minds have fabricated out of goodness knows what mysterious things-in-themselves, possesses the unity which our minds have imposed upon it. It is part of our thought, hence fundamentally homogeneous. Yes, the world is obviously one. But at the same time, it is no less obviously diverse. For if the world were absolutely one, it would no longer be knowable, it would cease to exist. Thought must be divided against itself before it can come to any knowledge of itself. Absolute oneness is absolute nothingness; homogeneous perfection, as the Hindus perceived and courageously recognized, is equivalent to non-existence, is nirvana. The Christian idea of a perfect heaven that is something other than a non-existence is a contradiction in terms. The world in which we live may be fundamentally one; but it is a unity divided up into a great many diverse fragments. A tree, a table, a newspaper, a piece of artificial silk are all made of wood. But they are, none the less, distinct and separate objects. It is the same with the world at large.

Our immediate intuitions are of diversity. We have only to open our eyes to recognize a multitude of different phenomena. These intuitions of diversity are as correct, as well justified as is our intellectual conviction of the fundamental homogeneity of the various parts of the world with one another and with ourselves.

Circumstances have led humanity to set an ever

increasing premium on the conscious and intellectual comprehension of things. Modern man's besetting temptation is to sacrifice his direct perceptions and spontaneous feelings to his reasoned reflections; to prefer in all circumstances the verdict of his intellect to that of his immediate intuitions. "L'homme est visiblement fait pour penser," says Pascal; "c'est toute sa dignité et toute sa mérite; et tout son devoir est de penser comme il faut."[5] Noble words; but do they happen to be true? Pascal seems to forget that man has something else to do besides think; he must live. Living may not be so dignified or so meritorious as thinking (particularly when you happen to be, like Pascal, a chronic invalid); but it is, perhaps unfortunately, a necessary process. If one would live well, one must live completely, with the whole being—with the body and the instincts, as well as with the conscious mind. A life lived, as far as may be, exclusively from the consciousness and in accordance with the considered judgments of the intellect, is a stunted life, a half-dead life. This is a fact that can be confirmed by daily observation. But consciousness, the intellect, the spirit have acquired an inordinate prestige; and such is men's snobbish respect for authority, such is their pedantic desire to be consistent, that they go on doing their best to lead the exclusively conscious, spiritual and intellectual, life in spite of its manifest disadvantages.

To know is pleasant; it is exciting to be conscious; the intellect is a valuable instrument, and for certain purposes the hypotheses which it fabricates are of great practical value. Quite true. But therefore, say the moralists and men of science, drawing conclusions only justified by their desire for consistency, therefore *all* life should be lived from the head, consciously, *all* phenomena should at *all* times be interpreted in terms of the intellect's hypotheses. The religious teachers are of a slightly different opinion. All life, according to them, should be lived spiritually, not intellectually. Why? On the grounds, as we discover when we push our analysis far enough, that certain occasional psychological states, currently called "spiritual," are extremely agreeable and have valuable consequences in the realm of social behavior. The unprejudiced observer finds it hard to understand why these people should set such store by consistency of thought and action. Because oysters are occasionally pleasant, it does not follow that one should make of oysters one's exclusive diet. Nor should one take castor oil every day because castor oil is occasionally good for one. Too much consistency is as bad for the mind as it is for the body. Consistency is contrary to nature, contrary to life. The only completely consistent people are the dead. Consistent intellectualism and spirituality may be socially valuable, up to a point; but they make, gradually, for individual death. And individual death, when the slow murder has been consummated, is finally social death. So that the social utility of pure intellectualism and pure spirituality is only apparent and temporary. What is needed is, as ever, a compromise. Life must be lived in different ways at different moments. The only satisfactory way of existing in the modern, highly specialized world is to live with two personalities. A Dr. Jekyll that does the metaphysical and scientific thinking, that transacts business in the city, adds up figures, designs machines, and so forth. And a natural, spontaneous Mr. Hyde to do the physical, instinctive living in the intervals of work. The two personalities should lead their unconnected lives apart, without poaching on one another's preserves or inquiring too closely into one another's activities. Only by living discreetly and inconsistently can we preserve both the man and the citizen, both the intellectual and the spontaneous animal being, alive within us. The solution may not be very satisfactory; but it is, I believe now (though once I thought differently), the best that, in the modern circumstances, can be devised.

The poet's place, it seems to me, is with the Mr. Hydes of human nature. He should be, as Blake remarked of Milton, "of the devil's party without knowing it"—or preferably with the full consciousness of being of the devil's party. There are so many intellectual and moral angels battling for rationalism, good citizenship, and pure spirituality; so many and such eminent ones, so very vocal and authoritative! The poor devil in man needs all the support and advocacy he can get. The artist is his natural champion. When an artist deserts to the side of the angels, it is the most odious of treasons. How unforgivable, for example, is Tolstoy![6] Tolstoy, the perfect Mr. Hyde, the complete embodiment, if ever there was one, of non-intellectual, non-moral, instinctive life—Tolstoy, who betrayed his own nature, betrayed his art, betrayed life itself in order to fight against the

[5] "Man is obviously made to think, that is his whole dignity and merit, and his whole duty is to think rationally."

[6] Russian novelist, author of *War and Peace* (1828-1910)

devil's party of his earlier allegiances, under the standard of Dr. Jekyll. Wordsworth's betrayal was not so spectacular; he was never so wholly of the devil's party as Tolstoy. Still, it was bad enough. It is difficult to forgive him for so utterly repenting his youthful passions and enthusiasms, and becoming, personally as well as politically, the Anglican tory. One remembers B. R. Haydon's[7] account of the poet's reactions to that charming classical bas-relief of Cupid and Psyche. "The devils!" he said malignantly, after a long-drawn contemplation of their marble embrace. "The devils!" And he was not using the word in the complimentary sense in which I have employed it here; he was expressing his hatred of passion and life, he was damning the young man he himself had been—the young man who had hailed the French Revolution with delight and begotten an illegitimate child. From being an ardent lover of the nymphs, he had become one of those all too numerous

> . . . woodmen who expel
> Love's gentle dryads from the haunts of life,
> And vex the nightingales in every dell.

Yes, even the nightingales he vexed. Even the nightingales, though the poor birds can never, like those all too human dryads, have led him into sexual temptation. Even the innocuous nightingales were moralized, spiritualized, turned into citizens and Anglicans—and along with the nightingales, the whole of animate and inanimate Nature.

The change in Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature is symptomatic of his general apostasy. Beginning as what I may call a natural aesthete, he transformed himself, in the course of years, into a moralist, a thinker. He used his intellect to distort his exquisitely acute and subtle intuitions of the world, to explain away their often disquieting strangeness, to simplify them into a comfortable metaphysical unreality. Nature had endowed him with the poet's gift of seeing more than ordinarily far into the brick walls of external reality, of intuitively comprehending the character of the bricks, of feeling the quality of their being and establishing the appropriate relationship with them. But he preferred to think his gifts away. He preferred, in the interests of a preconceived religious theory, to ignore the disquieting strangeness of things, to interpret the impersonal diversity of Nature in terms of a divine, Anglican unity. He chose, in a word, to be a philosopher, comfortably at home with a man-made and, therefore, thoroughly comprehensible system, rather than a poet adventuring for adventure's sake through the mysterious world revealed by his direct and undistorted intuitions.

It is a pity that he never travelled beyond the boundaries of Europe. A voyage through the tropics would have cured him of his too easy and comfortable pantheism. A few months in the jungle would have convinced him that the diversity and utter strangeness of Nature are at least as real and significant as its intellectually discovered unity. Nor would he have felt so certain, in the damp and stifling darkness, among the leeches and the malevolently tangled rattans, of the divinely Anglican character of that fundamental unity. He would have learned once more to treat Nature naturally, as he treated it in his youth; to react to it spontaneously, loving where love was the appropriate emotion, fearing, hating, fighting, whenever Nature presented itself to his intuition as being, not merely strange, but hostile, inhumanly evil. A voyage would have taught him this. But Wordsworth never left his native continent. Europe is so well gardened that it resembles a work of art, a scientific theory, a neat metaphysical system. Man has re-created Europe in his own image. Its tamed and temperate Nature confirmed Wordsworth in his philosophizings. The poet, the devil's partisan were doomed; the angels triumphed. Alas!

(1929)

[7] English painter (1786-1846).

DRAMA

John Millington Synge

(1871-1909)

The leading playwright of the Irish Renaissance was born near Dublin, the youngest of eight children of a Protestant barrister. After attending private schools in the metropolis, he went to Trinity College, where he displayed an interest in music and won prizes in ancient and modern languages. Upon graduation in 1892, he took his violin to the continent to study music. After a period of wandering, he settled in Paris, where he bided his time as a journalist while he studied to be a literary critic. Yeats found him in a Latin Quarter garret in 1898 and persuaded him to abandon hackdom, return to his homeland, and play his part in the new movement.

On his return Synge lived for a while among the fisher folk of the Aran Islands off the southwest coast of Galway. Here he gathered much of the material that he wove into his first five plays: *The Shadow of the Glen* (1903), *Riders to the Sea* (1904), *The Well of the Saints* (1905), *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), and *The Tinker's Wedding* (published 1909). The year after his death from cancer, appeared *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910), the only play in which he abandoned contemporary material for ancient Celtic legend. *The Playboy* is Synge's masterpiece in comedy. His tragic masterpiece is *Riders to the Sea,* a bleak, lyrical one-act play about the pathetic resignation of an old fisherwoman who has finally lost every man in the household—her husband, his father, and six sons—to the relentless sea. It is a classic example of what a great artist can achieve on a small canvas.

Synge's dramatic method and creed are simply summarized in the preface to *The Playboy*:

> In writing *The Playboy of the Western World,* as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds- and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo, or from beggar-women and ballad-singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk-imagination of these fine people. . . . When I was writing *The Shadow of the Glen,* some years ago, I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was

> staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen. This matter, I think, is of importance, for in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has, on one side, Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature; and on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words. On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality. In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland, for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery, and magnificent, and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the spring-time of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks.

Typographically speaking, Synge's plays are in prose. In consciously eavesdropping to transcribe the language of real people, he was a "realist." For limiting himself to the Irish peasantry, he might be further labeled as a "regionalist." But the lilting language of his country people is uncalculated poetry; prosaic as their lives may be, they are the natural heirs to the legend and superstition of which romance is made; however provincial, they come across the footlights as universal symbols of humankind.

The stage history of Synge's plays raises the age-old question of whether the Irish can laugh at themselves. *The Shadow of the Glen,* the tale of an old farmer who feigns death to test his wife's fidelity, was booed and hissed, when first produced, as a slander on Irish womanhood. For fear of a similar reception, *The Tinker's Wedding,* a comedy about a worldly priest and a blasphemous tinker, was never played at the Abbey Theatre. When certain of his countrymen objected to *The Well of the Saints,* Synge is supposed to have said: "I'll write something that *will* make 'em sit up." When *The Playboy* appeared at the Abbey on January 26, 1907, hot-headed Hibernians *stood* up and poured out their wrath in outraged catcalls. Moved by a mixture of puritanism and misguided patriotism, they accused the playwright of distorting the manners and morals of his people. According to the producer, W. G. Fay, who played Christy Mahon, not a word could be heard after the first three minutes.

Although Yeats and Lady Gregory came at once to the defense of the misunderstood playwright, the tumult and the shouting did not die after the opening assault. The American production in Philadelphia was the scene of further rioting. But Synge's artistry has survived these ephemeral tempests, and *The Playboy* has remained one of the favorites of the inimitable Abbey Players. They last brought it to New York in 1932. In 1946 it was revived at the Booth Theatre with Burgess Meredith as Christy and Eithne Dunne as Pegeen.

The Playboy of the Western World

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

Persons in the Play

CHRISTOPHER MAHON
OLD MAHON (*his father, a squatter*)
MICHAEL JAMES FLAHERTY, called MICHAEL JAMES (*a publican*)
MARGARET FLAHERTY, called PEGEEN MIKE (*his daughter*)
WIDOW QUIN (*a woman of about thirty*)
SHAWN KEOGH (*her cousin, a young farmer*)
PHILLY CULLEN and JIMMY FARRELL (*small farmers*)
SARA TANSEY, SUSAN BRADY, and HONOR BLAKE (*village girls*)
A BELLMAN
SOME PEASANTS

The action takes place near a village, on a wild coast of Mayo. The first Act passes on an evening of autumn, the other two Acts on the following day.

ACT I

SCENE. *Country public-house or shebeen, very rough and untidy. There is a sort of counter on the right with shelves, holding many bottles and jugs, just seen above it. Empty barrels stand near the counter. At back, a little to left of counter, there is a door into the open air, then, more to the left, there is a settle with shelves above it, with more jugs, and a table beneath a window. At the left there is a large open fireplace, with turf fire, and a small door into inner room.* PEGEEN, *a wild-looking but fine girl, of about twenty, is writing at table. She is dressed in the usual peasant dress.*

PEGEEN [*slowly as she writes*]. Six yards of stuff for to make a yellow gown. A pair of lace boots with lengthy heels on them and brassy eyes. A hat is suited for a wedding-day. A fine tooth comb. To be sent with three barrels of porter[1] in Jimmy Farrell's creel cart on the evening of the coming Fair to Mister Michael James Flaherty. With the best compliments of this season. Margaret Flaherty.

SHAWN KEOGH [*a fat and fair young man comes in as she signs, looks round awkwardly, when he sees she is alone*]. Where's himself?[2]

PEGEEN [*without looking at him*]. He's coming. [*She directs the letter.*] To Mister Sheamus Mulroy, Wine and Spirit Dealer, Castlebar.

SHAWN [*uneasily*]. I didn't see him on the road.

PEGEEN. How would you see him [*licks stamp and puts it on letter*] and it dark night this half hour gone by?

SHAWN [*turning towards the door again*]. I stood a while outside wondering would I have a right to pass on or to walk in and see you, Pegeen Mike [*comes to fire*], and I could hear the cows breathing, and sighing in the stillness of the air, and not a step moving any place from this gate to the bridge.

PEGEEN [*putting letter in envelope*]. It's above at the cross-roads he is, meeting Philly Cullen; and a couple more are going along with him to Kate Cassidy's wake.[3]

SHAWN [*looking at her blankly*]. And he's going that length in the dark night?

PEGEEN [*impatiently*]. He is surely, and leaving me lonesome on the scruff[4] of the hill. [*She gets up and puts envelope on dresser, then winds clock.*] Isn't it long the nights are now, Shawn Keogh, to be leaving a poor girl with her own self counting the hours to the dawn of day?

SHAWN [*with awkward humour*]. If it is, when we're wedded in a short while you'll have no call to complain, for I've little will to be walking off to wakes or weddings in the darkness of the night.

PEGEEN [*with rather scornful good humour*]. You're making mighty certain, Shaneen, that I'll wed you now.

SHAWN. Aren't we after making a good bargain, the way we're only waiting these days on Father Reilly's dispensation from the bishops, or the Court of Rome?

PEGEEN [*looking at him teasingly, washing up at dresser*]. It's a wonder, Shaneen, the Holy

[1] a rich stout, originally a mixture of ale and stout.

[2] i.e. her father.

[3] sitting up with a dead body, attended with festivities and drinks.

[4] literally, the neck.

Father'd be taking notice of the likes of you; for if I was him I wouldn't bother with this place where you'll meet none but Red Linahan, has a squint in his eye, and Patcheen is lame in his heel, or the mad Mulrannies were driven from California and they lost in their wits. We're a queer lot these times to go troubling the Holy Father on his sacred seat.

SHAWN [*scandalized*]. If we are, we're as good this place as another, maybe, and as good these times as we were for ever.[5]

PEGEEN [*with scorn*]. As good, is it? Where now will you meet the like of Daneen Sullivan knocked the eye from a peeler,[6] or Marcus Quin, God rest him, got six months for maiming ewes, and he a great warrant to tell stories of holy Ireland till he'd have the old women shedding down tears about their feet. Where will you find the like of them, I'm saying?

SHAWN [*timidly*]. If you don't, it's a good job, maybe; for [*with peculiar emphasis on the words*] Father Reilly has small conceit[7] to have that kind walking around and talking to the girls.

PEGEEN [*impatiently, throwing water from basin out of the door*]. Stop tormenting me with Father Reilly [*imitating his voice*] when I'm asking only what way I'll pass these twelve hours of dark, and not take my death with the fear.

[*Looking out of door.*]

SHAWN [*timidly*]. Would I fetch you the Widow Quin, maybe?

PEGEEN. Is it the like of that murderer? You'll not, surely.

SHAWN [*going to her, soothingly*]. Then I'm thinking himself will stop along with you when he sees you taking on, for it'll be a long night-time with great darkness, and I'm after feeling a kind of fellow above in the furzy[8] ditch, groaning wicked like a maddening dog, the way it's good cause you have, maybe, to be fearing now.

PEGEEN [*turning on him sharply*]. What's that? Is it a man you seen?

SHAWN [*retreating*]. I couldn't see him at all; but I heard him groaning out, and breaking his heart. It should have been a young man from his words speaking.

PEGEEN [*going after him*]. And you never went near to see was he hurted or what ailed him at all?

SHAWN. I did not, Pegeen Mike. It was a dark, lonesome place to be hearing the like of him.

PEGEEN. Well, you're a daring fellow, and if they find his corpse stretched above in the dews of dawn, what'll you say then to the peelers, or the Justice of the Peace?

SHAWN [*thunderstruck*]. I wasn't thinking of that. For the love of God, Pegeen Mike, don't let on I was speaking of him. Don't tell your father and the men is[9] coming above; for if they heard that story, they'd have great blabbing this night at the wake.

PEGEEN. I'll maybe tell them, and I'll maybe not.

SHAWN. They are coming at the door. Will you whisht, I'm saying?

PEGEEN. Whisht yourself.

[*She goes behind counter.* MICHAEL JAMES, *fat jovial publican, comes in followed by* PHILLY CULLEN, *who is thin and mistrusting, and* JIMMY FARRELL, *who is fat and amorous, about forty-five.*]

MEN [*together*]. God bless you. The blessing of God on this place.

PEGEEN. God bless you kindly.

MICHAEL [*to men who go to the counter*]. Sit down now, and take your rest. [*Crosses to* SHAWN *at the fire.*] And how is it you are, Shawn Keogh? Are you coming over the sands to Kate Cassidy's wake?

SHAWN. I am not, Michael James. I'm going home the short cut to my bed.

PEGEEN [*speaking across the counter*]. He's right too, and have you no shame, Michael James, to be quitting off for the whole night, and leaving myself lonesome in the shop?

MICHAEL [*good-humouredly*]. Isn't it the same whether I go for the whole night or a part only? and I'm thinking it's a queer daughter you are if you'd have me crossing backward through the Stooks of the Dead Women, with a drop[10] taken.

PEGEEN. If I am a queer daughter, it's a queer father'd be leaving me lonesome these twelve hours of dark, and I piling the turf[11] with the dogs barking, and the calves mooing, and my own teeth rattling with the fear.

JIMMY [*flatteringly*]. What is there to hurt you, and you a fine, hardy girl would knock the head of any two men in the place?

PEGEEN [*working herself up*]. Isn't there the harvest boys with their tongues red for drink, and the ten tinkers is camped in the east glen, and the

[5] i.e. as we ever were.
[6] a policeman (colloq.), so called from Sir Robert Peel, organizer of the Irish constabulary.
[7] idea.
[8] filled with a spiny evergreen shrub.
[9] who are.
[10] i.e. with only a drop (of whiskey).
[11] peat (used for fuel).

thousand militia—bad cess to them!—walking idle through the land. There's lots surely to hurt me, and I won't stop alone[12] in it, let himself do what he will.

MICHAEL. If you're that afeard, let Shawn Keogh stop along with you. It's the will of God, I'm thinking, himself should be seeing to you now.

[*They all turn on* SHAWN.]

SHAWN [*in horrified confusion*]. I would and welcome, Michael James, but I'm afeard of Father Reilly; and what at all would the Holy Father and the Cardinals of Rome be saying if they heard I did the like of that?

MICHAEL [*with contempt*]. God help you! Can't you sit in by the hearth with the light lit and herself beyond in the room? You'll do that surely, for I've heard tell there's a queer fellow above, going mad or getting his death, maybe, in the gripe of the ditch, so she'd be safer this night with a person here.

SHAWN [*with plaintive despair*]. I'm afeard of Father Reilly, I'm saying. Let you not be tempting me, and we near married itself.

PHILLY [*with cold contempt*]. Lock him in the west room. He'll stay then and have no sin to be telling to the priest.

MICHAEL [*to* SHAWN, *getting between him and the door*]. Go up now.

SHAWN [*at the top of his voice*]. Don't stop me, Michael James. Let me out of the door, I'm saying, for the love of the Almighty God. Let me out [*trying to dodge past him*]. Let me out of it, and may God grant you His indulgence in the hour of need.

MICHAEL [*loudly*]. Stop your noising, and sit down by the hearth.

[*Gives him a push and goes to counter laughing.*]

SHAWN [*turning back, wringing his hands*]. Oh, Father Reilly and the saints of God, where will I hide myself to-day? Oh, St. Joseph and St. Patrick and St. Brigid, and St. James, have mercy on me now!

[SHAWN *turns round, sees door clear, and makes a rush for it.*]

MICHAEL [*catching him by the coat-tail*]. You'd be going, is it?

SHAWN [*screaming*]. Leave me go, Michael James, leave me go, you old Pagan, leave me go, or I'll get the curse of the priests on you, and of the scarlet-coated bishops of the courts of Rome.

[*With a sudden movement he pulls himself out of his coat, and disappears out of the door, leaving his coat in* MICHAEL'S *hands.*]

MICHAEL [*turning round, and holding up coat*]. Well, there's the coat of a Christian man. Oh, there's sainted glory this day in the lonesome west; and by the will of God I've got you a decent man, Pegeen, you'll have no call to be spying after if you've a score of young girls, maybe, weeding in your fields.

PEGEEN [*taking up the defence of her property*]. What right have you to be making game of a poor fellow for minding the priest, when it's your own the fault is, not paying a penny pot-boy[13] to stand along with me and give me courage in the doing of my work?

[*She snaps the coat away from him, and goes behind counter with it.*]

MICHAEL [*taken aback*]. Where would I get a pot-boy? Would you have me send the bellman screaming in the streets of Castlebar?

SHAWN [*opening the door a chink and putting in his head, in a small voice*]. Michael James!

MICHAEL [*imitating him*] What ails you?

SHAWN. The queer dying fellow's beyond looking over the ditch. He's come up, I'm thinking, stealing your hens. [*Looks over his shoulder.*] God help me, he's following me now [*he runs into room*], and if he's heard what I said, he'll be having my life, and I going home lonesome in the darkness of the night.

[*For a perceptible moment they watch the door with curiosity. Some one coughs outside. Then* CHRISTY MAHON, *a slight young man, comes in very tired and frightened and dirty.*]

CHRISTY [*in a small voice*]. God save all here!

MEN. God save you kindly.

CHRISTY [*going to the counter*]. I'd trouble you for a glass of porter, woman of the house.

[*He puts down coin.*]

PEGEEN [*serving him*]. You're one of the tinkers, young fellow, is beyond camped in the glen?

CHRISTY. I am not; but I'm destroyed walking.

MICHAEL [*patronizingly*]. Let you come up then to the fire. You're looking famished with the cold.

CHRISTY. God reward you. [*He takes up his glass and goes a little way across to the left, then stops and looks about him.*] Is it often the police do be coming into this place, master of the house?

MICHAEL. If you'd come in better hours, you'd have seen "Licensed for the sale of Beer and Spirits, to be consumed on the premises," written

[12] I won't stay here by myself.

[13] the boy who carries pots of ale in the pub.

in white letters above the door, and what would the polis want spying on me, and not a decent house within four miles, the way every living Christian is a bona fide, saving one widow alone?

CHRISTY [*with relief*]. It's a safe house, so.

[*He goes over to the fire, sighing and moaning. Then he sits down, putting his glass beside him and begins gnawing a turnip, too miserable to feel the others staring at him with curiosity.*]

MICHAEL [*going after him*]. Is it yourself is fearing the polis? You're wanting,[14] maybe?

CHRISTY. There's many wanting.

MICHAEL. Many surely, with the broken harvest and the ended wars. [*He picks up some stockings, etc., that are near the fire, and carries them away furtively.*] It should be larceny, I'm thinking?

CHRISTY [*dolefully*]. I had it in my mind it was a different word and a bigger.

PEGEEN. There's a queer lad. Were you never slapped in school, young fellow, that you don't know the name of your deed?

CHRISTY [*bashfully*]. I'm slow at learning, a middling scholar only.

MICHAEL. If you're a dunce itself, you'd have a right to know that larceny's robbing and stealing. Is it for the like of that you're wanting?

CHRISTY [*with a flash of family pride*]. And I the son of a strong farmer [*with a sudden qualm*], God rest his soul, could have bought up the whole of your old house a while since, from the butt of his tailpocket,[15] and not have missed the weight of it gone.

MICHAEL [*impressed*]. If it's not stealing, it's maybe something big.

CHRISTY [*flattered*]. Aye; it's maybe something big.

JIMMY. He's a wicked-looking young fellow. Maybe he followed after a young woman on a lonesome night.

CHRISTY [*shocked*]. Oh, the saints forbid, mister; I was all times a decent lad.

PHILLY [*turning on* JIMMY]. You're a silly man, Jimmy Farrell. He said his father was a farmer a while since, and there's himself now in a poor state. Maybe the land was grabbed from him, and he did what any decent man would do.

MICHAEL [*to* CHRISTY, *mysteriously*]. Was it bailiffs?

CHRISTY. The divil a one.

MICHAEL. Agents?

CHRISTY. The divil a one.

MICHAEL. Landlords?

CHRISTY [*peevishly*]. Ah, not at all, I'm saying. You'd see the like of them stories on any little paper of a Munster town. But I'm not calling to mind any person, gentle, simple, judge or jury, did the like of me.

[*They all draw nearer with delighted curiosity.*]

PHILLY. Well, that lad's a puzzle-the-world.

JIMMY. He'd beat Dan Davies' circus, or the holy missioners making sermons on the villainy of man. Try him again, Philly.

PHILLY. Did you strike golden guineas out of solder, young fellow, or shilling coins itself?

CHRISTY. I did not, mister, not sixpence nor a farthing coin.

JIMMY. Did you marry three wives maybe? I'm told there's a sprinkling have done that among the holy Luthers of the preaching north.[16]

CHRISTY [*shyly*]. I never married with one, let alone with a couple or three.

PHILLY. Maybe he went fighting for the Boers, the like of the man beyond, was judged to be hanged, quartered and drawn. Were you off east, young fellow, fighting bloody wars for Kruger and the freedom of the Boers?[17]

CHRISTY. I never left my own parish till Tuesday was a week.

PEGEEN [*coming from counter*]. He's done nothing, so. [*To* CHRISTY.] If you didn't commit murder or a bad, nasty thing, or false coining, or robbery, or butchery, or the like of them, there isn't anything that would be worth your troubling for to run from now. You did nothing at all.

CHRISTY [*his feelings hurt*]. That's an unkindly thing to be saying to a poor orphaned traveller, has a prison behind him, and hanging before, and hell's gap gaping below.

PEGEEN [*with a sign to the men to be quiet*]. You're only saying it. You did nothing at all. A soft lad the like of you wouldn't slit the windpipe of a screeching sow.

CHRISTY [*offended*]. You're not speaking the truth.

PEGEEN [*in mock rage*]. Not speaking the truth, is it? Would you have me knock the head of you with the butt of the broom?

CHRISTY [*twisting round on her with a sharp cry of horror*]. Don't strike me. I killed my poor father, Tuesday was a week, for doing the like of that.

[14] wanted (by the police).

[15] pocket at the rear of the trousers.

[16] (of Ireland) where the population is largely Protestant.

[17] a rural descendant of early Dutch settlers in South Africa.

PEGEEN [*with blank amazement*]. Is it killed your father?

CHRISTY [*subsiding*]. With the help of God I did surely, and that the Holy Immaculate Mother may intercede for his soul.

PHILLY [*retreating with* JIMMY]. There's a daring fellow.

JIMMY. Oh, glory be to God!

MICHAEL [*with great respect*]. That was a hanging crime, mister honey. You should have had good reason for doing the like of that.

CHRISTY [*in a very reasonable tone*]. He was a dirty man, God forgive him, and he getting old and crusty, the way I couldn't put up with him at all.

PEGEEN. And you shot him dead?

CHRISTY [*shaking his head*]. I never used weapons. I've no license, and I'm a law-fearing man.

MICHAEL. It was with a hilted knife maybe? I'm told, in the big world it's bloody knives they use.

CHRISTY [*loudly, scandalized*]. Do you take me for a slaughter-boy?

PEGEEN. You never hanged him, the way Jimmy Farrell hanged his dog from the license, and had it screeching and wriggling three hours at the butt of a string, and himself swearing it was a dead dog, and the peelers swearing it had life?

CHRISTY. I did not then. I just riz[18] the loy[19] and let fall the edge of it on the ridge of his skull, and he went down at my feet like an empty sack, and never let a grunt or groan from him at all.

MICHAEL [*making a sign to* PEGEEN *to fill* CHRISTY'S *glass*]. And what way weren't you hanged, mister? Did you bury him then?

CHRISTY [*considering*]. Aye. I buried him then. Wasn't I digging spuds in the field?

MICHAEL. And the peelers never followed after you the eleven days that you're out?

CHRISTY [*shaking his head*]. Never a one of them, and I walking forward facing hog, dog, or divil on the highway of the road.

PHILLY [*nodding wisely*]. It's only with a common week-day kind of a murderer them lads would be trusting their carcase, and that man should be a great terror when his temper's roused.

MICHAEL. He should then. [*to* CHRISTY]. And where was it, mister honey, that you did the deed?

CHRISTY [*looking at him with suspicion*]. Oh, a distant place, master of the house, a windy corner of high, distant hills.

[18] lifted.

[19] a long narrow spade used in stony lands.

PHILLY [*nodding with approval*]. He's a close man, and he's right, surely.

PEGEEN. That'd be a lad with the sense of Solomon to have for a pot-boy, Michael James, if it's the truth you're seeking one at all.

PHILLY. The peelers is fearing him, and if you'd that lad in the house there isn't one of them would come smelling around if the dogs itself were lapping poteen[20] from the dung-pit of the yard.

JIMMY. Bravery's a treasure in a lonesome place, and a lad would kill his father, I'm thinking, would face a foxy divil with a pitchpike on the flags of hell.

PEGEEN. It's the truth they're saying, and if I'd that lad in the house, I wouldn't be fearing the looséd kharki cut-throats, or the walking dead.

CHRISTY [*swelling with surprise and triumph*]. Well, glory be to God!

MICHAEL [*with deference*]. Would you think well to stop here and be pot-boy, mister honey, if we gave you good wages, and didn't destroy you with the weight of work?

SHAWN [*coming forward uneasily*]. That'd be a queer kind to bring into a decent quiet household with the like of Pegeen Mike.

PEGEEN [*very sharply*]. Will you whisht? Who's speaking to you?

SHAWN [*retreating*]. A bloody-handed murderer the like of . . .

PEGEEN [*snapping at him*]. Whisht I am saying; we'll take no fooling from your like at all. [*To* CHRISTY *with a honeyed voice.*] And you, young fellow, you'd have a right to stop, I'm thinking, for we'd do our all and utmost to content your needs.

CHRISTY [*overcome with wonder*]. And I'd be safe in this place from the searching law?

MICHAEL. You would, surely. If they're not fearing you, itself, the peelers in this place is decent droughty[21] poor fellows, wouldn't touch a cur dog and not give warning in the dead of night.

PEGEEN [*very kindly and persuasively*]. Let you stop a short while anyhow. Aren't you destroyed walking with your feet in bleeding blisters, and your whole skin needing washing like a Wicklow sheep.

CHRISTY [*looking round with satisfaction*]. It's a nice room, and if it's not humbugging me you are, I'm thinking that I'll surely stay.

JIMMY [*jumps up*]. Now, by the grace of God, herself will be safe this night, with a man killed his father holding danger from the door, and let

[20] a strong, illicitly made Irish whiskey [21] thirsty.

you come on, Michael James, or they'll have the best stuff drunk at the wake.

MICHAEL [*going to the door with men*]. And begging your pardon, mister, what name will we call you, for we'd like to know?

CHRISTY. Christopher Mahon.

MICHAEL. Well, God bless you, Christy, and a good rest till we meet again when the sun'll be rising to the noon of day.

CHRISTY. God bless you all.

MEN. God bless you.

[*They go out except* SHAWN, *who lingers at door.*]

SHAWN [*to* PEGEEN]. Are you wanting me to stop along with you and keep you from harm?

PEGEEN [*gruffly*]. Didn't you say you were fearing Father Reilly?

SHAWN. There'd be no harm staying now, I'm thinking, and himself in it too.

PEGEEN. You wouldn't stay when there was need for you, and let you step off nimble this time when there's none.

SHAWN. Didn't I say it was Father Reilly . . .

PEGEEN. Go on, then, to Father Reilly [*in a jeering tone*], and let him put you in the holy brotherhoods, and leave that lad to me.

SHAWN. If I meet the Widow Quin . . .

PEGEEN. Go on, I'm saying, and don't be waking this place with your noise. [*She hustles him out and bolts the door.*] That lad would wear the spirits from the saints of peace. [*Bustles about, then takes off her apron and pins it up in the window as a blind,* CHRISTY *watching her timidly. Then she comes to him and speaks with bland good-humour.*] Let you stretch out now by the fire, young fellow. You should be destroyed travelling.

CHRISTY [*shyly again, drawing off his boots*]. I'm tired, surely, walking wild eleven days, and waking fearful in the night.

[*He holds up one of his feet, feeling his blisters, and looking at them with compassion.*]

PEGEEN [*standing beside him, watching him with delight*]. You should have had great people in your family, I'm thinking, with the little, small feet you have, and you with a kind of a quality name, the like of what you'd find on the great powers and potentates of France and Spain.

CHRISTY [*with pride*]. We were great surely, with wide and windy acres of rich Munster land.

PEGEEN. Wasn't I telling you, and you a fine, handsome young fellow with a noble brow?

CHRISTY [*with a flash of delighted surprise*]. Is it me?

PEGEEN. Aye. Did you never hear that from the young girls where you come from in the west or south?

CHRISTY [*with venom*]. I did not then. Oh, they're bloody liars in the naked parish where I grew a man.

PEGEEN. If they are itself, you've heard it these days, I'm thinking, and you walking the world telling out your story to young girls or old.

CHRISTY. I've told my story no place till this night, Pegeen Mike, and it's foolish I was here, maybe, to be talking free, but you're decent people, I'm thinking, and yourself a kindly woman, the way I wasn't fearing you at all.

PEGEEN [*filling a sack with straw*]. You've said the like of that, maybe, in every cot and cabin where you've met a young girl on your way.

CHRISTY [*going over to her, gradually raising his voice*]. I've said it nowhere till this night, I'm telling you, for I've seen none the like of you the eleven long days I am walking the world, looking over a low ditch or a high ditch on my north or my south, into stony scattered fields, or scribes[22] of bog, where you'd see young, limber girls, and fine prancing women making laughter with the men.

PEGEEN. If you weren't destroyed travelling, you'd have as much talk and streeleen,[23] I'm thinking, as Owen Roe O'Sullivan or the poets of the Dingle Bay, and I've heard all times it's the poets are your like, fine fiery fellows with great rages when their temper's roused.

CHRISTY [*drawing a little nearer to her*]. You've a power of rings, God bless you, and would there be any offence if I was asking are you single now?

PEGEEN. What would I want wedding so young?

CHRISTY [*with relief*]. We're alike, so.

PEGEEN [*she puts sack on settle and beats it up*]. I never killed my father. I'd be afeared to do that, except I was the like of yourself with blind rages tearing me within, for I'm thinking you should have had great tussling when the end was come.

CHRISTY [*expanding with delight at the first confidential talk he has ever had with a woman*]. We had not then. It was a hard woman was come over the hill, and if he was always a crusty kind when he'd a hard woman setting him on, not the divil himself or his four fathers could put up with him at all.

PEGEEN [*with curiosity*]. And isn't it a great wonder that one wasn't fearing you?

CHRISTY [*very confidentially*]. Up to the day I killed my father, there wasn't a person in Ireland

[22] ditches. [23] a stream (of talk).

knew the kind I was, and I there drinking, waking, eating, sleeping, a quiet, simple poor fellow with no man giving me heed.

PEGEEN [*getting a quilt out of the cupboard and putting it on the sack*]. It was the girls were giving you heed maybe, and I'm thinking it's most conceit you'd have to be gaming with their like.

CHRISTY [*shaking his head, with simplicity*]. Not the girls itself, and I won't tell you a lie. There wasn't anyone heeding me in that place saving only the dumb beasts of the field.

[*He sits down at fire.*]

PEGEEN [*with disappointment*]. And I thinking you should have been living the like of a king of Norway or the Eastern world.

[*She comes and sits beside him after placing bread and mug of milk on the table.*]

CHRISTY [*laughing piteously*]. The like of a king, is it? And I after toiling, moiling, digging, dodging from the dawn till dusk with never a sight of joy or sport saving only when I'd be abroad in the dark night poaching rabbits on hills, for I was a devil to poach, God forgive me, [*very naïvely*] and I near got six months for going with a dung fork and stabbing a fish.

PEGEEN. And it's that you'd call sport, is it, to be abroad in the darkness with yourself alone?

CHRISTY. I did, God help me, and there I'd be as happy as the sunshine of St. Martin's Day, watching the light passing the north or the patches of fog, till I'd hear a rabbit starting to screech and I'd go running in the furze. Then when I'd my full share I'd come walking down where you'd see the ducks and geese stretched sleeping on the highway of the road, and before I'd pass the dunghill, I'd hear himself snoring out, a loud lonesome snore he'd be making all times, the while he was sleeping, and he a man 'd be raging all times, the while he was waking, like a gaudy officer you'd hear cursing and damning and swearing oaths.

PEGEEN. Providence and Mercy, spare us all!

CHRISTY. It's that you'd say surely if you seen him and he after drinking for weeks, rising up in the red dawn, or before it maybe, and going out into the yard as naked as an ash tree in the moon of May, and shying clods against the visage of the stars till he'd put the fear of death into the banbhs[24] and the screeching sows.

PEGEEN. I'd be well-nigh afeard of that lad myself, I'm thinking. And there was no one in it but the two of you alone?

CHRISTY. The divil a one, though he'd sons and daughters walking all great states and territories of the world, and not a one of them, to this day, but would say their seven curses on him, and they rousing up to let a cough or sneeze, maybe, in the deadness of the night.

PEGEEN [*nodding her head*]. Well, you should have been a queer lot. I never cursed my father the like of that, though I'm twenty and more years of age.

CHRISTY. Then you'd have cursed mine, I'm telling you, and he a man never gave peace to any, saving when he'd get two months or three, or be locked in the asylums for battering peelers or assaulting men [*with depression*] the way it was a bitter life he led me till I did up a Tuesday and halve his skull.

PEGEEN [*putting her hand on his shoulder*]. Well, you'll have peace in this place, Christy Mahon, and none to trouble you, and it's near time a fine lad like you should have your good share of the earth.

CHRISTY. It's time surely, and I a seemly fellow with great strength in me and bravery of . . .

[*Someone knocks.*]

CHRISTY [*clinging to* PEGEEN]. Oh, glory! it's late for knocking, and this last while I'm in terror of the peelers, and the walking dead.

[*Knocking again.*]

PEGEEN. Who's there?

VOICE [*outside*]. Me.

PEGEEN. Who's me?

VOICE. The Widow Quin.

PEGEEN [*jumping up and giving him the bread and milk*]. Go on now with your supper, and let on to be sleepy, for if she found you were such a warrant to talk, she'd be stringing gabble till the dawn of day. [*He takes bread and sits shyly with his back to the door.*]

PEGEEN [*opening door, with temper*]. What ails you, or what is it you're wanting at this hour of the night?

WIDOW QUIN [*coming in a step and peering at* CHRISTY]. I'm after meeting Shawn Keogh and Father Reilly below, who told me of your curiosity man, and they fearing by this time he was maybe roaring, romping on your hands with drink.

PEGEEN [*pointing to* CHRISTY]. Look now is he roaring, and he stretched away drowsy with his supper and his mug of milk. Walk down and tell that to Father Reilly and to Shaneen Keogh.

WIDOW QUIN [*coming forward*]. I'll not see them again, for I've their word to lead that lad forward for to lodge with me.

[24] lands unploughed for a year.

PEGEEN [*in blank amazement*]. This night, is it?

WIDOW QUIN [*going over*]. This night. "It isn't fitting," says the priesteen, "to have his likeness lodging with an orphaned girl." [*To* CHRISTY.] God save you, mister!

CHRISTY [*shyly*]. God save you kindly.

WIDOW QUIN [*looking at him with half-amazed curiosity*]. Well, aren't you a little smiling fellow? It should have been great and bitter torments did rouse your spirits to a deed of blood.

CHRISTY [*doubtfully*]. It should, maybe.

WIDOW QUIN. It's more than "maybe" I'm saying, and it'd soften my heart to see you sitting so simple with your cup and cake, and you fitter to be saying your catechism than slaying your da.[25]

PEGEEN. [*at counter, washing glasses*]. There's talking when any'd see he's fit to be holding his head high with the wonders of the world. Walk on from this,[26] for I'll not have him tormented and he destroyed travelling since Tuesday was a week.

WIDOW QUINN [*peaceably*]. We'll be walking surely when his supper's done, and you'll find we're great company, young fellow, when it's of the like of you and me you'd hear the penny poets singing in an August Fair.

CHRISTY [*innocently*]. Did you kill your father?

PEGEEN [*contemptuously*]. She did not. She hit himself with a worn pick, and the rusted poison did corrode his blood the way he never overed it, and died after. That was a sneaky kind of murder did win small glory with the boys itself.

[*She crosses to* CHRISTY'S *left.*]

WIDOW QUIN [*with good-humour*]. If it didn't, maybe all knows a widow woman has buried her children and destroyed her man is a wiser comrade for a young lad than a girl, the like of you, who'd go helter-skeltering after any man would let you a wink upon the road.

PEGEEN [*breaking out into wild rage*]. And you'll say that, Widow Quin, and you gasping with the rage you had racing the hill beyond to look on his face.

WIDOW QUIN [*laughing derisively*]. Me, is it? Well, Father Reilly has cuteness to divide[27] you now. [*She pulls* CHRISTY *up.*] There's great temptation in a man did slay his da, and we'd best be going, young fellow; so rise up and come with me.

PEGEEN [*seizing his arm*]. He'll not stir. He's pot-boy in this place, and I'll not have him stolen off and kidnabbed while himself's abroad.

WIDOW QUIN. It'd be a crazy pot-boy'd lodge him in the shebeen[28] where he works by day, so you'd have a right to come on, young fellow, till you see my little houseen, a perch off on the rising hill.

PEGEEN. Wait till morning, Christy Mahon. Wait till you lay eyes on her leaky thatch is growing more pasture for her buck goat than her square of fields, and she without a tramp itself to keep in order her place at all.

WIDOW QUIN. When you see me contriving in my little gardens, Christy Mahon, you'll swear the Lord God formed me to be living lone, and that there isn't my match in Mayo for thatching, or mowing, or shearing a sheep.

PEGEEN [*with noisy scorn*]. It's true the Lord God formed you to contrive indeed. Doesn't the world know you reared a black lamb at your own breast, so that the Lord Bishop of Connaught felt the elements of a Christian, and he eating it after in a kidney stew? Doesn't the world know you've been seen shaving[29] the foxy skipper from France for a threepenny bit and a sop of grass tobacco would wring the liver from a mountain goat you'd meet leaping the hills?

WIDOW QUIN [*with amusement*]. Do you hear her now, young fellow? Do you hear the way she'll be rating at your own self when a week is by?

PEGEEN [*to* CHRISTY]. Don't heed her. Tell her to go into her pigsty and not plague us here.

WIDOW QUIN. I'm going; but he'll come with me.

PEGEEN [*shaking him*]. Are you dumb, young fellow?

CHRISTY [*timidly, to* WIDOW QUIN]. God increase you; but I'm pot-boy in this place, and it's here I'd liefer stay.

PEGEEN [*triumphantly*]. Now you have heard him, and go on from this.

WIDOW QUIN [*looking round the room*]. It's lonesome this hour crossing the hill, and if he won't come along with me, I'd have a right maybe to stop this night with yourselves. Let me stretch out on the settle, Pegeen Mike; and himself can lie by the hearth.

PEGEEN [*short and fiercely*]. Faith, I won't. Quit off or I will send you now.

WIDOW QUIN [*gathering her shawl up*]. Well, it's a terror to be aged a score. [*To* CHRISTY.] God bless you now, young fellow, and let you be wary,

[25] pa. [26] i.e. Get out of here.
[27] has the acuteness to separate.
[28] a shop where taxable liquors are sold without the license required by law.
[29] swindling.

or there's right torment will await you here if you go romancing with her like, and she waiting only, as they bade me say, on a sheepskin parchment to be wed with Shawn Keogh of Killakeen.

CHRISTY [*going to* PEGEEN *as she bolts the door*]. What's that she's after saying?

PEGEEN. Lies and blather, you've no call to mind. Well, isn't Shawn Keogh an impudent fellow to send up spying on me? Wait till I lay hands on him. Let him wait, I'm saying.

CHRISTY. And you're not wedding him at all?

PEGEEN. I wouldn't wed him if a bishop came walking for to join us here.

CHRISTY. That God in glory may be thanked for that.

PEGEEN. There's your bed now. I've put a quilt upon you I'm after quilting a while since with my own two hands, and you'd best stretch out now for your sleep, and may God give you a good rest till I call you in the morning when the cocks will crow.

CHRISTY [*as she goes to inner room*]. May God and Mary and St. Patrick bless you and reward you, for your kindly talk. [*She shuts the door behind her. He settles his bed slowly, feeling the quilt with immense satisfaction.*] Well, it's a clean bed and soft with it, and it's great luck and company I've won me in the end of time—two fine women fighting for the likes of me—till I'm thinking this night wasn't I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in the years gone by.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE, *as before. Brilliant morning light.* CHRISTY, *looking bright and cheerful, is cleaning a girl's boots.*

CHRISTY [*to himself, counting jugs on dresser*]. Half a hundred beyond. Ten there. A score that's above. Eighty jugs. Six cups and a broken one. Two plates. A power of glasses. Bottles, a schoolmaster'd be hard set to count, and enough in them, I'm thinking, to drunken all the wealth and wisdom of the County Clare. [*He puts down the boot carefully.*] There's her boots now, nice and decent for her evening use, and isn't it grand brushes she has? [*He puts them down and goes by degrees to the looking-glass.*] Well, this'd be a fine place to be my whole life talking out with swearing Christians, in place of my old dogs and cat, and I stalking around, smoking my pipe and drinking my fill, and never a day's work but drawing a cork an odd time, or wiping a glass, or rinsing out a shiny tumbler for a decent man. [*He takes the looking-glass from the wall and puts it on the back of a chair; then sits down in front of it and begins washing his face.*] Didn't I know rightly I was handsome, though it was the divil's own mirror we had beyond, would twist a squint across an angel's brow; and I'll be growing fine from this day, the way I'll have a soft lovely skin on me and won't be the like of the clumsy young fellows do be ploughing all times in the earth and dung. [*He starts.*] Is she coming again? [*He looks out.*] Stranger girls. God help me, where'll I hide myself away and my long neck naked to the world? [*He looks out.*] I'd best go to the room maybe till I'm dressed again.

[*He gathers up his coat and the looking-glass, and runs into the inner room. The door is pushed open, and* SUSAN BRADY *looks in, and knocks on door.*]

SUSAN. There's nobody in it.

[*Knocks again.*]

NELLY [*pushing her in and following her, with* HONOR BLAKE *and* SARA TANSEY]. It'd be early for them both to be out walking the hill.

SUSAN. I'm thinking Shawn Keogh was making game of us and there's no such man in it at all.

HONOR [*pointing to straw and quilt*]. Look at that. He's been sleeping there in the night. Well, it'll be a hard case if he's gone off now, the way we'll never set our eyes on a man killed his father, and we after rising early and destroying ourselves running fast on the hill.

NELLY. Are you thinking them's his boots?

SARA [*taking them up*]. If they are, there should be his father's track on them. Did you never read in the papers the way murdered men do bleed and drip?

SUSAN. Is that blood there, Sara Tansey?

SARA [*smelling it*]. That's bog water, I'm thinking, but it's his own they are surely, for I never seen the like of them for whity mud, and red mud, and turf on them, and the fine sands of the sea. That man's been walking, I'm telling you.

[*She goes down right, putting on one of his boots.*]

SUSAN [*going to window*]. Maybe he's stolen off to Belmullet with the boots of Michael James, and you'd have a right so to follow after him, Sara

Tansey, and you the one yoked the ass cart and drove ten miles to set your eyes on the man bit the yellow lady's nostril on the northern shore.

[*She looks out.*]

SARA [*running to window with one boot on*]. Don't be talking, and we fooled to-day. [*Putting on other boot.*] There's a pair do fit me well, and I'll be keeping them for walking to the priest, when you'd be ashamed this place, going up winter and summer with nothing worth while to confess at all.

HONOR [*who has been listening at the door*]. Whisht! there's someone inside the room. [*She pushes door a chink open.*] It's a man.

[SARA *kicks off boots and puts them where they were. They all stand in a line looking through chink.*]

SARA. I'll call him. Mister! Mister! [*He puts in his head.*] Is Pegeen within?

CHRISTY [*coming in as meek as a mouse, with the looking-glass held behind his back*]. She's above on the cnuceen,[30] seeking the nanny goats, the way she'd have a sup of goat's milk for to colour my tea.

SARA. And asking your pardon, is it you's the man killed his father?

CHRISTY [*sliding toward the nail where the glass was hanging*]. I am, God help me!

SARA [*taking eggs she has brought*]. Then my thousand welcomes to you, and I've run up with a brace[31] of duck's eggs for your food to-day. Pegeen's ducks is no use, but these are the real rich sort. Hold out your hand and you'll see it's no lie I'm telling you.

CHRISTY [*coming forward shyly, and holding out his left hand*]. They're a great and weighty size.

SUSAN. And I run up with a pat of butter, for it'd be a poor thing to have you eating your spuds dry, and you after running a great way since you did destroy your da.

CHRISTY. Thank you kindly.

HONOR. And I brought you a little cut of cake, for you should have a thin stomach on you, and you that length walking the world.

NELLY. And I brought you a little laying pullet —boiled and all she is—was crushed at the fall of night by the curate's car. Feel the fat of that breast, mister.

CHRISTY. It's bursting, surely.

[*He feels it with the back of his hand, in which he holds the presents.*]

SARA. Will you pinch it? Is your right hand too sacred for to use at all? [*She slips round behind him.*] It's a glass he has. Well, I never seen to this day a man with a looking-glass held to his back. Them that kills their fathers is a vain lot surely.

[*Girls giggle.*]

CHRISTY [*smiling innocently and piling presents on glass*]. I'm very thankful to you all to-day . . .

WIDOW QUIN [*coming in quickly, at door*]. Sara Tansey, Susan Brady, Honor Blake! What in glory has you here at this hour of day?

GIRLS [*giggling*]. That's the man killed his father.

WIDOW QUIN [*coming to them*]. I know well it's the man; and I'm after putting him down in the sports below for racing, leaping, pitching, and the Lord knows what.

SARA [*exuberantly*]. That's right, Widow Quin. I'll bet my dowry that he'll lick the world.

WIDOW QUIN. If you will, you'd have a right to have him fresh and nourished in place of nursing a feast. [*Taking presents.*] Are you fasting or fed, young fellow?

CHRISTY. Fasting, if you please.

WIDOW QUIN [*loudly*]. Well, you're the lot.[32] Stir up now and give him his breakfast. [*To* CHRISTY.] Come here to me [*she puts him on bench beside her while the girls make tea and get his breakfast*] and let you tell us your story before Pegeen will come, in place of grinning your ears off like the moon of May.

CHRISTY [*beginning to be pleased*]. It's a long story; you'd be destroyed listening.

WIDOW QUIN. Don't be letting on to be shy, a fine, gamey, treacherous lad the like of you. Was it in your house beyond you cracked his skull?

CHRISTY [*shy but flattered*]. It was not. We were digging spuds in his cold, sloping, stony, divil's patch of a field.

WIDOW QUIN. And you went asking money of him, or making talk of getting a wife would drive him from his farm?

CHRISTY. I did not, then; but there I was, digging and digging, and "You squinting idiot," says he, "let you walk down now and tell the priest you'll wed the Widow Casey in a score of days."

WIDOW QUIN. And what kind was she?

CHRISTY. [*with horror*]. A walking terror from beyond the hills, and she two score and five years, and two hundredweights and five pounds in the

[30] hillock.
[31] pair.
[32] You're the limit!

weighing scales, with a limping leg on her, and a blinded eye, and she a woman of noted misbehaviour with the old and young.

GIRLS [*clustering round him, serving him*]. Glory be.

WIDOW QUIN. And what did he want driving you to wed with her?

[*She takes a bit of the chicken.*]

CHRISTY [*eating with growing satisfaction*]. He was letting on I was wanting a protector from the harshness of the world, and he without a thought the whole while but how he'd have her hut to live in and her gold to drink.

WIDOW QUIN. There's maybe worse than a dry hearth and a widow woman and your glass at night. So you hit him then?

CHRISTY [*getting almost excited*]. I did not. "I won't wed her," says I, "when all know she did suckle me for six weeks when I came into the world, and she a hag this day with a tongue on her has the crows and seabirds scattered, the way they wouldn't cast a shadow on her garden with the dread of her curse."

WIDOW QUIN [*teasingly*]. That one should be right company.

SARA [*eagerly*]. Don't mind her. Did you kill him then?

CHRISTY. "She's too good for the like of you," says he, "and go on now or I'll flatten you out like a crawling beast has passed under a dray."[33] "You will not if I can help it," says I. "Go on," says he, "or I'll have the divil making garters of your limbs to-night." "You will not if I can help it," says I.

[*He sits up, brandishing his mug.*]

SARA. You were right surely.

CHRISTY [*impressively*]. With that the sun came out between the cloud and the hill, and it shining green in my face. "God have mercy on your soul," says he, lifting a scythe; "or on your own," says I, raising the loy.

SUSAN. That's a grand story.

HONOR. He tells it lovely.

CHRISTY [*flattered and confident, waving bone*]. He gave a drive with the scythe, and I gave a lep to the east. Then I turned around with my back to the north, and I hit a blow on the ridge of his skull, laid him stretched out, and he split to the knob of his gullet.

[*He raises the chicken bone to his Adam's apple.*]

[33] a strong low cart with stout wheels for carrying heavy loads.

GIRLS [*together*]. Well, you're a marvel! Oh, God bless you! You're the lad surely!

SUSAN. I'm thinking the Lord God sent him this road to make a second husband to the Widow Quin, and she with a great yearning to be wedded, though all dread her here. Lift him on her knee, Sara Tansey.

WIDOW QUIN. Don't tease him.

SARA [*going over to dresser and counter very quickly, and getting two glasses and porter*]. You're heroes surely, and let you drink a supeen with your arms linked like the outlandish lovers in the sailor's song. [*She links their arms and gives them the glasses.*] There now. Drink a health to the wonders of the western world, the pirates, preachers, poteen-makers, with the jobbing[34] jockies; parching peelers, and the juries fill their stomachs selling judgments of the English law.

[*Brandishing the bottle.*]

WIDOW QUIN. That's a right toast, Sara Tansey. Now Christy.

[*They drink with their arms linked, he drinking with his left hand, she with her right. As they are drinking,* PEGEEN MIKE *comes in with a milk can and stands aghast. They all spring away from* CHRISTY. *He goes down left.* WIDOW QUIN *remains seated.*]

PEGEEN [*angrily, to* SARA]. What is it you're wanting?

SARA [*twisting her apron*]. An ounce of tobacco.

PEGEEN. Have you tuppence?

SARA. I've forgotten my purse.

PEGEEN. Then you'd best be getting it and not fooling us here. [*To the* WIDOW QUIN, *with more elaborate scorn.*] And what is it you're wanting, Widow Quin?

WIDOW QUIN [*insolently*]. A penn'orth of starch.

PEGEEN [*breaking out*]. And you without a white shift or a shirt in your whole family since the drying of the flood. I've no starch for the like of you, and let you walk on now to Killamuck.

WIDOW QUIN. [*turning to* CHRISTY, *as she goes out with the girls*]. Well, you're mighty huffy this day, Pegeen Mike, and, you young fellow, let you not forget the sports and racing when the noon is by.

[*They go out.*]

PEGEEN [*imperiously*]. Fling out that rubbish and put them cups away. [CHRISTY *tidies away in great haste.*] Shove in the bench by the wall. [*He does so.*] And hang that glass on the nail. What disturbed it at all?

[34] underhanded

CHRISTY [*very meekly*]. I was making myself decent only, and this a fine country for young lovely girls.

PEGEEN [*sharply*]. Whisht your talking of girls. [*Goes to counter—right.*]

CHRISTY. Wouldn't any wish to be decent in a place . . .

PEGEEN. Whisht I'm saying.

CHRISTY [*looks at her face for a moment with great misgivings, then as a last effort, takes up a loy, and goes towards her, with feigned assurance*]. It was with a loy the like of that I killed my father.

PEGEEN [*still sharply*]. You've told me that story six times since the dawn of day.

CHRISTY [*reproachfully*]. It's a queer thing you wouldn't care to be hearing it and them girls after walking four miles to be listening to me now.

PEGEEN [*turning round astonished*]. Four miles.

CHRISTY [*apologetically*]. Didn't himself say there were only four bona fides living in the place?

PEGEEN. It's bona fides by the road they are, but that lot came over the river lepping the stones. It's not three perches when you go like that, and I was down this morning looking on the papers the post-boy does have in his bag. [*With meaning and emphasis.*] For there was great news this day, Christopher Mahon.

[*She goes into room left.*]

CHRISTY [*suspiciously*]. It is news of my murder?

PEGEEN [*inside*]. Murder, indeed.

CHRISTY [*loudly*]. A murdered da?

PEGEEN [*coming in again and crossing right*]. There was not, but a story filled half a page of the hanging of a man. Ah, that should be a fearful end, young fellow, and it worst of all for a man who destroyed his da, for the like of him would get small mercies, and when it's dead he is, they'd put him in a narrow grave, with cheap sacking wrapping him round, and pour down quicklime on his head, the way you'd see a woman pouring any frish-frash[35] from a cup.

CHRISTY [*very miserably*]. Oh, God help me. Are you thinking I'm safe? You were saying at the fall of night, I was shut of jeopardy and I here with yourselves.

PEGEEN [*severely*]. You'll be shut of jeopardy no place if you go talking with a pack of wild girls the like of them do be walking abroad with the peelers, talking whispers at the fall of night.

CHRISTY [*with terror*]. And you're thinking they'd tell?

PEGEEN [*with mock sympathy*]. Who knows, God help you.

CHRISTY [*loudly*]. What joy would they have to bring hanging to the likes of me?

PEGEEN. It's queer joys they have, and who knows the thing they'd do, if it'd make the green stones[36] cry itself to think of you swaying and swiggling at the butt of a rope, and you with a fine, stout neck, God bless you! the way you'd be a half an hour, in great anguish, getting your death.

CHRISTY [*getting his boots and putting them on*]. If there's that terror of them, it'd be best, maybe, I went on wandering like Esau or Cain and Abel on the sides of Neifin or the Erris plain.

PEGEEN [*beginning to play with him*]. It would, maybe, for I've heard the Circuit Judges this place is a heartless crew.

CHRISTY [*bitterly*]. It's more than Judges this place is a heartless crew. [*Looking up at her.*] And isn't it a poor thing to be starting again and I a lonesome fellow will be looking out on women and girls the way the needy fallen spirits do be looking on the Lord?

PEGEEN. What call have you to be that lonesome when there's poor girls walking Mayo in their thousands now?

CHRISTY [*grimly*]. It's well you know what call I have. It's well you know it's a lonesome thing to be passing small towns with the lights shining sideways when the night is down, or going in strange places with a dog noising before you and a dog noising behind, or drawn to the cities where you'd hear a voice kissing and talking deep love in every shadow of the ditch, and you passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from your heart.

PEGEEN. I'm thinking you're an odd man, Christy Mahon. The oddest walking fellow I ever set my eyes on to this hour to-day.

CHRISTY. What would any be but odd men and they living lonesome in the world?

PEGEEN. I'm not odd, and I'm my whole life with my father only.

CHRISTY [*with infinite admiration*]. How would a lovely handsome woman the like of you be lonesome when all men should be thronging around to hear the sweetness of your voice, and the little infant children should be pestering your steps I'm thinking, and you walking the roads.

PEGEEN. I'm hard set to know what way a coax-

[35] slops (?) The word is unknown, and Pegeen is probably indulging in onomatopoeia.

[36] (very hard and close-textured stone).

ing fellow the like of yourself should be lonesome either.

CHRISTY. Coaxing?

PEGEEN. Would you have me think a man never talked with the girls would have the words you've spoken to-day? It's only letting on you are to be lonesome, the way you'd get around me now.

CHRISTY. I wish to God I was letting on; but I was lonesome all times, and born lonesome, I'm thinking, as the moon of dawn.

[*Going to door.*]

PEGEEN [*puzzled by his talk*]. Well, it's a story I'm not understanding at all why you'd be worse than another, Christy Mahon, and you a fine lad with the great savagery to destroy your da.

CHRISTY. It's little I'm understanding myself, saving only that my heart's scalded this day, and I going off stretching out the earth between us, the way I'll not be waking near you another dawn of the year till the two of us do arise to hope or judgment with the saints of God, and now I'd best be going with my wattle[37] in my hand, for hanging is a poor thing [*turning to go*], and it's little welcome only is left me in this house to-day.

PEGEEN [*sharply*]. Christy! [*He turns round.*] Come here to me. [*He goes towards her.*] Lay down that switch and throw some sods on the fire. You're pot-boy in this place, and I'll not have you mitch off[38] from us now.

CHRISTY. You were saying I'd be hanged if I stay.

PEGEEN [*quite kindly at last*]. I'm after going down and reading the fearful crimes of Ireland for two weeks or three, and there wasn't a word of your murder. [*Getting up and going over to the counter.*] They've likely not found the body. You're safe so with ourselves.

CHRISTY [*astonished, slowly*]. It's making game of me you were [*following her with fearful joy*], and I can stay so, working at your side, and I not lonesome from this mortal day.

PEGEEN. What's to hinder you from staying, except the widow woman or the young girls would inveigle you off?

CHRISTY [*with rapture*]. And I'll have your words from this day filling my ears, and that look is come upon you meeting my two eyes, and I watching you loafing around in the warm sun, or rinsing your ankles when the night is come.

PEGEEN [*kindly, but a little embarrassed*]. I'm thinking you'll be a loyal young lad to have working around, and if you vexed me a while since with your leaguing with the girls, I wouldn't give a thraneen[39] for a lad hadn't a mighty spirit in him and a gamey heart.

[SHAWN KEOGH *runs in carrying a cleeve on his back, followed by the* WIDOW QUIN.]

SHAWN [*to* PEGEEN]. I was passing below, and I seen your mountainy sheep eating cabbages in Jimmy's field. Run up or they'll be bursting surely.

PEGEEN. Oh, God mend them!

[*She puts a shawl over her head and runs out.*]

CHRISTY [*looking from one to the other. Still in high spirits*]. I'd best go to her aid maybe. I'm handy with ewes.

WIDOW QUIN [*closing the door*]. She can do that much, and there is Shaneen has long speeches for to tell you now.

[*She sits down with an amused smile.*]

SHAWN [*taking something from his pocket and offering it to* CHRISTY]. Do you see that, mister?

CHRISTY [*looking at it*]. The half of a ticket to the Western States!

SHAWN [*trembling with anxiety*]. I'll give it to you and my new hat [*pulling it out of hamper*]; and my breeches with the double seat [*pulling it off*]; and my new coat is woven from the blackest shearings for three miles around [*giving him the coat*]; I'll give you the whole of them, and my blessing, and the blessing of Father Reilly itself, maybe, if you'll quit from this and leave us in the peace we had till last night at the fall of dark.

CHRISTY [*with a new arrogance*]. And for what is it you're wanting to get shut of me?

SHAWN [*looking to the* WIDOW *for help*]. I'm a poor scholar with middling faculties to coin a lie, so I'll tell you the truth, Christy Mahon. I'm wedding with Pegeen beyond, and I don't think well of having a clever fearless man the like of you dwelling in her house.

CHRISTY [*almost pugnaciously*]. And you'd be using bribery for to banish me?

SHAWN [*in an imploring voice*]. Let you not take it badly, mister honey, isn't beyond the best place for you where you'll have golden chains and shiny coats and you riding upon hunters with the ladies of the land.

[*He makes an eager sign to the* WIDOW QUIN *to come to help him.*]

WIDOW QUIN [*coming over*]. It's true for him, and you'd best quit off and not have that poor girl setting her mind on you, for there's Shaneen

[37] rod.

[38] skulk away.

[39] a very small coin.

thinks she wouldn't suit you though all is saying that she'll wed you now.

[CHRISTY *beams with delight.*]

SHAWN [*in terrified earnest*]. She wouldn't suit you, and she with the divil's own temper the way you'd be strangling one another in a score of days. [*He makes the movement of strangling with his hands.*] It's the like of me only that she's fit for, a quiet simple fellow wouldn't raise a hand upon her if she scratched itself.

WIDOW QUIN [*putting* SHAWN'S *hat on* CHRISTY]. Fit them clothes on you anyhow, young fellow, and he'd maybe loan them to you for the sports. [*Pushing him towards inner door.*] Fit them on and you can give your answer when you have them tried.

CHRISTY [*beaming, delighted with the clothes*]. I will then. I'd like herself to see me in them tweeds and hat.

[*He goes into room and shuts the door.*]

SHAWN [*in great anxiety*]. He'd like herself to see them. He'll not leave us, Widow Quin. He's a score of divils in him the way it's well nigh certain he will wed Pegeen.

WIDOW QUIN [*jeeringly*]. It's true all girls are fond of courage and do hate the like of you.

SHAWN [*walking about in desperation*]. Oh, Widow Quin, what'll I be doing now? I'd inform again him, but he'd burst from Kilmainham and he'd be sure and certain to destroy me. If I wasn't so God-fearing, I'd near have courage to come behind him and run a pike[40] into his side. Oh, it's a hard case to be an orphan and not to have your father that you're used to, and you'd easy kill and make yourself a hero in the sight of all. [*Coming up to her.*] Oh, Widow Quin, will you find me some contrivance when I've promised you a ewe?

WIDOW QUIN. A ewe's a small thing, but what would you give me if I did wed him and did save you so?

SHAWN [*with astonishment*]. You?

WIDOW QUIN. Aye. Would you give me the red cow you have and the mountainy ram, and the right of way across your rye path, and a load of dung at Michaelmas,[41] and turbary[42] upon the western hill?

SHAWN [*radiant with hope*]. I would surely, and I'd give you the wedding-ring I have, and the loan of a new suit, the way you'd have him decent on the wedding-day. I'd give you two kids for your dinner, and a gallon of poteen, and I'd call the piper on the long car to your wedding from Crossmolina or from Ballina. I'd give you . . .

WIDOW QUIN. That'll do so, and let you whisht, for he's coming now again.

[CHRISTY *comes in very natty in the new clothes.* WIDOW QUIN *goes to him admiringly.*]

WIDOW QUIN. If you seen yourself now, I'm thinking you'd be too proud to speak to us at all, and it'd be a pity surely to have your like sailing from Mayo to the Western World.

CHRISTY [*as proud as a peacock*]. I'm not going. If this is a poor place itself, I'll make myself contented to be lodging here.

[WIDOW QUIN *makes a sign to* SHAWN *to leave them.*]

SHAWN. Well, I'm going measuring the race-course while the tide is low, so I'll leave you the garments and my blessing for the sports to-day. God bless you!

[*He wriggles out.*]

WIDOW QUIN [*admiring* CHRISTY]. Well, you're mighty spruce, young fellow. Sit down now while you're quiet till you talk with me.

CHRISTY [*swaggering*]. I'm going abroad on the hillside for to seek Pegeen.

WIDOW QUIN. You'll have time and plenty for to seek Pegeen, and you heard me saying at the fall of night the two of us should be great company.

CHRISTY. From this out I'll have no want of company when all sorts is bringing me their food and clothing [*he swaggers to the door, tightening his belt*], the way they'd set their eyes upon a gallant orphan cleft his father with one blow to the breeches belt. [*He opens door, then staggers back.*] Saints of glory! Holy angels from the throne of light!

WIDOW QUIN [*going over*]. What ails you?

CHRISTY. It's the walking spirit of my murdered da!

WIDOW QUIN [*looking out*]. Is it that tramper?

CHRISTY [*wildly*]. Where'll I hide my poor body from that ghost of hell?

[*The door is pushed open, and old* MAHON *appears on threshold.* CHRISTY *darts in behind door.*]

WIDOW QUIN [*in great amusement*]. God save you, my poor man.

MAHON [*gruffly*]. Did you see a young lad passing this way in the early morning or the fall of night?

[40] a spike.
[41] September 29.
[42] peat-turf.

WIDOW QUIN. You're a queer kind to walk in not saluting at all.

MAHON. Did you see the young lad?

WIDOW QUIN [*stiffly*]. What kind was he?

MAHON. An ugly young streeler[43] with a murderous gob[44] on him, and a little switch in his hand. I met a tramper seen him coming this way at the fall of night.

WIDOW QUIN. There's harvest hundreds do be passing these days for the Sligo boat. For what is it you're wanting him, my poor man?

MAHON. I want to destroy him for breaking the head on me with a clout of a loy. [*He takes off a big hat, and shows his head in a mass of bandages and plaster, with some pride.*] It was he did that, and amn't I a great wonder to think I've traced him ten days with that rent in my crown?

WIDOW QUIN [*taking his head in both hands and examining it with extreme delight*]. That was a great blow. And who hit you? A robber maybe?

MAHON. It was my own son hit me, and he the divil a robber, or anything else, but a dirty, stuttering lout.

WIDOW QUIN [*letting go his skull and wiping her hands in her apron*]. You'd best be wary of a mortified scalp, I think they call it, lepping around with that wound in the splendour of the sun. It was a bad blow surely, and you should have vexed him fearful to make him strike that gash in his da.

MAHON. Is it me?

WIDOW QUIN [*amusing herself*]. Aye. And isn't it a great shame when the old and hardened do torment the young?

MAHON [*raging*]. Torment him is it? And I after holding out with the patience of a martyred saint till there's nothing but destruction on, and I'm driven out in my old age with none to aid me.

WIDOW QUIN [*greatly amused*]. It's a sacred wonder the way that wickedness will spoil a man.

MAHON. My wickedness, is it? Amn't I after saying it is himself has me destroyed, and he a liar on walls, a talker of folly, a man you'd see stretched the half of the day in the brown ferns with his belly to the sun.

WIDOW QUIN. Not working at all?

MAHON. The divil a work, or if he did itself, you'd see him raising up a haystack like the stalk of a rush, or driving our last cow till he broke her leg at the hip, and when he wasn't at that he'd be fooling over little birds he had—finches and felts—or making mugs at his own self in the bit of a glass we had hung on the wall.

WIDOW QUIN [*looking at* CHRISTY]. What way was he so foolish? It was running wild after the girls may be?

MAHON [*with a shout of derision*]. Running wild, is it? If he seen a red petticoat coming swinging over the hill, he'd be off to hide in the sticks, and you'd see him shooting out his sheep's eyes between the little twigs and the leaves, and his two ears rising like a hare looking out through a gap. Girls, indeed!

WIDOW QUIN. It was drink maybe?

MAHON. And he a poor fellow would get drunk on the smell of a pint. He'd a queer rotten stomach, I'm telling you, and when I gave him three pulls from my pipe a while since, he was taken with contortions till I had to send him in the ass cart to the females' nurse.

WIDOW QUIN [*clasping her hands*]. Well, I never till this day heard tell of a man the like of that!

MAHON. I'd take a mighty oath you didn't surely, and wasn't he the laughing joke of every female woman where four baronies meet, the way the girls would stop their weeding if they seen him coming the road to let a roar at him, and call him the looney of Mahon's.

WIDOW QUIN. I'd give the world and all to see the like of him. What kind was he?

MAHON. A small low fellow.

WIDOW QUIN. And dark?

MAHON. Dark and dirty.

WIDOW QUIN [*considering*]. I'm thinking I seen him.

MAHON [*eagerly*]. An ugly young blackguard.

WIDOW QUIN. A hideous, fearful villain, and the spit of you.

MAHON. What way is he fled?

WIDOW QUIN. Gone over the hills to catch a coasting steamer to the north or south.

MAHON. Could I pull up on him now?

WIDOW QUIN. If you'll cross the sands below where the tide is out, you'll be in it as soon as himself, for he had to go round ten miles by the top of the bay. [*She points to the door.*] Strike down by the head beyond and then follow on the roadway to the north and east.

[MAHON *goes abruptly.*]

WIDOW QUIN [*shouting after him*]. Let you give him a good vengeance when you come up with him, but don't put yourself in the power of the law, for it'd be a poor thing to see a judge in his

[43] an aimless wanderer.
[44] beak.

black cap reading out his sentence on a civil warrior the like of you.

[*She swings the door to and looks at* CHRISTY, *who is cowering in terror, for a moment, then she bursts into a laugh.*]

WIDOW QUIN. Well, you're the walking Playboy of the Western World, and that's the poor man you had divided to his breeches belt.

CHRISTY [*looking out: then, to her*]. What'll Pegeen say when she hears that story? What'll she be saying to me now?

WIDOW QUIN. She'll knock the head of you, I'm thinking, and drive you from the door. God help her to be taking you for a wonder, and you a little schemer making up the story you destroyed your da.

CHRISTY [*turning to the door, nearly speechless with rage, half to himself*]. To be letting on he was dead, and coming back to his life, and following after me like an old weazel tracing a rat, and coming in here laying desolation between my own self and the fine women of Ireland, and he a kind of carcase that you'd fling upon the sea . . .

WIDOW QUIN [*more soberly*]. There's talking for a man's one only son.

CHRISTY [*breaking out*]. His one son, is it? May I meet him with one tooth and it aching, and one eye to be seeing seven and seventy divils in the twists of the road, and one old timber leg on him to limp into the scalding grave. [*Looking out.*] There he is now crossing the strands, and that the Lord God would send a high wave to wash him from the world.

WIDOW QUIN [*scandalized*]. Have you no shame? [*Putting her hand on his shoulder and turning him round.*] What ails you? Near crying, is it?

CHRISTY [*in despair and grief*]. Amn't I after seeing the love-light of the star of knowledge shining from her brow, and hearing words would put you thinking on the holy Brigid speaking to the infant saints, and now she'll be turning again, and speaking hard words to me, like an old woman with a spavindy[45] ass she'd have, urging on a hill.

WIDOW QUIN. There's poetry talk for a girl you'd see itching and scratching, and she with a stale stink of poteen on her from selling in the shop.

CHRISTY [*impatiently*]. It's her like is fitted to be handling merchandise in the heavens above, and what'll I be doing now, I ask you, and I a kind of wonder was jilted by the heavens when a day was by.

[*There is a distant noise of girls' voices.* WIDOW QUIN *looks from window and comes to him, hurriedly.*]

WIDOW QUIN. You'll be doing like myself, I'm thinking, when I did destroy my man, for I'm above many's the day, odd times in great spirits, abroad in the sunshine, darning a stocking or stitching a shift; and odd times again looking out on the schooners, hookers, trawlers is sailing the sea, and I thinking on the gallant hairy fellows are drifting beyond, and myself long years living alone.

CHRISTY [*interested*]. You're like me, so.

WIDOW QUIN. I am your like, and it's for that I'm taking a fancy to you, and I with my little houseen above where there'd be myself to tend you, and none to ask were you a murderer or what at all.

CHRISTY. And what would I be doing if I left Pegeen?

WIDOW QUIN. I've nice jobs you could be doing, gathering shells to make a whitewash for our hut within, building up a little goose-house, or stretching a new skin on an old curragh[46] I have, and if my hut is far from all sides, it's there you'll meet the wisest old men, I tell you, at the corner of my wheel, and it's there yourself and me will have great times whispering and hugging. . . .

VOICES [*outside, calling far away*]. Christy! Christy Mahon! Christy!

CHRISTY. Is it Pegeen Mike?

WIDOW QUIN. It's the young girls, I'm thinking, coming to bring you to the sports below, and what is it you'll have me to tell them now?

CHRISTY. Aid me for to win Pegeen. It's herself only that I'm seeking now. [WIDOW QUIN *gets up and goes to window.*] Aid me for to win her, and I'll be asking God to stretch a hand to you in the hour of death, and lead you short cuts through the Meadows of Ease, and up the floor of Heaven to the Footstool of the Virgin's Son.

WIDOW QUIN. There's praying.

VOICES [*nearer*]. Christy! Christy Mahon!

CHRISTY [*with agitation*]. They're coming. Will you swear to aid and save me for the love of Christ?

WIDOW QUIN [*looks at him for a moment*]. If I aid you, will you swear to give me a right of way I want, and a mountainy ram, and a load of dung at Michaelmas, the time that you'll be master here?

[45] crippled.

[46] a small boat of wicker-work covered with hides.

CHRISTY. I will, by the elements and stars of night.

WIDOW QUIN. Then we'll not say a word of the old fellow, the way Pegeen won't know your story till the end of time.

CHRISTY. And if he chances to return again?

WIDOW QUIN. We'll swear he's a maniac and not your da. I could take an oath I seen him raving on the sands to-day.

[*Girls run in.*]

SUSAN. Come on to the sports below. Pegeen says you're to come.

SARA TANSEY. The lepping's beginning, and we've a jockey's suit to fit upon you for the mule race on the sands below.

HONOR. Come on, will you?

CHRISTY. I will then if Pegeen's beyond.

SARA TANSEY. She's in the boreen[47] making game of Shaneen Keogh.

CHRISTY. Then I'll be going to her now.

[*He runs out followed by the girls.*]

WIDOW QUIN. Well, if the worst comes in the end of all, it'll be great game to see there's none to pity him but a widow woman, the like of me, has buried her children and destroyed her man.

[*She goes out.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE, *as before. Later in the day.* JIMMY *comes in, slightly drunk.*

JIMMY [*calls*]. Pegeen! [*Crosses to inner door.*] Pegeen Mike! [*Comes back again into the room.*] Pegeen! [PHILLY *comes in in the same state.*] [*To* PHILLY.] Did you see herself?

PHILLY. I did not; but I sent Shawn Keogh with the ass cart for to bear him home. [*Trying cupboards which are locked.*] Well, isn't he a nasty man to get into such staggers at a morning wake? and isn't herself the divil's daughter for locking, and she so fussy after that young gaffer, you might take your death with drought and none to heed you?

JIMMY. It's little wonder she'd be fussy, and he after bringing bankrupt ruin on the roulette man, and the trick-o'-the-loop[48] man, and breaking the nose of the cockshot-man,[49] and winning all in the sports below, racing, lepping, dancing, and the Lord knows what! He's right luck, I'm telling you.

PHILLY. If he has, he'll be rightly hobbled yet, and he not able to say ten words without making a brag of the way he killed his father, and the great blow he hit with the loy.

JIMMY. A man can't hang by his own informing, and his father should be rotten by now.

[*Old* MAHON *passes window slowly.*]

PHILLY. Supposing a man's digging spuds in that field with a long spade, and supposing he flings up the two halves of that skull, what'll be said then in the papers and the courts of law?

JIMMY. They'd say it was an old Dane, maybe, was drowned in the flood. [*Old* MAHON *comes in and sits down near door listening.*] Did you never hear tell of the skulls they have in the city of Dublin, ranged[50] out like blue jugs in a cabin of Connaught?

PHILLY. And you believe that?

JIMMY [*pugnaciously*]. Didn't a lad see them and he after coming from harvesting in the Liverpool boat? "They have them there," says he, "making a show of the great people there was one time walking the world. White skulls and black skulls and yellow skulls, and some with full teeth, and some haven't only but one."

PHILLY. It was no lie, maybe, for when I was a young lad there was a graveyard beyond the house with the remnants of a man who had thighs as long as your arm. He was a horrid man, I'm telling you, and there was many a fine Sunday I'd put him together for fun, and he with shiny bones, you wouldn't meet the like of these days in the cities of the world.

MAHON [*getting up*]. You wouldn't, is it? Lay your eyes on that skull, and tell me where and when there was another the like of it, is splintered only from the blow of a loy.

PHILLY. Glory be to God! And who hit you at all?

MAHON [*triumphantly*]. It was my own son hit me. Would you believe that?

JIMMY. Well, there's wonders hidden in the heart of man!

PHILLY [*suspiciously*]. And what way was it done?

MAHON [*wandering about the room*]. I'm after walking hundreds and long scores of miles, winning clean beds and the fill of my belly four times in the day, and I doing nothing but telling stories of that naked truth. [*He comes to them a little*

[47] a lane or narrow road. [48] carnival man.
[49] probably the man who operates a shooting-gallery.
[50] arrayed.

aggressively.] Give me a supeen and I'll tell you now.

[WIDOW QUIN *comes in and stands aghast behind him. He is facing* JIMMY *and* PHILLY, *who are on the left.*]

JIMMY. Ask herself beyond. She's the stuff hidden in her shawl.

WIDOW QUIN [*coming to* MAHON *quickly*]. You here, is it? You didn't go far at all?

MAHON. I seen the coasting steamer passing, and I got a drought upon me and a cramping leg, so I said, "The divil go along with him," and turned again. [*Looking under her shawl.*] And let you give me a supeen, for I'm destroyed travelling since Tuesday was a week.

WIDOW QUIN [*getting a glass, in a cajoling tone*]. Sit down then by the fire and take your ease for a space. You've a right to be destroyed indeed, with your walking, and fighting, and facing the sun [*giving him poteen from a stone jar she has brought in*]. There now is a drink for you, and may it be to your happiness and length of life.

MAHON [*taking glass greedily and sitting down by fire*]. God increase you!

WIDOW QUIN [*taking men to the right stealthily*]. Do you know what? That man's raving from his wound to-day, for I met him a while since telling a rambling tale of a tinker had him destroyed. Then he heard of Christy's deed, and he up and says it was his son had cracked his skull. O isn't madness a fright, for he'll go killing someone yet, and he thinking it's the man has struck him so?

JIMMY [*entirely convinced*]. It's a fright, surely. I knew a party was kicked in the head by a red mare, and he went killing horses a great while, till he eat the insides of a clock and died after.

PHILLY [*with suspicion*]. Did he see Christy?

WIDOW QUIN. He didn't. [*With a warning gesture.*] Let you not be putting him in mind of him, or you'll be likely summoned if there's murder done. [*Looking round at* MAHON.] Whisht! He's listening. Wait now till you hear me taking him easy and unravelling all. [*She goes to* MAHON.] And what way are you feeling, mister? Are you in contentment now?

MAHON [*slightly emotional from his drink*]. I'm poorly only, for it's a hard story the way I'm left to-day, when it was I did tend him from his hour of birth, and he a dunce never reached his second book, the way he'd come from school, many's the day, with his legs lamed under him, and he blackened with his beatings like a tinker's ass. It's a hard story, I'm saying, the way some do have their next and nighest raising up a hand of murder on them, and some is lonesome getting their death with lamentation in the dead of night.

WIDOW QUIN [*not knowing what to say*]. To hear you talking so quiet, who'd know you were the same fellow we seen pass to-day?

MAHON. I'm the same surely. The wrack and ruin of three score years; and it's a terror to live that length, I tell you, and to have your sons going to the dogs against you, and you wore out scolding them, and skelping[51] them, and God knows what.

PHILLY [*to* JIMMY]. He's not raving. [*To* WIDOW QUIN.] Will you ask him what kind was his son?

WIDOW QUIN [*to* MAHON, *with a peculiar look*]. Was your son that hit you a lad of one year and a score maybe, a great hand at racing and lepping and licking the world?

MAHON [*turning on her with a roar of rage*]. Didn't you hear me say he was the fool of men, the way from this out he'll know the orphan's lot with old and young making game of him and they swearing, raging, kicking at him like a mangy cur.

[*A great burst of cheering outside, some way off.*]

MAHON [*putting his hands to his ears*]. What in the name of God do they want roaring below?

WIDOW QUIN [*with the shade of a smile*]. They're cheering a young lad, the champion Playboy of the Western World.

[*More cheering.*]

MAHON [*going to window*]. It'd split my heart to hear them, and I with pulses in my brain-pan for a week gone by. Is it racing they are?

JIMMY [*looking from door*]. It is then. They are mounting him for the mule race will be run upon the sands. That's the playboy on the winkered mule.

MAHON [*puzzled*]. That lad, is it? If you said it was a fool he was, I'd have laid a mighty oath he was the likeness of my wandering son [*uneasily, putting his hand to his head*]. Faith, I'm thinking I'll go walking for to view the race.

WIDOW QUIN [*stopping him, sharply*]. You will not. You'd best take the road to Belmullet, and not be dillydallying in this place where there isn't a spot you could sleep.

PHILLY [*coming forward*]. Don't mind her. Mount there on the bench and you'll have a view of the whole. They're hurrying before the tide will rise, and it'd be near over if you went down the pathway through the crags below.

MAHON [*mounts on bench,* WIDOW QUIN *be-*

[51] beating.

side him]. That's a right view again the edge of the sea. They're coming now from the point. He's leading. Who is he at all?

WIDOW QUIN. He's the champion of the world, I tell you, and there isn't a hop'orth[52] isn't falling lucky to his hands to-day.

PHILLY [*looking out, interested in the race*]. Look at that. They're pressing him now.

JIMMY. He'll win it yet.

PHILLY. Take your time, Jimmy Farrell. It's too soon to say.

WIDOW QUIN [*shouting*]. Watch him taking the gate. There's riding.

JIMMY [*cheering*]. More power to the young lad!

MAHON. He's passing the third.

JIMMY. He'll lick them yet!

WIDOW QUIN. He'd lick them if he was running races with a score itself.

MAHON. Look at the mule he has, kicking the stars.

WIDOW QUIN. There was a lep! [*Catching hold of* MAHON *in her excitement.*] He's fallen! He's mounted again! Faith, he's passing them all!

JIMMY. Look at him skelping her!

PHILLY. And the mountain girls hooshing him on!

JIMMY. It's the last turn! The post's cleared for them now!

MAHON. Look at the narrow place. He'll be into the bogs! [*With a yell.*] Good rider! He's through it again!

JIMMY. He's neck and neck!

MAHON. Good boy to him! Flames, but he's in! [*Great cheering, in which all join.*]

MAHON [*with hesitation*]. What's that? They're raising him up. They're coming this way. [*With a roar of rage and astonishment.*] It's Christy! by the stars of God! I'd know his way of spitting and he astride the moon.

[*He jumps down and makes for the door, but* WIDOW QUIN *catches him and pulls him back.*]

WIDOW QUIN. Stay quiet, will you. That's not your son. [*To* JIMMY.] Stop him, or you'll get a month for the abetting of manslaughter and be fined as well.

JIMMY. I'll hold him.

MAHON [*struggling*]. Let me out! Let me out, the lot of you! till I have my vengeance on his head to-day.

WIDOW QUIN [*shaking him, vehemently*]. That's not your son. That's a man is going to make a marriage with the daughter of this house, a place with fine trade, with a license, and with poteen too.

MAHON [*amazed*]. That man marrying a decent and a moneyed girl! Is it mad yous are? Is it in a crazy-house for females that I'm landed now?

WIDOW QUIN. It's mad yourself is with the blow upon your head. That lad is the wonder of the Western World.

MAHON. I seen it's my son.

WIDOW QUIN. You seen that you're mad. [*Cheering outside.*] Do you hear them cheering him in the zig-zags of the road? Aren't you after saying that your son's a fool, and how would they be cheering a true idiot born?

MAHON [*getting distressed*]. It's maybe out of reason that that man's himself. [*Cheering again.*] There's none surely will go cheering him. Oh, I'm raving with a madness that would fright the world! [*He sits down with his hand to his head.*] There was one time I seen ten scarlet divils letting on they'd cork my spirit in a gallon can; and one time I seen rats as big as badgers sucking the life blood from the butt on my lug;[53] but I never till this day confused that dribbling idiot with a likely man. I'm destroyed surely.

WIDOW QUIN. And who'd wonder when it's your brain-pan that is gaping now?

MAHON. Then the blight of the sacred drought upon myself and him, for I never went mad to this day, and I not three weeks with the Limerick girls drinking myself silly, and parlatic[54] from the dusk to dawn. [*To* WIDOW QUIN, *suddenly.*] Is my visage astray?

WIDOW QUIN. It is then. You're a sniggering maniac, a child could see.

MAHON [*getting up more cheerfully*]. Then I'd best be going to the union beyond, and there'll be a welcome before me, I tell you [*with great pride*], and I a terrible and fearful case, the way that there I was one time, screeching in a straitened waistcoat, with seven doctors writing out my sayings in a printed book. Would you believe that?

WIDOW QUIN. If you're a wonder itself, you'd best be hasty, for them lads caught a maniac one time and pelted the poor creature till he ran out, raving and foaming, and was drowned in the sea.

MAHON [*with philosophy*]. It's true mankind is the divil when your head's astray. Let me out now and I'll slip down the boreen, and not see them so.

WIDOW QUIN [*showing him out*]. That's it. Run to the right, and not a one will see.

[52] half-penny's worth.

[53] ear (lobe of the ear).

[54] paralyzed (?).

[*He runs off.*]

PHILLY [*wisely*]. You're at some gaming, Widow Quin; but I'll walk after him and give him his dinner and a time to rest, and I'll see then if he's raving or as sane as you.

WIDOW QUIN [*annoyed*]. If you go near that lad, let you be wary of your head, I'm saying. Didn't you hear him telling he was crazed at times?

PHILLY. I heard him telling a power; and I'm thinking we'll have right sport, before night will fall.

[*He goes out.*]

JIMMY. Well, Philly's a conceited and foolish man. How could that madman have his senses and his brain-pan slit? I'll go after them and see him turn on Philly now.

[*He goes;* WIDOW QUIN *hides poteen behind counter. Then hubbub outside.*]

VOICES. There you are! Good jumper! Grand lepper! Darlint boy! He's the racer! Bear him on, will you!

[CHRISTY *comes in, in Jockey's dress, with* PEGEEN MIKE, SARA, *and other girls, and men.*]

PEGEEN [*to crowd*]. Go on now and don't destroy him and he drenching with sweat. Go along, I'm saying, and have your tug-of-warring till he's dried his skin.

CROWD. Here's his prizes! A bagpipes! A fiddle was played by a poet in the years gone by! A flat and three-thorned blackthorn[55] would lick the scholars out of Dublin town!

CHRISTY [*taking prizes from the men*]. Thank you kindly, the lot of you. But you'd say it was little only I did this day if you'd seen me a while since striking my one single blow.

TOWN CRIER [*outside, ringing a bell*]. Take notice, last event of this day! Tug-of-warring on the green below! Come on, the lot of you! Great achievements for all Mayo men!

PEGEEN. Go on, and leave him for to rest and dry. Go on, I tell you, for he'll do no more. [*She hustles crowd out;* WIDOW QUIN *following them.*]

MEN [*going*]. Come on then. Good luck for the while!

PEGEEN [*radiantly, wiping his face with her shawl*]. Well, you're the lad, and you'll have great times from this out when you could win that wealth of prizes, and you sweating in the heat of noon!

CHRISTY [*looking at her with delight*]. I'll have great times if I win the crowning prize I'm seeking now, and that's your promise that you'll wed me in a fortnight, when our banns[56] is called.

PEGEEN [*backing away from him*]. You've right daring to go ask me that, when all knows you'll be starting to some girl in your own townland, when your father's rotten in four months, or five.

CHRISTY [*indignantly*]. Starting from you, is it? [*He follows her.*] I will not, then, and when the airs is warming in four months, or five, it's then yourself and me should be pacing Neifin in the dews of night, the times sweet smells do be rising, and you'd see a little shiny new moon, maybe, sinking on the hills.

PEGEEN [*looking at him playfully*]. And it's that kind of a poacher's love you'd make, Christy Mahon, on the sides of Neifin, when the night is down?

CHRISTY. It's little you'll think if my love's a poacher's, or an earl's itself, when you'll feel my two hands stretched around you, and I squeezing kisses on your puckered lips, till I'd feel a kind of pity for the Lord God in all ages sitting lonesome in his golden chair.

PEGEEN. That'll be right fun, Christy Mahon, and any girl would walk her heart out before she'd meet a young man was your like for eloquence, or talk, at all.

CHRISTY [*encouraged*]. Let you wait, to hear me talking, till we're astray in Erris, when Good Friday's by, drinking a sup from a well, and making mighty kisses with our wetted mouths, or gaming in a gap or sunshine, with yourself stretched back unto your necklace, in the flowers of the earth.

PEGEEN [*in a lower voice, moved by his tone*]. I'd be nice so, is it?

CHRISTY [*with rapture*]. If the mitred bishops seen you that time, they'd be the like of the holy prophets, I'm thinking, do be straining the bars of Paradise to lay eyes on the Lady Helen of Troy, and she abroad, pacing back and forward, with a nosegay in her golden shawl.

PEGEEN [*with real tenderness*]. And what is it I have, Christy Mahon, to make me fitting entertainment for the like of you, that has such poet's talking, and such bravery of heart?

CHRISTY [*in a low voice*]. Isn't there the light of seven heavens in your heart alone, the way you'll be an angel's lamp to me from this out, and I abroad in the darkness, spearing salmons in the Owen, or the Carrowmore?

PEGEEN. If I was your wife, I'd be along with

[55] a walking-stick.

[56] proclamation of intended marriage.

you those nights, Christy Mahon, the way you'd see I was a great hand at coaxing bailiffs, or coining funny nick-names for the stars of night.

CHRISTY. You, is it? Taking your death in the hailstones, or in the fogs of dawn.

PEGEEN. Yourself and me would shelter easy in a narrow bush, [*with a qualm of dread*] but we're only talking, maybe, for this would be a poor, thatched place to hold a fine lad is the like of you.

CHRISTY [*putting his arm round her*]. If I wasn't a good Christian, it's on my naked knees I'd be saying my prayers and paters to every jackstraw you have roofing your head, and every stony pebble is paving the laneway to your door.

PEGEEN [*radiantly*]. If that's the truth, I'll be burning candles[57] from this out to the miracles of God that have brought you from the south to-day, and I, with my gowns bought ready, the way that I can wed you, and not wait at all.

CHRISTY. It's miracles, and that's the truth. Me there toiling a long while, and walking a long while, not knowing at all I was drawing all times nearer to this holy day.

PEGEEN. And myself, a girl, was tempted often to go sailing the seas till I'd marry a Jew-man, with ten kegs of gold, and I not knowing at all there was the like of you drawing nearer, like the stars of God.

CHRISTY. And to think I'm long years hearing women talking that talk, to all bloody fools, and this the first time I've heard the like of your voice talking sweetly for my own delight.

PEGEEN. And to think it's me is talking sweetly, Christy Mahon, and I the fright of seven townlands for my biting tongue. Well, the heart's a wonder; and, I'm thinking, there won't be our like in Mayo, for gallant lovers, from this hour, to-day. [*Drunken singing is heard outside.*] There's my father coming from the wake, and when he's had his sleep we'll tell him, for he's peaceful then.

[*They separate.*]

MICHAEL [*singing outside*].

> The jailer and the turnkey
> They quickly ran us down,
> And brought us back as prisoners
> Once more to Cavan town.

[*He comes in supported by* SHAWN.]

> There we lay bewailing
> All in a prison bound. . . .

[*He sees* CHRISTY. *Goes and shakes him drunkenly by the hand, while* PEGEEN *and* SHAWN *talk on the left.*]

MICHAEL [*to* CHRISTY]. The blessing of God and the holy angels on your head, young fellow. I hear tell you're after winning all in the sports below; and wasn't it a shame I didn't bear you along with me to Kate Cassidy's wake, a fine, stout lad, the like of you, for you'd never see the match of it for flows of drink, the way when we sunk her bones at noonday in her narrow grave, there were five men, aye, and six men, stretched out retching speechless on the holy stones.

CHRISTY [*uneasily, watching* PEGEEN]. Is that the truth?

MICHAEL. It is then, and aren't you a louty schemer to go burying your poor father unbeknownst when you'd a right to throw him on the crupper[58] of a Kerry mule and drive him westwards, like holy Joseph in the days gone by, the way we could have given him a decent burial, and not have him rotting beyond, and not a Christian drinking a smart drop to the glory of his soul?

CHRISTY [*gruffly*]. It's well enough he's lying, for the likes of him.

MICHAEL [*slapping him on the back*]. Well, aren't you a hardened slayer? It'll be a poor thing for the household man where you go sniffing for a female wife; and [*pointing to* SHAWN] look beyond at that shy and decent Christian I have chosen for my daughter's hand, and I after getting the gilded dispensation this day for to wed them now.

CHRISTY. And you'll be wedding them this day, is it?

MICHAEL [*drawing himself up*]. Aye. Are you thinking, if I'm drunk itself, I'd leave my daughter living single with a little frisky rascal is the like of you?

PEGEEN [*breaking away from* SHAWN]. Is it the truth the dispensation's come?

MICHAEL [*triumphantly*]. Father Reilly's after reading it in gallous[59] Latin, and "It's come in the nick of time," says he; "so I'll wed them in a hurry, dreading that young gaffer who'd capsize the stars."

PEGEEN [*fiercely*]. He's missed his nick of time, for it's that lad, Christy Mahon, that I'm wedding now.

MICHAEL [*loudly with horror*]. You'd be making him a son to me, and he wet and crusted with his father's blood?

PEGEEN. Aye. Wouldn't it be a bitter thing for a girl to go marrying the like of Shaneen, and he a

[57] (in thankfulness).

[58] rump. [59] foreign.

middling kind of a scarecrow, with no savagery or fine words in him at all?

MICHAEL [*gasping and sinking on a chair*]. Oh, aren't you a heathen daughter to go shaking the fat of my heart, and I swamped and drownded with the weight of drink? Would you have them turning on me the way that I'd be roaring to the dawn of day with the wind upon my heart? Have you not a word to aid me, Shaneen? Are you not jealous at all?

SHANEEN [*in great misery*]. I'd be afeared to be jealous of a man did slay his da.

PEGEEN. Well, it'd be a poor thing to go marrying your like. I'm seeing there's a world of peril for an orphan girl, and isn't it a great blessing I didn't wed you, before himself came walking from the west or south?

SHAWN. It's a queer story you'd go picking a dirty tramp up from the highways of the world.

PEGEEN [*playfully*]. And you think you're a likely beau to go straying along with, the shiny Sundays of the opening year, when it's sooner on a bullock's liver you'd put a poor girl thinking than on the lily or the rose?

SHAWN. And have you no mind of my weight of passion, and the holy dispensation, and the drift of heifers I am giving, and the golden ring?

PEGEEN. I'm thinking you're too fine for the like of me, Shawn Keogh of Killakeen, and let you go off till you'd find a radiant lady with droves of bullocks on the plains of Meath, and herself bedizened in the diamond jewelleries of Pharaoh's ma. That'd be your match, Shaneen. So God save you now!

[*She retreats behind* CHRISTY.]

SHAWN. Won't you hear me telling you . . . ?

CHRISTY [*with ferocity*]. Take yourself from this, young fellow, or I'll maybe add a murder to my deeds to-day.

MICHAEL [*springing up with a shriek*]. Murder is it? Is it mad yous are? Would you go making murder in this place, and it piled with poteen for our drink to-night? Go on to the foreshore if it's fighting you want, where the rising tide will wash all traces from the memory of man.

[*Pushing* SHAWN *towards* CHRISTY.]

SHAWN [*shaking himself free, and getting behind* MICHAEL]. I'll not fight him, Michael James. I'd liefer live a bachelor, simmering in passions to the end of time, than face a lepping savage the like of him has descended from the Lord knows where. Strike him yourself, Michael James, or you'll lose my drift of heifers and my blue bull from Sneem.

MICHAEL. Is it me fight him, when it's father-slaying he's bred to now? [*Pushing* SHAWN.] Go on you fool and fight him now.

SHAWN [*coming forward a little*]. Will I strike him with my hand?

MICHAEL. Take the loy is on your western side.

SHAWN. I'd be afeard of the gallows if I struck him with that.

CHRISTY [*taking up the loy*]. Then I'll make you face the gallows or quit off from this.

[SHAWN *flies out of the door.*]

CHRISTY. Well, fine weather be after him, [*going to* MICHAEL, *coaxingly*] and I'm thinking you wouldn't wish to have that quaking backguard in your house at all. Let you give us your blessing and hear her swear her faith to me, for I'm mounted on the springtide of the stars of luck, the way it'll be good for any to have me in the house.

PEGEEN [*at the other side of* MICHAEL]. Bless us now, for I swear to God I'll wed him, and I'll not renege.

MICHAEL [*standing up in the centre, holding on to both of them*]. It's the will of God, I'm thinking, that all should win an easy or a cruel end, and it's the will of God that all should rear up lengthy families for the nurture of the earth. What's a single man, I ask you, eating a bit in one house and drinking a sup in another, and he with no place of his own, like an old braying jackass strayed upon the rocks? [*To* CHRISTY.] It's many would be in dread to bring your like into their house for to end them, maybe, with a sudden end; but I'm a decent man of Ireland, and I liefer face the grave untimely and I seeing a score of grandsons growing up little gallant swearers by the name of God, than go peopling my bedside with puny weeds the like of what you'd breed, I'm thinking, out of Shaneen Keogh. [*He joins their hands.*] A daring fellow is the jewel of the world, and a man did split his father's middle with a single clout, should have the bravery of ten, so may God and Mary and St. Patrick bless you, and increase you from this mortal day.

CHRISTY *and* PEGEEN. Amen, O Lord!

[*Hubbub outside.*]

[*Old* MAHON *rushes in, followed by all the crowd, and* WIDOW QUIN. *He makes a rush at* CHRISTY, *knocks him down, and begins to beat him.*]

PEGEEN [*dragging back his arm*]. Stop that, will you. Who are you at all?

MAHON. His father, God forgive me!

PEGEEN [*drawing back*]. Is it rose from the dead?

MAHON. Do you think I look so easy quenched with the tap of a loy?

[*Beats* CHRISTY *again.*]

PEGEEN [*glaring at* CHRISTY]. And it's lies you told, letting on you had him slitted, and you nothing at all.

CHRISTY [*catching* MAHON'S *stick*]. He's not my father. He's a raving maniac would scare the world. [*Pointing to* WIDOW QUIN.] Herself knows it is true.

CROWD. You're fooling Pegeen! The Widow Quin seen him this day, and you likely knew! You're a liar!

CHRISTY [*dumbfounded*]. It's himself was a liar, lying stretched out with an open head on him, letting on he was dead.

MAHON. Weren't you off racing the hills before I got my breath with the start I had seeing you turn on me at all?

PEGEEN. And to think of the coaxing glory we had given him, and he after doing nothing but hitting a soft blow and chasing northward in a sweat of fear. Quit off from this.

CHRISTY [*piteously*]. You've seen my doings this day, and let you save me from the old man; for why would you be in such a scorch of haste to spur me to destruction now?

PEGEEN. It's there your treachery is spurring me, till I'm hard set to think you're the one I'm after lacing in my heart-strings half-an-hour gone by. [*To* MAHON.] Take him on from this, for I think bad the world should see me raging for a Munster liar, and the fool of men.

MAHON. Rise up now to retribution, and come on with me.

CROWD [*jeeringly*]. There's the playboy! There's the lad thought he'd rule the roost in Mayo. Slate him now, mister.

CHRISTY [*getting up in shy terror*]. What is it drives you to torment me here, when I'd asked the thunders of the might of God to blast me if I ever did hurt to any saving only that one single blow.

MAHON [*loudly*]. If you didn't, you're a poor good-for-nothing, and isn't it by the like of you the sins of the whole world are committed?

CHRISTY [*raising his hands*]. In the name of the Almighty God. . . .

MAHON. Leave troubling the Lord God. Would you have him sending down droughts, and fevers, and the old hen and the cholera morbus?[60]

CHRISTY [*to* WIDOW QUIN]. Will you come between us and protect me now?

WIDOW QUIN. I've tried a lot, God help me, and my share is done.

CHRISTY [*looking round in desperation*]. And I must go back into my torment is it, or run off like a vagabond straying through the Unions with the dusts of August making mudstains in the gullet of my throat, or the winds of March blowing on me till I'd take an oath I felt them making whistles of my ribs within?

SARA. Ask Pegeen to aid you. Her like does often change.

CHRISTY. I will not then, for there's torment in the splendour of her like, and she a girl any moon of midnight would take pride to meet, facing southwards on the heaths of Keel. But what did I want crawling forward to scorch my understanding at her flaming brow?

PEGEEN [*to* MAHON, *vehemently, fearing she will break into tears*]. Take him on from this or I'll set the young lads to destroy him here.

MAHON [*going to him, shaking his stick*]. Come on now if you wouldn't have the company to see you skelped.

PEGEEN [*half laughing, through her tears*]. That's it, now the world will see him pandied,[61] and he an ugly liar was playing off the hero, and the fright of men.

CHRISTY [*to* MAHON, *very sharply*]. Leave me go!

CROWD. That's it. Now Christy. If them two set fighting, it will lick the world.

MAHON [*making a grab at* CHRISTY]. Come here to me.

CHRISTY [*more threateningly*]. Leave me go, I'm saying.

MAHON. I will maybe, when your legs is limping, and your back is blue.

CROWD. Keep it up, the two of you. I'll back the old one. Now the playboy.

CHRISTY [*in low and intense voice*]. Shut your yelling, for if you're after making a mighty man of me this day by the power of a lie, you're setting me now to think if it's a poor thing to be lonesome, it's worse maybe to go mixing with the fools of earth.

[MAHON *makes a movement towards him.*]

CHRISTY [*almost shouting*]. Keep off . . . lest I do show a blow unto the lot of you would set the guardian angels winking in the clouds above.

[*He swings round with a sudden rapid movement and picks up a loy.*]

CROWD [*half frightened, half amused*]. He's going mad! Mind yourselves! Run from the idiot!

[60] a type of sporadic cholera.

[61] slapped.

CHRISTY. If I am an idiot, I'm after hearing my voice this day saying words would raise the top-knot[62] on a poet in a merchant's town. I've won your racing, and your lepping, and . . .

MAHON. Shut your gullet and come on with me.

CHRISTY. I'm going, but I'll stretch you first.

[*He runs at old* MAHON *with the loy, chases him out of the door, followed by crowd and* WIDOW QUIN. *There is a great noise outside, then a yell, and dead silence for a moment.* CHRISTY *comes in, half dazed, and goes to fire.*]

WIDOW QUIN [*coming in, hurriedly, and going to him*]. They're turning again you. Come on, or you'll be hanged, indeed.

CHRISTY. I'm thinking, from this out, Pegeen'll be giving me praises the same as in the hours gone by.

WIDOW QUIN [*impatiently*]. Come by the back-door. I'd think bad to have you stifled on the gallows tree.

CHRISTY [*indignantly*]. I will not, then. What good'd be my life-time, if I left Pegeen?

WIDOW QUIN. Come on, and you'll be no worse than you were last night; and you with a double murder this time to be telling to the girls.

CHRISTY. I'll not leave Pegeen Mike.

WIDOW QUIN [*impatiently*]. Isn't there the match of her in every parish public, from Binghamstown unto the plain of Meath? Come on, I tell you, and I'll find you finer sweethearts at each waning moon.

CHRISTY. It's Pegeen I'm seeking only, and what'd I care if you brought me a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself, maybe, from this place to the Eastern World?

SARA [*runs in, pulling off one of her petticoats*]. They're going to hang him. [*Holding out petticoat and shawl.*] Fit these upon him, and let him run off to the east.

WIDOW QUIN. He's raving now; but we'll fit them on him, and I'll take him, in the ferry, to the Achill boat.

CHRISTY [*struggling feebly*]. Leave me go, will you? when I'm thinking of my luck to-day, for she will wed me surely, and I a proven hero in the end of all.

[*They try to fasten petticoat round him.*]

WIDOW QUIN. Take his left hand, and we'll pull him now. Come on, young fellow.

CHRISTY [*suddenly starting up*]. You'll be taking me from her? You're jealous, is it, of her wedding me? Go on from this.

[*He snatches up a stool, and threatens them with it.*]

WIDOW QUIN [*going*]. It's in the mad-house they should put him, not in jail, at all. We'll go by the back-door, to call the doctor, and we'll save him so.

[*She goes out, with* SARA, *through inner room.* MEN *crowd in the doorway.* CHRISTY *sits down again by the fire.*]

MICHAEL [*in a terrified whisper*]. Is the old lad killed surely?

PHILLY. I'm after feeling the last gasps quitting his heart.

[*They peer in at* CHRISTY.]

MICHAEL [*with a rope*]. Look at the way he is. Twist a hangman's knot on it, and slip it over his head, while he's not minding at all.

PHILLY. Let you take it, Shaneen. You're the soberest of all that's here.

SHAWN. Is it me to go near him, and he the wickedest and worst with me? Let you take it, Pegeen Mike.

PEGEEN. Come on, so.

[*She goes forward with the others, and they drop the double hitch over his head.*]

CHRISTY. What ails you?

SHAWN [*triumphantly, as they pull the rope tight on his arms*]. Come on to the peelers, till they stretch you now.

CHRISTY. Me!

MICHAEL. If we took pity on you, the Lord God would, maybe, bring us ruin from the law to-day, so you'd best come easy, for hanging is an easy and a speedy end.

CHRISTY. I'll not stir. [*To* PEGEEN.] And what is it you'll say to me, and I after doing it this time in the face of all?

PEGEEN. I'll say, a strange man is a marvel, with his mighty talk; but what's a squabble in your back-yard, and the blow of a loy, have taught me that there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed. [*To* MEN.] Take him on from this, or the lot of us will be likely put on trial for his deed to-day.

CHRISTY [*with horror in his voice*]. And it's yourself will send me off, to have a horny-fingered hangman hitching his bloody slip-knots at the butt of my ear.

MEN [*pulling rope*]. Come on, will you?

[*He is pulled down on the floor.*]

CHRISTY [*twisting his legs round the table*]. Cut the rope, Pegeen, and I'll quit the lot of you, and live from this out, like the madmen of Keel, eating

[62] hair on the top of the head

muck and green weeds, on the faces of the cliffs.

PEGEEN. And leave us to hang, is it, for a saucy liar, the like of you? [*To* MEN.] Take him on, out from this.

SHAWN. Pull a twist on his neck, and squeeze him so.

PHILLY. Twist yourself. Sure he cannot hurt you, if you keep your distance from his teeth alone.

SHAWN. I'm afeard of him. [*To* PEGEEN.] Lift a lighted sod, will you, and scorch his leg.

PEGEEN. [*blowing the fire, with a bellows*]. Leave go now, young fellow, or I'll scorch your shins.

CHRISTY. You're blowing for to torture me. [*His voice rising and growing stronger.*] That's your kind, is it? Then let the lot of you be wary, for, if I've to face the gallows, I'll have a gay march down, I tell you, and shed the blood of some of you before I die.

SHAWN [*in terror*]. Keep a good hold, Philly. Be wary, for the love of God. For I'm thinking he would liefest wreak his pains on me.

CHRISTY [*almost gaily*]. If I do lay my hands on you, it's the way you'll be at the fall of night, hanging as a scarecrow for the fowls of hell. Ah, you'll have a gallous jaunt I'm saying, coaching out through Limbo with my father's ghost.

SHAWN [*to* PEGEEN]. Make haste, will you? Oh, isn't he a holy terror, and isn't it true for Father Reilly, that all drink's a curse that has the lot of you so shaky and uncertain now?

CHRISTY. If I can wring a neck among you, I'll have a royal judgment looking on the trembling jury in the courts of law. And won't there be crying out in Mayo the day I'm stretched upon the rope with ladies in their silks and satins snivelling in their lacy kerchiefs, and they rhyming songs and ballads on the terror of my fate?

[*He squirms round on the floor and bites* SHAWN'S *leg.*]

SHAWN [*shrieking*]. My leg's bit on me. He's the like of a mad dog, I'm thinking, the way that I will surely die.

CHRISTY [*delighted with himself*]. You will then, the way you can shake out hell's flags of welcome for my coming in two weeks or three, for I'm thinking Satan hasn't many have killed their da in Kerry, and in Mayo too.

[*Old* MAHON *comes in behind on all fours and looks on unnoticed.*]

MEN [*to* PEGEEN]. Bring the sod, will you?

PEGEEN [*coming over*]. God help him so. [*Burns his leg.*]

CHRISTY [*kicking and screaming*]. O, glory be to God!

[*He kicks loose from the table, and they all drag him towards the door.*]

JIMMY [*seeing old* MAHON]. Will you look what's come in?

[*They all drop* CHRISTY *and run left.*]

CHRISTY [*scrambling on his knees face to face with old* MAHON]. Are you coming to be killed a third time, or what ails you now?

MAHON. For what is it they have you tied?

CHRISTY. They're taking me to the peelers to have me hanged for slaying you.

MICHAEL [*apologetically*]. It is the will of God that all should guard their little cabins from the treachery of law, and what would my daughter be doing if I was ruined or was hanged itself?

MAHON [*grimly, loosening* CHRISTY]. It's little I care if you put a bag on her back, and went picking cockles[68] till the hour of death; but my son and myself will be going our own way, and we'll have great times from this out telling stories of the villainy of Mayo, and the fools is here. [*To* CHRISTY, *who is freed.*] Come on now.

CHRISTY. Go with you, is it? I will then, like a gallant captain with his heathen slave. Go on now and I'll see you from this day stewing my oatmeal and washing my spuds, for I'm master of all fights from now. [*Pushing* MAHON.] Go on, I'm saying.

MAHON. Is it me?

CHRISTY. Not a word out of you. Go on from this.

MAHON [*walking out and looking back at* CHRISTY *over his shoulder*]. Glory be to God! [*With a broad smile.*] I am crazy again!

[*Goes.*]

CHRISTY. Ten thousand blessings upon all that's here, for you've turned me a likely gaffer in the end of all, the way I'll go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgment day.

[*He goes out.*]

MICHAEL. By the will of God, we'll have peace now for our drinks. Will you draw the porter, Pegeen?

SHAWN [*going up to her*]. It's a miracle Father Reilly can wed us in the end of all, and we'll have none to trouble us when his vicious bite is healed.

PEGEEN [*hitting him a box on the ear*]. Quit my sight. [*Putting her shawl over her head and breaking out into wild lamentations.*] Oh my grief, I've lost him surely. I've lost the only Playboy of the Western World.

CURTAIN

(1907)

[68] a weed whose burrs grow in cornfields.

Emlyn Williams

(1905-)

The early life of Emlyn Williams roughly resembles that of the hero of *The Corn Is Green*. He was born in Wales, the son of an ironmonger. According to one report, he did not speak English until he was eight or see a play until he was nineteen. After attending the county school, he studied French in Geneva and later won a scholarship to Christ Church, Oxford. Here his first play, *Full Moon,* was produced by the Dramatic Society. In the London production of *Glamour* in 1927 he played his first small part and was launched on his professional career as an actor-playwright.

After *A Murder Has Been Arranged* in 1930, he was widely acclaimed in England; but his name meant little to Broadway until, on the evening of September 28, 1936, the curtain at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre rose on *Night Must Fall*. Williams himself played the leading role—an appealing bellhop who goes in for decapitation to conquer a sense of inferiority—and he was ably supported by one of the distinguished character actresses of stage and screen, Dame May Whitty. Even the more discriminating critics had high praise for Williams' acting and greeted the play as a first-rate specimen of the slow-paced, macabre English thriller. But the Broadway audience, perhaps because it was more accustomed to overt sadism than to excursions into the inner recesses of the unsettled mind, did not choose to agree with the London playgoers who had packed the house for a year and seven months. Not until the movie appeared, a haunting film with Robert Montgomery in the lead, did *Night Must Fall* become almost a household word.

Williams' Broadway triumph finally arrived at the National Theatre on the night of November 26, 1940, when *The Corn is Green* had its American première. He had played "himself" for over seven hundred performances of the London production, but now he relinquished the role to Richard Waring. The star, of course, was Ethel Barrymore, who played the testy teacher as if she had spent her life in a chalk-dusty Welsh schoolroom. Some of the New York critics admitted that the play was, after all, a rather conventional tissue of familiar theatrical hand-me-downs. But almost to a man they praised its sound craftsmanship and the obvious sincerity of its message. Stark Young found its best scenes "stirringly dramatic," and detected "overtones now and then of the Irish Theatre." Joseph Wood Krutch found it "human and sincere" and "continuously interesting." Even Wolcott Gibbs, though voicing his customary dissenting opinion, had to concede that Ethel Barrymore made "a serene, humorous, dignified, and very moving old woman out of a character who might easily have seemed an exasperating old nobody." The play ran for 477 performances during the seasons of 1940-41 and 1941-42 and was rightly regarded as an expression of the liberal spirit in the English theater owing to its conviction that the common man can rise above his station and that the education of the masses is a noble undertaking.

The schoolteacher heroine's resolute struggle against conservative opinion, her discovery of a genius among her underprivileged charges, and her belief that her protégé should be enabled to become a champion of his people stem from the tradition of social enlightenment in modern English drama established by John Galsworthy and George Bernard Shaw.[1]

[1] George Bernard Shaw does not permit his plays to be reprinted in American anthologies.

The Corn Is Green

Characters

(In the order in which they speak)

JOHN GORONWY JONES	MISS MOFFAT
MISS RONBERRY	ROBBART ROBBATCH
IDWAL MORRIS	MORGAN EVANS
SARAH PUGH	GLYN THOMAS
A GROOM	JOHN OWEN
THE SQUIRE	WILL HUGHES
MRS. WATTY	OLD TOM
BESSIE WATTY	BOYS, GIRLS AND PARENTS

SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE I—An afternoon in June.
SCENE II—A night in August, six weeks later.

ACT TWO

SCENE I—An early evening in August, two years later.
SCENE II—A morning in November, three months later.

ACT THREE

An afternoon in July, seven months later.

The action of the play takes place in the living room of a house in Glansarno, a small village in a remote Welsh countryside.

The time is the latter part of the last century, and covers a period of three years.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The living room of a house in Glansarno, a small village in a remote Welsh countryside. A sunny afternoon in June, in the latter part of the last century.

The house is old, and the ceiling slants away from the audience. Facing the audience, on the left, narrow stairs lead up to a landing and then on the left to a passage to the bedrooms; we can just see, facing, the door of one bedroom which is later to be Miss Moffat's. A door leads to the kitchen; at the foot of the stairs, an alcove and a door lead to a little room which is later the study. In the back wall, to the right, the front door, with outside it a small stone porch faintly overgrown with ivy, and opening to the left on to a path; in the back wall, to the left, a large bay window with a small sofa seat. In the right wall, downstage, the garden door, and above it a small side window; when the door is open we can just see a trellised porch with a creeper. Through the thickish curtains over the bay window we glimpse a jagged stone wall and the sky.

The floor is of stone flags, with one rug in front of the sofa. Faded sprigged wallpaper.

The furniture is a curious jumble of old Welsh and Victorian pieces. A large serviceable flat-topped desk under the side window, a desk-chair in front of it; a table with a small chair, near the middle of the room; an armchair, between the desk and the table; a sofa, downstage, between the table and the foot of the stairs; in the back wall, near the kitchen door, an old Welsh dresser with plates and crockery; in the left wall, against the staircase, a settle; in the window recess, a small table. In the back wall, to the right of the front door, a small grandfather's clock. An oil lamp on the centre table, another on the desk. Another on the dresser.

The most distinctive feature of the room is the amount of books on the walls, of all sorts and sizes; some in open bookcases, others on newly built shelves, in practically every available space.

The kitchen door is open; there are books on the window seat.

As the curtain rises, MR. JOHN GORONWY JONES *and* MISS RONBERRY *are arranging the last books in their places; she is sitting on a tiny stool taking books out of a large packing case and fitting them on to narrow shelves between the garden door and the side window, flicking each one mechanically with a tiny lace handkerchief. She is a gentlewoman in her thirties, with the sort of pinched prettiness that tends to look sharp before that age, especially when it makes sporadic attempts at coquetry; she wears a hat. He is a shabby Welshman of forty, bespectacled, gloomy and intense; a volcano, harmless even in full eruption. He is perched on top of a stepladder, arranging books on*

a high shelf between the front door and the bay window, dusting them vigorously before putting them in place.

MR. JONES [*Singing*]. ". . . Pechudur wyf, y dua'n fyw—'O Uffern!' yw fy nghri; Gostwng dy glust, a'am llefain clyw . . . So—so—so—la—so—so!"

MISS RONBERRY [*seated on stool*]. Your voice has given me an agonising headache. And if you must indulge in music, will you please not do it in Welsh?

MR. JONES. I wasn't indulgin' in music, I was singin' a hymn. [*Putting the last book on the shelf and climbing down*] And if a hymn gives you a headache, there is nothing wrong with the hymn, there is something wrong with your head.

MISS RONBERRY. I still don't see the necessity for it.

MR. JONES [*picking up the empty packing case and moving towards the kitchen*]. I sing to cheer myself up.

MISS RONBERRY. What do the words mean?

MR. JONES. "The wicked shall burn in hell." [*Exits into kitchen.*]

[MISS RONBERRY *picks up packing case.* IDWAL MORRIS *comes in from garden, stops at door.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Oh! [IDWAL *is a thin, ragged boy of thirteen, very timid*] Is the garden nice and ready?

IDWAL. 'Sgwelwchi'n dda, d'wi'di torri'r bloda.

MISS RONBERRY. Translation! [*Crosses with box to chair in arch of bay window—then to left of centre table.*]

[MR. JONES *returns, carries two piles of books.*]

IDWAL. Osgwelchi'n dda, Mistar Jones, d'wi'di torri'r bloda, a mae'r domen yn hogla'n ofnadwy.

[MISS RONBERRY *goes to him and takes flowers.*]

MR. JONES. He says he cut the sweet peas and the rubbish heap is smelling terrible.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, dear. His father must put something on it. [*Arranges flowers in vase.*]

MR. JONES [*going up ladder*]. That's the English all over. The devil is there, is he? Don't take him away, put a bit of scent on him! Gofyn i dy dad i roi rwbeth arno am heddyw.

IDWAL. Diolch, syr. [*He runs into the garden again.*]

MISS RONBERRY. I hope he will have the sense to give the message.

MR. JONES [*still on ladder*]. It is terrible, isn't it, the people on these green fields and flowery hillsides bein' turned out of Heaven because they cannot answer Saint Peter when he asks them who they are in English? It is wicked, isn't it, the Welsh children not bein' *born* knowing English—isn't it? Good heavens, God bless my soul, by Jove, this, that and the other!

MISS RONBERRY. Anybody in Wales will tell you that the people in this part of the countryside are practically barbarians. [SARAH PUGH *comes out of the bedroom and down the stairs. She is a buxom peasant woman, with a strong Welsh accent*] Not a single caller for fifteen miles, and even then . . .

SARAH. Please, Miss—I made the bed lovely. And I dust . . .

MISS RONBERRY. That will be all, dear. The Colonel is bound to have his own manservant.

SARAH. Then I better have another sit down in my post office.

MR. JONES. What is the matter with your post office?

SARAH. It has—[*Opens door*]—not had a letter for seven weeks. Nobody but me can write, and no good *me* writin', because nobody but me can read. If I get a telegram I put him in the window and I die straight off. [*She goes, closes door.*]

MISS RONBERRY. You see? I can't *think* why a Colonel should elect to come and live in this place. There. . . . I have never *seen* so many books! I do hope the curtains will not be too feminine. I chose them with such care.

MR. JONES [*darkly*]. Why are you taking so much trouble getting somebody else's house ready for them?

MISS RONBERRY [*examines cushion*]. You need not have helped me if you did not wish! [*Crosses to settle for needle and thread*] I am frightened of the spinning-wheel, too, and the china; his own furniture is *so* distinctive. The desk. And the wastepaper basket. . . . So . . . so virile.

MR. JONES [*on ladder*]. Are you hoping that the Colonel will live up to his wastepaper basket?

MISS RONBERRY. That is horrid.

MR. JONES. And then you will have two on a string: him and the Squire . . .

MISS RONBERRY. Mr. Jones!

MR. JONES. And if I was a bit more of a masher, there would be three. Worldly things, that is your trouble. "Please, Mistar Jones, my life is as empty as a rotten nutshell, so get me a husband before it is too late, double quick!"

[*A knock at the front door; it opens and a liveried* GROOM *appears.*]

MISS RONBERRY. You insulting man . . .

GROOM. The Squire.

[*The* SQUIRE *follows him. He is a handsome*

English country gentleman in his forties, wearing knickerbockers and gaiters; a hard drinker, bluff, kind, immensely vain; and, when the time comes, obtusely obstinate. The GROOM *goes out again and shuts the door.*]

MISS RONBERRY. [*fluttering eagerly into a handshake*]. Squire. . . .

THE SQUIRE. [*with exuberant patronage*]. Delicious lady, delicious surprise, and a merry afternoon to ye, as our forebears put it. . . . How are you, Jones, making the most of your half-day?

MR. JONES [*sullenly, making an uncertain effort to rise from the ladder*]. Good afternoon, sir . . .

THE SQUIRE. Squat, dear fellow, squat . . . No ceremony with me! And why, dear lady, were you not at the Travers-Ellis wedding?

[JONES *starts down the ladder.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Naughty! I sat next to you at the breakfast.

THE SQUIRE. By Jingo! So you did!

MR. JONES. Excuse me . . .

[*He goes into study.*]

THE SQUIRE. Deuced fine breakfast. . . .

MISS RONBERRY. We had a talk about children.

THE SQUIRE. *Did* we? Well, the next wedding we're at, there'll be *no* chance of my forgettin' you, eh?

MISS RONBERRY. Why?

THE SQUIRE. Because—you'll be the stunning, blushing bride!

MISS RONBERRY. And who—will be the—?

THE SQUIRE. Now that's what *I* want to know, because *I'm* going to give you away!

MISS RONBERRY. Oh!

[MR. JONES *returns from the study.*]

THE SQUIRE. Now who's it going to be?

MISS RONBERRY. Squire, you are too impatient! I am taking my time!

THE SQUIRE. Too bad . . . No sign of the new inhabitant?

MISS RONBERRY. Any moment now, I think! The pony and trap met the London train at a quarter to twelve!

THE SQUIRE. Hasn't the fellow got his own private conveyance?

MISS RONBERRY. I think not.

THE SQUIRE. I hope he's all right.

MISS RONBERRY. He wrote very civilly to Mr. Jones about the house . . .

THE SQUIRE. Oh, yes. Not a club, I remember, but the paper—not bad texture. Funny sort of chap, though, eh?

MISS RONBERRY. Why?

THE SQUIRE. All these books.

[*A timid knock at the front door.* IDWAL *enters, very frightened.*]

IDWAL. Osgwelwchi'n dda, syr, mae Mistar Tomos wedi 'ngyrru i yma ich gweld chi!

THE SQUIRE. Y'know, it's as bad as being abroad. . . . Been among it half my life, and never get used to it.

MR. JONES. The groom told him, sir, that you wanted to see him.

THE SQUIRE. Oh, yes—well, come here where I can see you, eh? [SQUIRE *turns to him*] Now, boy, how old are you—[*To* JONES]—or whatever the Chinese is for it?

MR. JONES. Just turned thirteen, sir.

THE SQUIRE. Thirteen? Well, why aren't you working in the mine over in the next valley? Don't like to see young fellows wasting their time, y'know.

MR. JONES. He has got one lung funny.

THE SQUIRE. Oh, I see. . . . Rough luck. Here, laddy, there's a sixpence for you, and remember all work and no play makes Taffy a dull boy!

IDWAL. Diolch yn faw, syr . . .

THE SQUIRE. And tell your uncle I want Ranger shod . . .

IDWAL. Diolch, syr . . .

THE SQUIRE. And a gate mended . . .

IDWAL. Diolch yn faw, syr . . . [*He runs out.*]

MISS RONBERRY. But he hasn't understood your orders!

THE SQUIRE. Neither he has . . .

MR. JONES. He thought the Squire was havin' a chat. I will tell his uncle—

IDWAL [*offstage, calling shrilly to his friends*]. Tomos—Aneurin—dyma'r cerbyd—[JONES *looks out window*]—dewch i wel'd—fe ddwedai wrth y Scweiar—brysiwch!

MISS RONBERRY [*rises*]. That must be something . . .

[IDWAL *appears at the front door, panting with expectation.*]

IDWAL. Pliss, syr, dyma'r carbyd! [*He darts back, leaving the door open.*]

MISS RONBERRY [*looks out window*]. He must mean the Colonel. How gratifying . . .

[BESSIE WATTY *wanders shyly in. She is an extremely pretty, plump little girl of fourteen; it is a moment before one realises that her demureness is too good to be true. She wears her hair over her shoulders, is dressed very plainly, in a shabby sailor suit and hat, and carries brown-paper parcels. She is followed by* MRS. WATTY, *a middle-aged Cock*

ney servant, dressed for traveling, carrying a hamper in her arms. Her self-confidence is not so overwhelming as the SQUIRE'S, *but it is quite as complete, and as kindly.*]

THE SQUIRE. Capital . . .

MRS. WATTY [*to the* SQUIRE]. D'you speak English?

THE SQUIRE [*taken aback*]. I do.

MRS. WATTY. Be a dear an' 'old this! [*She hands him the hamper and hurries out through the front door.*]

THE SQUIRE. Crikey! A Colonel with an abigail! [*Catching* BESSIE'S *owl-like expression and stopping short*] Why don't *you* say something?

BESSIE. I never speak till I'm spoken to.

THE SQUIRE. Oh . . . Well, who was that?

BESSIE. My mummy. [*To* MISS RONBERRY] I never had no daddy. [*Her accent is not as natural as her mother's; she sometimes strains to be ladylike, especially at moments like this.* MRS. WATTY *returns with two large parcels.*]

MRS. WATTY. My Gawd—[*Pause*]—they're heavy. [*Puts them on table.*]

MISS RONBERRY. What are they?

MRS. WATTY. Books.

[*Takes hamper from* SQUIRE.]

THE SQUIRE. Is your employer with you, my good woman?

MRS. WATTY. No, followed be'ind, most of the way. Ought to be 'ere by now, I'll 'ave a see. . . . [*Goes to door*] 'Ere we are! Tally-o! Thought we'd lost you!

[*A pause.* MISS MOFFAT *comes in from the road, wheeling a bicycle. She is about forty, a healthy Englishwoman with an honest face, clear, beautiful eyes, a humorous mouth, a direct friendly manner, and unbounded vitality, which is prevented from tiring the spectator by its capacity for sudden silence and for listening. Her most prominent characteristic is her complete unsentimentality. She wears a straw hat, collar and tie, and a dark unexaggerated skirt; a satchel hangs from her shoulder.*]

MISS MOFFAT. I was hoping to pass you, but that last hill was too much for me. [*Displaying the bicycle*] Good afternoon.

ALL. Good afternoon.

MISS MOFFAT. There's a smallish crowd already, so I thought I'd better bring Priscilla inside. Watty, can you find somewhere for her? [*She gives the room a quick appraising look, peers out of the side window, and nods pleasantly to the* SQUIRE.]

MRS. WATTY. Dunno, I'm sure.

MISS MOFFAT. I think I'll have a look at the garden first. [*She goes out into the garden.*]

MRS. WATTY [*wheeling bicycle gingerly towards the kitchen*]. That must be my kitchen in there, we'll 'ave to 'ang 'er with the bacon. [*To* BESSIE] Come on, girl, give us a 'and—don't stand there gettin' into mischief!

BESSIE. I'm frightened of it.

MRS. WATTY. It won't bite you! Most it can do is catch fire, and I'll 'ave a drop o' water ready for it. [*Her voice fades away into the kitchen.*]

BESSIE. Has anybody got a sweetie?[1]

MISS RONBERRY. No.

BESSIE. Oh. . . .

[*She trails after her mother into the kitchen.* MISS MOFFAT *returns very businesslike.*]

MISS MOFFAT. It's bigger than I expected. . . . [*Closes door*] There! [*Puts satchel on desk*] Good afternoon! So this is my house. . . .

THE SQUIRE [*blustering*]. No, it isn't!

MISS MOFFAT. Oh? Isn't this Pengrath? The name of the building, I mean?

MISS RONBERRY. Yes, it is. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. That's right, it was left me by my uncle, Dr. Moffat. I'm Miss Moffat. I take it you're Miss Ronberry, who so kindly corresponded with me?

THE SQUIRE. But sure—those letters were written by a man?

MISS MOFFAT. Well, if they were, I have been grossly deceiving myself for over forty years. Now this is jolly interesting. Why did it never occur to you that I might be a woman?

THE SQUIRE. Well—the paper wasn't scented . . .

MISS RONBERRY. And such a bold hand . . .

THE SQUIRE. And that long piece about the lease being ninety-nine years, don't you know . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Was there anything wrong with it?

THE SQUIRE. No, there wasn't, that's the point.

MISS MOFFAT. I see.

MISS RONBERRY. And surely you signed your name very oddly?

MISS MOFFAT. My initials, L. C. Moffat? You see, I've never felt that Lily Christabel really suited me.

MISS RONBERRY. And I thought—it meant Lieutenant-Colonel! But there *was* a military title after it.

MISS MOFFAT. M.A., Master of Arts.

THE SQUIRE. Arts? D'ye mean the degree my father bought me when I came down from the Varsity?

[1] a piece of candy.

Miss Moffat. The very same. Except that I was at Aberdeen, and had to work jolly hard for mine.

The Squire. A female M.A.? And how long's that going to last?

Miss Moffat. Quite a long time, I hope, considering we've been waiting for it for two thousand years.

Mr. Jones [*who has been silent since she entered*]. Are you saved?

Miss Moffat [*starting, turning and taking him in for the first time*]. I beg your pardon?

Mr. Jones. Are you Church or Chapel?

Miss Moffat. I really don't know . . . And now you know all about me, what do *you* do?

The Squire. I'm afraid I don't do anything. [*He extricates his hat angrily from the table.*]

Miss Ronberry. Mr. Treverby owns the Hall!

Miss Moffat. Really. I've never had much to do with the landed gentry. Interesting.

The Squire. Au revoir, dear lady. 'Day, Jones. [*He goes frigidly out by the front door.* Jones *closes door.*]

Miss Moffat. Well, nobody could say that I've made a conquest there. . . . What's the matter with him?

[Mrs. Watty *comes in from kitchen with tea tray.*]

Mrs. Watty. I found the tea, ma'am, it *looks* all right. . . .

Miss Moffat. Good!

Mrs. Watty. An' the big luggage is comin' after . . .

Miss Moffat [*at study door*]. This isn't a bad little room . . .

Mrs. Watty. Where's his lordship?

Miss Moffat [*going upstairs*]. Took offense and left. [*She disappears down the passage.*]

Mrs. Watty [*looks at them both*]. Took offense? At 'er?

Miss Ronberry. I am afraid so.

Mrs. Watty. I'm jiggered! What d'*you* think of 'er, eh? Ain't she a clinker?

Miss Ronberry. She is unusual, is she not?

Mrs. Watty. She's a clinker, that's what. Terrible strong-willed, o' course, terrible. Get 'er into mischief, I keep tellin' 'er. Would bring me 'ere. I said no, I said, not with my past, I said.

Miss Ronberry. Your past?

Mrs. Watty. Before she took me up. But what with 'er, and now I've joined the Corpse, it's all blotted out.

Mr. Jones. The Corpse?

Mrs. Watty. The Militant Righteous Corpse. Ran into 'em in the street I did, singin' and prayin' and collectin', full blast; and I been a different woman since. Are *you* saved?

Mr. Jones. Yes, I am.

Mrs. Watty. So'm I, Ain't it lovely?

Miss Ronberry. But what *was*—your past?

Mrs. Watty [*sorrowfully*]. Light fingers.

Miss Ronberry. Light fingers? You mean—stealing?

Mrs. Watty. Everywhere I went. Terrible. Pennies, stockin's, brooches, spoons, tiddly,[2] anything. Every time there was a do, everything went; and I always knew it was me! [Miss Moffat *comes downstairs*] I was just tellin' 'em about my trouble.

Miss Moffat. Well, don't tell them any more. Is your kitchen all right?

Mrs. Watty. I ain't seed no mice yet. [*She goes into kitchen, takes hamper with her.*]

[*Far away, softly, the sound of boys' voices, singing an old country song, in harmony, in Welsh "Yr Hufen Melyn."*]

Miss Moffat. I agree with the last tenant's taste. . . . You have arranged my things quite splendidly, Miss Ronberry. I do thank you—both of you. . . . I like this house [*As the music grows imperceptibly in the distance*] . . . What's that singing?

Mr. Jones. Boys coming home from the mine.

Miss Ronberry. They burst into song on the slightest provocation. You mustn't take any notice . . .

Miss Moffat. I like it . . . And those mountains. That grand wild countryside . . . The foreign-looking people . . . But business . . . I've heard about that mine. How far is it?

Mr. Jones. It is the Glasynglo coal mine, six miles over the hills.

Miss Moffat. Hm . . .

Miss Ronberry. We're hoping it will stay the only one, or our scenery will be ruined—such a pretty landscape . . .

Miss Moffat. What is the large empty building next door?

Mr. Jones. Next door? The old barn belongin' to the Gwalia Farm, before the farm was burnt down. . . .

[*Song fades out.*]

Miss Moffat. So it's free?

Mr. Jones [*perplexed*]. Free? Yes . . .

Miss Ronberry [*rises*]. I am overstaying my welcome. So very charming . . .

[2] liquor.

MR. JONES. I also. All the volumes are dusted. . . . [*Starts to go towards her.*]

MISS MOFFAT. I want you two people. Very specially. First you, Miss Ronberry. I used to meet friends of yours at lectures in London. You live alone, you have just enough money, you're not badly educated, and time lies heavy on your hands.

MISS RONBERRY. The Wingroves! How mean! I should never have thought . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Isn't that so?

MISS RONBERRY. Not at all. When the right gentleman appears . . .

MISS MOFFAT. If you're a spinster well on in her thirties, he's lost his way and isn't coming. Why don't you face the fact and enjoy yourself, the same as I do?

MISS RONBERRY. But when did you give up hope? Oh, what a horrid expression. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. I can't recall ever having any hope. Visitors used to take a long look at my figure and say: "*She's* going to be the clever one."

MISS RONBERRY. But a woman's only future is to marry and—and fulfill the duties of . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Skittles![1] I'd have made a shocking wife, anyway.

MISS RONBERRY. But haven't you ever—been in love?

MISS MOFFAT. No.

MISS RONBERRY. How very odd.

MISS MOFFAT. I've never talked to a man for more than five minutes without wanting to box his ears.

MISS RONBERRY. But how have you passed your time since . . . ?

MISS MOFFAT. Since I had no hope? Very busily. In the East End, for years.

MISS RONBERRY. Social service?

MISS MOFFAT. If you like; though there's nothing very social about washing invalids with every unmentionable ailment under the sun. . . . I've read a lot, too. I'm afraid I'm what is known as an educated woman. Which brings me to Mr. Jones; the Wingroves told me all about you, too.

MR. JONES. My conscience is as clear as the snow.

MISS MOFFAT. I'm sure it is, but you're a disappointed man, aren't you?

MR. JONES [*startled*]. How can I be disappointed when I am saved?

MISS MOFFAT. Oh, but you can! You can't really enjoy sitting all by yourself on a raft, on a sea, containing everybody you know. You're disappointed because you're between two stools.

MR. JONES. Between two stools? On a raft?

MISS MOFFAT. Exactly. Your father was a grocer with just enough money to send you to a grammar school, with the result that you are educated beyond your sphere, and yet fail to qualify for the upper classes. You feel frustrated, and fall back on being saved. Am I right?

MR. JONES. It is such a terrible thing you have said that I will have to think it over.

MISS MOFFAT. Do. [*Rises*] But in the meantime —[*Pause*]—would you two like to stop moping and be very useful to me?

MISS RONBERRY. Useful?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes, tell me—within a radius of five miles, how many families are there round here?

MISS RONBERRY. Families? There's the Squire, of course, and Mrs. Gwent-Price in the little Plas Lodge, quite a dear thing . . .

MISS MOFFAT. I mean ordinary people.

MISS RONBERRY. The villagers?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes. How many families?

MISS RONBERRY. I really haven't the faint . . .

MR. JONES. There are about twenty families in the village and fifteen in the farms around.

MISS MOFFAT. Many children?

MR. JONES. What age?

MISS MOFFAT. Up to sixteen or seventeen.

MR. JONES. Round here they are only children till they are twelve. Then they are sent away over the hills to the mine, and in one week they are old men.

MISS MOFFAT. I see. How many can read or write?

MR. JONES. Next to none.

MISS RONBERRY. Why do you ask?

MISS MOFFAT. Because I am going to start a school for them.

MISS RONBERRY [*coldly*]. Start a school for them? What for?

MISS MOFFAT. What for? See these books? Hundreds of 'em, and something wonderful to read in every single one. These nippers are to be cut off from all that, for ever, are they? Why? Because they happen to be born penniless in an uncivilised countryside, coining gold down there in that stinking dungeon for some beef-headed old miser!

MR. JONES [*roused*]. That's right. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. The printed page, what is it? One of the miracles of all time, that's what! And yet when these poor babies set eyes on it, they might

[1] nonsense.

just as well have been struck by the miracle of sudden blindness; and that, to my mind, is plain infamous!

MR. JONES. My goodness, Miss, that's right. . . .

MISS RONBERRY. The *ordinary* children, you mean?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes, my dear, the ordinary children that came into the world by the same process exactly as you and I. When I heard that this part of the world was a disgrace to a Christian country, I knew this house was a godsend. I am going to start a school, immediately, next door in the barn, and you are going to help me!

MISS RONBERRY. I?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes, you! You're going to fling away your parasol and your kid gloves, and you're going to stain those tapering fingers with a little honest toil!

MISS RONBERRY. I couldn't teach those children, I couldn't! They—they smell!

MISS MOFFAT. If we'd never been taught to wash, so would we; we'll put 'em under the pump. . . . Mr. Jones—d'ye know what I'm going to do with that obstinate old head of yours?

MR. JONES. My head?

MISS MOFFAT. I'm going to crack it open with a skewer. And I'm going to excavate all those chunks of grammar-school knowledge, give 'em a quick dust, and put 'em to some use at last.

MR. JONES. I am a solicitor's clerk in Gwaenygam and I earn thirty-three shillings per week. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. I'll give you thirty-four—and your lunch.

MISS RONBERRY. I have an enormous house to run, and the flowers to do. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Shut it up except one room, and leave the flowers to die a natural death—in their own beds. I've been left a little money and I know exactly what I am going to do with it. . . .

MR. JONES. But those children are in the mine—earning money. How can they . . . ?

MISS MOFFAT. I'll pay their parents the few miserable pennies they get out of it . . . And when I've finished with you, *you* won't have time to think about snapping up a husband, and *you* won't have time to be so pleased that you're saved! Well?

MR. JONES. I do not care if you are not chapel, I am with you.

MISS MOFFAT. Good! I have all the details worked out. I'll explain roughly. . . . Come along—my dears, gather round, children—gather round. [*She takes the dazed* MISS RONBERRY *by the arm, seats her beside her on the sofa, and beckons* MR. JONES *to sit on her other side*] Of course, we must go slowly at first, but if we put our backs into it . . . Here we are, three stolid middle-aged folk, settled in our little groove and crammed with benefits; and *there* are those babbies scarcely out of the shell, that have no idea they are even breathing the air. . . . Only God can know how their life will end, but He will give us the chance to direct them a little of the way. . . .

MR. JONES [*intoning, seized with religious fervor*]. We have the blessed opportunity to raise up the children from the bowels of the earth where the devil hath imprisoned them in the powers of darkness, and bring them to the light of knowledge—

MRS. WATTY [*coming in from the kitchen*]. Here's the tea!

MISS MOFFAT. Each of us can take several classes, not only for the children, but their fathers and their mothers, and the older people too.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

A night in August, six weeks later. The window curtains are closed and the lamps lit. The armchair has been pushed away from table, and two small benches face the audience. Red geraniums in pots across the window sills. Miss Moffat's straw hat is slung over the knob of the settle at the foot of the stairs. The big desk, the sofa and the settle are littered with books, exercise books and sheets of paper. Apart from these details the room is unchanged.

Sitting on the bench are five black-faced miners, between twelve and sixteen years of age, wearing caps, mufflers, boots and corduroys embedded in coal, they look as if they had been commanded to wait. They all look alike under their black; the ringleader is MORGAN EVANS, *fifteen, quick and impudent, his second is* ROBBART ROBBATCH, *a big, slow boy, a year or two older; the others are* GLYN THOMAS, WILL HUGHES *and* JOHN OWEN. *They all hum at rise.*

MRS. WATTY *comes downstairs, carrying a basket of washing.*

MRS. WATTY. You 'ere again? [*On stairs, stops halfway down.*]

ROBBART. Be mai'n ddeud?

MRS. WATTY. I said, you 'ere again?

MORGAN. No, Miss.

MRS. WATTY. What d'ye mean, no, Miss?

MORGAN. We isn't 'ere again, Miss.

MRS. WATTY. What are you, then?

MORGAN. We issn't the same lot ass this mornin', Miss.

MRS. WATTY. Ain't you?

MORGAN. Miss Ronny-berry tell us to wait, Miss.

MRS. WATTY. Ma'am! [*Goes to kitchen door.*]

MISS MOFFAT [*in the bedroom*]. Yes?

MRS. WATTY. Five more nigger boys for you! [*She goes into the kitchen.* MORGAN *takes a bottle from his pocket and swigs at it. One of the others holds out his hand, takes the bottle, gulps, and gives it back, while another begins to hum, absent-mindedly, a snatch of the same song as before. The rest take up the harmony and sing it to the end.* MR. JONES *comes in.*]

MORGAN. Sh! Good evenin', sir.

MR. JONES. Good evening. [*Tips hat.*]

MORGAN. I seed you and the lady teacher be'ind the door! [*A laugh from him and the others.*]

MR. JONES. You wait till you see Miss Moffat. She will give you what for.

MORGAN [*shaking finger at boys*]. You wait till you see Miss Moffat. She will give you what for! [MR. JONES *goes into the kitchen.* ROBBART *repeats: "You wait till you see Miss Moffat, she will give you what for!"*] Shh!

[MISS MOFFAT *comes downstairs from the bedroom.*]

MISS MOFFAT. I told you, the shape of the bedroom doesn't allow for a door into the barn—Oh, she isn't here. . . . Sorry to keep you waiting, boys, but I have to go across to Mr. Rees, the carpenter, and then I'll be able to talk to you. In the meantime, will you go to the pump in the garden shed, and wash your hands? Through there. You'll find a lantern. Did you understand all that?

MORGAN. Yes, Miss.

THE OTHERS. Thank you, Miss.

MISS MOFFAT. Good. [*Starts to go.*]

MORGAN. Please, Miss, can I have a kiss?

MISS MOFFAT [*returns*]. What did you say?

MORGAN. Please, Miss, can I have a kiss?

MISS MOFFAT. Of course you can. [*Puts her foot on the bench—takes him by the neck and bends him over her knee and spanks him with the plans she carries*] Can I oblige anybody else? [*She goes out by the front door. The others follow her with their eyes, aghast, in silence.*]

ROBBART. Please, Miss, can I 'ave a smack bottom?

[*An uproar of mirth, and a quick tangle of Welsh.*]

WILL. Na-beth of Naw-stee.

MORGAN. Cythral uffarn . . .

GLYN. Be hari hi—hi a'i molchi . . .

JOHN. Pwy sisho molchi . . .

WILL. Welso ti'rioed wraig fel ene—

MORGAN. Mae'n lwcus na ddaru mi mo'i thrawo hi lawr a'i lladd hi . . .

ROBBART. Nawn—[*Rises*]—i dro molchi—dewch hogia— [*All rise—start off*] mae'n well nag eistedd yma—dewch . . .

GLYN. Dynna gusan yti Morgan Bach.

ROBBART. Cymmer yna y corgu fol.

JOHN. Dynna ateb—i—ti.

WILL. Jobin da y diawl.

MORGAN. Cai da geg.

[*They lumber into the garden, close door.* MR. JONES' *head appears timidly from the kitchen. He sees they are gone, gives a sigh of relief, and comes into the room, carrying books.* BESSIE *comes in from the front door, dejected and sulky. She is munching a sweet; her hair is in curls, and one curl is turned around one finger, which she holds stiffly in the air. She lays her hat on the sofa, then decides* MR. JONES's *company is better than none.*]

BESSIE. Would you like a sweetie?

MR. JONES. No, thank you, my little dear. Have you had another walk?

BESSIE. Yes, Mr. Jones. All by myself.

MR. JONES. Did you see anybody?

BESSIE. Only a lady and a gentleman in the lane —and mother told me never to look. . . . I do miss the shops. London's full o' them, you know.

MR. JONES. Full of fancy rubbish, you mean.

BESSIE. I'd like to be always shopping, I would. Sundays and all. . . .

MRS. WATTY. Bessie!

BESSIE [*slyly*]. Mr. Jones, is it true the school idea isn't going on that well?

MR. JONES. Who told you that?

BESSIE. Miss Ronberry was sayin' something to my mum. Oh, I wasn't listenin'! . . . Besides, we've been here six weeks, and nothin's started yet.

MR. JONES. Everything is splendid.

BESSIE [*disappointed*]. Oh, I'm glad. Miss Moffat's been cruel to me, but I don't bear no grudge.

MR. JONES. Cruel to you?

BESSIE. She hides my sweets. She's a liar too.

MR. JONES. A liar?

BESSIE. Told me they're bad for me. And it says on the bag they're nourishin'. . . . And the idea of learnin' school with those children, ooh . . .

MR. JONES. Why are you holding your hair like that?

BESSIE. These are my curls. D'you think it's nice?

MR. JONES. It is nice, but it is wrong.

MRS. WATTY [*calling shrilly, in the kitchen*]. Bess-ie!

BESSIE. I've been curlin' each one round me finger and holdin' it tight till it was all right. My finger's achin' something terrible. [*She goes into the kitchen. A knock at the front door.*]

MR. JONES. Dewch ifewn.

[IDWAL *appears, drawing a small wooden crate on tiny wheels which he pushes in front of the sofa.* MISS RONBERRY *comes in from the study.*]

IDWAL. Cloch yr ysgol, Mistar Jones.

MR. JONES. Diolch, ymachgen. [*Pause*] Nosdawch.

IDWAL. Nosdawch, Mistar Jones. [*He leaves through the front door.*]

MISS RONBERRY. It says here that eight sevens are fifty-six. Then it says that seven eights are fifty-six—I can't see that at all. [MISS MOFFAT *returns*] Well?

MISS MOFFAT. No good.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, dear.

MISS MOFFAT. Mr. Rees says he's had a strict order not to discuss lining the roof till the lease of the barn is signed.

MR. JONES. Who gave the order?

MISS MOFFAT. That's what I want to know.

MISS RONBERRY. And when will the lease be signed?

MISS MOFFAT. Never, it seems to me. Did you call at the solicitor's?

MR. JONES. They have located Sir Herbert Vezey, but he is now doubtful about letting the barn and will give his decision by post.

MISS MOFFAT. But why? He'd already said it was no use to him. And my references were impeccable. . . . *Why?*

MISS RONBERRY. You look tired.

MISS MOFFAT. It's been a bit of a day. A letter from the mine to say no child can be released above-ground—that's all blethers,[4] but still . . . A request from the public house not to start a school in case it interferes with beer-swilling and games of chance. A message from the chapel people to the effect that I am a foreign adventuress with cloven feet; a bit of a day.

[MRS. WATTY *comes in from the kitchen with a cup of tea.*]

[4] empty talk.

MRS. WATTY. Drop o' tea, ma'am, I expect you've 'ad a bit of a day. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Who was that at the back, anything important?

MRS. WATTY. Only the person that does for that Mrs. Gwent-Price. Would you not 'ave your school opposite her lady because of her lady's 'eadaches.

MISS MOFFAT [*angrily*]. What did you say?

MRS. WATTY. I pulverized 'er. I said it would be a shame, I said, if there was such a shindy over the way that the village couldn't hear Mrs. Double-Barrel givin' her 'usband what for, I said. The person didn't know where to put 'erself. [*She goes back into the kitchen.*]

MR. JONES. That has not helped the peace in the community, neither.

MISS MOFFAT. I know, but she does make a tip-top cup of tea. . . . [*Seeing the crate, wearily*] What's that?

MR. JONES. It is the bell, for the school.

MISS MOFFAT. Oh, is it?

MISS RONBERRY [*rising*]. The bell? Do let us have a peep . . .

MR. JONES. It was on Llantalon Monastery before it burnt down. . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*opens crate*]. Look, it's got the rope, and everything. . . . Well, it's good to see it, anyway.

MISS RONBERRY. The mason finished the little tower for it yesterday. Do let us tell those boys to put it up! It'll bring us luck!

MISS MOFFAT. If it keeps them out of mischief till I'm ready . . .

MISS RONBERRY. Mr. Jones, do go and tell them!

[JONES *gives her a doubtful look and goes towards the garden. As he opens the door,* JOHN OWEN *shouts: "Mai, Mr. Jones, yn dywed." All the boys laugh.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Poor Jonesy, he's terrified of 'em.

MISS RONBERRY. So am I. They're so big. And so black. . . .

[SARAH *runs in, excited, leaving the door open behind her.*]

SARAH. A letter from the gentleman that own the barn. I had a good look at the seal!

MISS MOFFAT. At last . . .

MISS RONBERRY. What does it say?

MISS MOFFAT. Sir Herbert still cannot give a definite decision until the seventeenth. Another week wasted. This is infuriating.

MISS RONBERRY. Does it mean he may not let you have it?

SARAH. Oh. . . .

Miss Moffat. He must—it would ruin everything. . . .

Miss Ronberry. Sarah—isn't there another empty building *anywhere* round here?

Sarah. There is the pigsties on the Maes Road, but they issn't big enough. [*She goes.*]

Miss Ronberry. Oh, dear! Can't we start afresh somewhere else?

Miss Moffat. I've spent too much on preparations here—besides, I felt so right here from the start. . . . I *can't* leave now . . . I'm a Christian woman, but I could smack Sir Herbert's face till my arm dropped off.

[*The front door is opened unceremoniously and the* Squire *strides in; he is in full evening dress.*]

The Squire. Jolly good evenin', teacher. Remember me?

Miss Moffat. Would you mind going outside, knocking, and waiting quite a long time before I say "Come in"?

The Squire. Jolly good! Parlor games, what?

Miss Ronberry. But, Miss Moffat, it's the *Squire*! Squire, you must forget you ever saw me in this dress . . . So ashamed . . . I shan't be a moment . . . [*She runs upstairs into the bedroom.*]

The Squire. Rat tat tat, one two three four come in, one two three four, forward *march*! My dear madam, you're not in class now! [*A knock at the garden door*] Come in!

[Robbart *and* Morgan *enter from garden.* Morgan *has lantern.*]

Robbart. Please, Miss, for the bell.

The Squire. Evening, boys! [*Enter* Jones] Evening, Jones. I am appalled to observe, my boys, that you are still soiling your fingers in that disgusting coal mine!

Mr. Jones. Excuse me, please. . . . [*He goes into the study.*]

The Squire. What's that you've got there?

Robbart. Bell, syr, for the school.

The Squire. Up with it, boys, up with it! [Robbart *lifts the crate and carries it out of the garden door, which* Morgan *has opened for him.* Morgan *follows him, shutting the door*] Ding dong bell—teacher's in the well! . . . Now, my dear madam—

Miss Moffat. I'm rather irritable this evening, so unless there's a reason for your visit . . .

The Squire. Oh, but there is! Very important message. Word of mouth. From a gent that's just been dining with me. Sir Herbert Vezey.

Miss Moffat. Yes? Oh, do be quick! . . .

The Squire. He has definitely decided that he has no use for the barn—but he does not see it as a school, and under no circumstances will he let it as such, so he must regretfully decline, et cetera.

Miss Moffat [*trying to hide her chagrin*]. He implied in his first letter that he would be willing to sell.

The Squire. Then some bigwig must have made him change his mind, mustn't he?

Miss Moffat [*Suddenly looking at him, incredulously*]. You?

The Squire [*rising, serious, taking the floor with a certain authority*]. I have not called on you, madam, because I have been eyeing your activities very closely from afar. . . . It is with dis—disapproval and—er—dis—

Miss Moffat. It is unwise to embark on a speech with the vocabulary of a child of five.

The Squire. [*suddenly aggressive*]. I am not going to have any of this damned hanky-panky in my village!

Miss Moffat. *Your* village!

The Squire. *My* village! I am no braggart, but I'd have you know that everything you can see from that window—and you haven't got a bad view—*I own!* Now, my dear madam . . .

Miss Moffat [*in an outburst*]. And stop calling me your dear madam. I'm not married, I'm not French, and you haven't the slightest affection for me!

The Squire. Oh. . . . First of all, I'm not one to hit a woman below the belt. If you know what I mean. Always be fair—to the fair sex. . . . All my life I've done my level best for the villagers. They call me Squire, y'know, term of affection, jolly touching. . . . I mean, a hamper every Christmas, the whole shoot, and a whopping tankard of beer on my birthday, and on my twenty-firster they all got a mug . . .

Miss Moffat. Go on.

The Squire. They jabber away in that funny lingo, but bless their hearts, it's a free country! But puttin' 'em up to read English, and pothooks,[5] and givin' 'em ideas . . . If there were more people like you, y'know, England'd be a jolly dangerous place to live in! What d'ye want to do, turn 'em into gentlemen? What's the idea?

Miss Moffat. I am beginning to wonder myself.

The Squire. Anyway, this buyin' 'em out of the mine is a lot of gammon.[6] I own a half share in it.

Miss Moffat. That explains a good deal.

The Squire. Why don't you take up croquet?

[5] a character resembling a pothook, used in teaching writing. [6] nonsense.

Keep you out of mischief. [MISS RONBERRY *comes out of the bedroom*] Well, dear lady, anything I can do to make your stay here a happier one . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Thank you.

THE SQUIRE. I must be getting back. If I know Sir Herbert, my best old port will be no more . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Wait a minute.

THE SQUIRE. Yes?

MISS MOFFAT. I know I shall be sticking a pin into a whale, but here are just two words about yourself. You are the Squire Bountiful, are you? Adored by his contented subjects, intelligent and benignly understanding, are you? I should just like to point out that there is a considerable amount of dirt, ignorance, misery and discontent abroad in this world, and that a good deal of it is due to people like you, because you are a stupid, conceited, greedy, good-for-nothing, addle-headed nincompoop, and you can go to blue blazes. Good night! [*She turns away. A frozen pause.*]

THE SQUIRE. I perceive that you have been drinking. [*He goes.*]

[MISS RONBERRY *comes downstairs.*]

MISS MOFFAT. That was undignified, but I feel better for it. [*She sits on the bench, intensely depressed.*]

MISS RONBERRY. I am glad, because it *was* plain-spoken, wasn't it? Has he been nasty? So unlike the Squire . . .

MISS MOFFAT. He was kindness itself. He advised me to go and live in a hole in the ground with my knitting. He has persuaded the owner not to sell.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, dear . . . of course . . . I always think men know best, don't you?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes.

MISS RONBERRY. I'm wearing my mousseline de soie, and he never even noticed. . . . What will you do?

MISS MOFFAT. Sell the house; take this brain child of a ridiculous spinster, and smother it. Have you got a handkerchief?

MISS RONBERRY. Yes, Miss Moffat. Why?

MISS MOFFAT. I want to blow my nose. [*She holds her hand out;* MISS RONBERRY *hands her the handkerchief. She blows her nose, and returns the handkerchief.*]

MISS RONBERRY. You ought to have had a cry. I love a cry when I'm depressed. Such an advantage over the gentlemen, I always think.

MISS MOFFAT [*opening the study door*]. Mr. Jones . . .

JONES [*off stage*]. Yes . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Will you write letters to the tradespeople and the mine? We are giving up the school . . .

JONES [*off stage*]. Oh!

MISS MOFFAT. I suppose we'd better start putting some order into this chaos, and get the business over . . . What are these filthy exercise books doing among my papers . . . ?

MISS RONBERRY. Those hooligans just now. They said Mr. Jones had picked them out because they could write English and would I mind my own some-dreadful-word business.

MISS MOFFAT. I set them an essay on "How I would spend my holiday." I must have been mad. . . . [*Throws one book away and takes one from* MISS RONBERRY.]

MISS RONBERRY [*reading, laboriously*]. "If—I has ever holiday—I has breakfast and talks then dinner and a rest, tea then nothing—then supper then I talk and I go sleep."

MISS MOFFAT. From exhaustion, I suppose. [BESSIE *comes in from the kitchen, gets hat from table and starts for door*] Where are you going?

BESSIE. Just another walk, Miss Moffat.

MISS RONBERRY. What's the matter, little dear?

BESSIE. Mum's hit me.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, naughty mum. Why?

BESSIE. Just because I told her she was common. [*She goes out.*]

MISS RONBERRY. That child *is* unhappy.

MISS MOFFAT. I can't be bothered with her. Another time I'd have been faintly amused by this one's idea of a holiday, judging by a rather crude drawing.

MISS RONBERRY. What is it?

MISS MOFFAT. A bicycling tour with me in bloomers.

MISS RONBERRY. Tch, tch . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*reading*]. "'Holiday-time.' That carefree magic word! What shall it be this year, tobogganing among the eternal snows or tasting the joys of Father Neptune?"

MISS RONBERRY. But that's beautiful! Extraordinary!

MISS MOFFAT. I might think so too if I hadn't seen it in a book open on that desk [*Throws book in wastebasket.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Oh!

MISS MOFFAT. No, your Squire was right. . . . I have been a stupid and impractical ass, and I can't imagine how . . . [*Looks at name on book. She begins to read, slowly, with difficulty*] "The mine is dark . . . If a light come in the mine . . .

the rivers in the mine will run fast with the voice of many women; the walls will fall in, and it will be the end of the world."

[MISS RONBERRY *is listening, enquiringly.* MORGAN *enters brusquely. He has made no attempt to wash, but now that he is alone he half-emerges as a truculent, arresting boy with, latent in him, a very strong personality which his immaturity and natural inclination make him shy to display.*]

MORGAN. We put up the bell, Miss.

MISS RONBERRY. Shhh—the garden . . . [MORGAN *moves sulkily towards the door*] Do go on . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*reading*]. ". . . So the mine is dark. . . . But when I walk through the Tan—something—shaft, in the dark, I can touch with my hands the leaves on the trees, and underneath . . . where the corn is green." [*Looks at* MORGAN.]

MORGAN. Go on readin'.

MISS MOFFAT [*reading*]. " . . . There is a wind in the shaft, not carbon monoxide they talk about, it smell like the sea, only like as if the sea had fresh flowers lying about . . . and that is my holiday." [*She looks at the name on book.* MORGAN *starts off, turns quickly as she speaks*] Are you Morgan Evans?

MORGAN. Yes, Miss.

MISS MOFFAT. Did you write this?

MORGAN [*after hesitation, sullenly*]. No, Miss.

MISS MOFFAT. But it's in your book.

MORGAN. Yes, Miss.

MISS MOFFAT. Then who wrote it?

MORGAN. I dunno, Miss.

[MISS MOFFAT *nods to* MISS RONBERRY, *who patters discreetly into the study, closes door.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Did you write this?

[*It is difficult to tell from the crisp severity of her manner that she is experiencing a growing inward excitement.* MORGAN *looks at her, distrustfully.*]

MORGAN. I dunno, Miss. . . . What iss the matter with it?

MISS MOFFAT. Sit down. [*He sits*] And take your cap off. [*He takes off his cap*] Spelling's deplorable, of course. "Mine" with two "n's," and "leaves" l, e, f, s.

MORGAN. What wass it by rights?

MISS MOFFAT. A "v," to start with.

MORGAN. I never 'eard o' no "v's," Miss.

MISS MOFFAT. Don't call me Miss.

MORGAN. Are you not a Miss?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes, I am, but it is not polite.

MORGAN. Oh.

MISS MOFFAT. You say "Yes, Miss Moffat," or "No, Miss Moffat." M, o, double f, a, t.

MORGAN. No "v's"?

MISS MOFFAT. No "v's." Where do you live?

MORGAN. Under the ground, Miss.

MISS MOFFAT. I mean your home.

MORGAN. Llyn-y-Mwyn, Miss . . . . Moffat. Four miles from 'ere.

MISS MOFFAT. How big is it?

MORGAN. Four 'ouses and a beer-'ouse.

MISS MOFFAT. Have you any hobbies?

MORGAN. Oh, yes.

MISS MOFFAT. What?

MORGAN. Rum. [*He takes a small bottle of rum out of his pocket.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Rum? Do you live with your parents?

MORGAN. No, by my own self. My mother iss dead, and my father and my four big brothers wass in the Big Shaft Accident when I wass ten.

MISS MOFFAT. Killed?

MORGAN. Oh, yes, everybody wass.

MISS MOFFAT. What sort of man was your father?

MORGAN. 'E was a mongrel.

MISS MOFFAT. A what?

MORGAN. 'E had a dash of English. 'E learned it to me.

MISS MOFFAT. D'you go to chapel?

MORGAN. No, thank you.

MISS MOFFAT. Who taught you to read and write?

MORGAN. Tott?

MISS MOFFAT. Taught. The verb "to teach."

MORGAN. Oh, teached.

MISS MOFFAT. Who taught you?

MORGAN. I did.

MISS MOFFAT. Why?

MORGAN. I dunno.

MISS MOFFAT. What books have you read?

MORGAN. Books? A bit of the Bible and a book that a feller from the Plas kitchen nab for me.

MISS MOFFAT. What was it?

MORGAN. *The Ladies' Companion!* [MISS MOFFAT *rises and walks thoughtfully towards her desk, studying him. He sits uncomfortably, twirling his cap between his fingers*] Can I go now, pliss . . .

MISS MOFFAT. No. [MORGAN *sits, taken aback*] Do you want to learn any more?

MORGAN. No, thank you.

MISS MOFFAT. Why not?

MORGAN. The other men would have a good laugh.

MISS MOFFAT. I see. Have you ever written anything before this exercise?

MORGAN. No.

MISS MOFFAT. Why not?

MORGAN. Nobody never ask me to. What iss the matter with it?

MISS MOFFAT. Nothing's the matter with it. Whether it means anything is too early for me to say, but it shows exceptional talent for a boy in your circumstances.

MORGAN [*blinking and hesitating*]. Terrible long words, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT. This shows that you are very clever.

[*A pause. He looks up slowly, not sure if he has heard aright, looks at her searchingly, then away again. His mind is working uncertainly, but swiftly.*]

MORGAN. Oh.

MISS MOFFAT. Have you ever been told that before?

MORGAN. It iss news to me.

MISS MOFFAT. What effect does the news have on you?

MORGAN. It iss a bit sudden. It makes me that I . . . [*Hesitating, then plunging*] I want to get more clever still. I want to know what iss—behind of all them books. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Miss Ronberry . . . [*To him*] Can you come tomorrow?

MORGAN [*taken by surprise*]. Tomorrow—no—I'm workin' on the six-till-four shift.

MISS MOFFAT. Then can you be here at five?

MORGAN. Five—no, not before seven, Miss—six miles to walk . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Oh, yes, of course—seven then. In the meantime I'll correct this for spelling and grammar.

MORGAN [*Staring at her, fascinated*]. Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT. That will be all. Good night.

MORGAN. Good night, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT. Are you the one I spanked? [*He turns at the door, looks at her, smiles, blinks and goes*] Miss Ronberry! Mr. Jones! [MISS RONBERRY *runs in from the study.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Yes?

MISS MOFFAT. I have been a deuce of a fool. It doesn't matter about the barn; we are going to start the school, in a small way at first, in this room. . . . And I am going to get those youngsters out of that mine if I have to black my face and go down and fetch them myself! Get Jonesy before he posts those letters, and tell those others I'll be ready for them in five minutes. We are going on with the school! [MISS RONBERRY *scampers into the study, rather dazed. Her voice is heard, calling: "We are going on with the school!" The door shuts behind her.* MISS MOFFAT *reads from the exercise book*] ". . . . and when I walk—in the dark . . . I can touch with my hands . . . where the corn is green. . . ."

[*The school bell rings.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

An early evening in August, two years later; the sun is still bright.

The room is now a complete jumble of living room and schoolroom, and there is every sign of cheerful overcrowding. The table in the window recess is replaced by a double school desk; the table and its small chair are pushed behind the sofa; a school desk stands isolated between the big open-top desk and the sofa; between the sofa and the bay window, two rows of four school desks each, squeezed together and facing the audience at an angle. Charts, maps, an alphabet list are pinned up higgledy-piggledy over all the books; a large world globe on the shelf; hat-pegs have been fixed irregularly back of right door above and below kitchen door. Books overflow everywhere, all over the dresser especially, in place of plates; the hat-pegs are loaded with caps and hats; MISS MOFFAT'S *cloak hangs on a hook on the back of the front door; a blackboard lies on the sofa upside down, with "Constantinople is the capital of Turkey" written across in* MISS RONBERRY'S *tremulous hand-writing. The lamp on the table has been removed. Potted plants on the window sills.*

Before the curtain rises, voices are heard singing, in harmony, in Welsh, "Begeilio'r Gwenyth Gwyn"; children, shrill, sweet and self-confident, reinforced by harmony from older boys and parents, especially SARAH.

The room seems full of people; MISS RONBERRY *stands perched on the tiny stool between the sofa and the foot of the stairs, her back to the audience, conducting stiffly;* MR. JONES *is crouched in the desk chair, correcting exercises at the open desk.* SARAH, *two older peasant women in shawls, and three older men in their shabby best stand crowded*

behind the eight desks and in the window recess. In the front row of desks sit ROBBART, IDWAL, *a little girl, and* GLYN THOMAS; *in the second sit another little boy, another little girl,* BESSIE *and* WILL HUGHES. *At another desk pushed provisionally next the front row sits* JOHN OWEN, *and at the other isolated one sits* OLD TOM, *an elderly distinguished-looking peasant, his cap and stick before him, carried away by the music. A young girl sits at table.*

BESSIE *is silent, bored, and prettier than ever, though still dressed as a sober little schoolgirl. The boys we saw before as miners are clean and almost spruce; the parents follow every movement of* MISS RONBERRY'S *with avid curiosity. The pupils have slates and slate pencils in front of them.*

The song is sung through to the end.

MISS RONBERRY. Now that was quite better. Full of splendid feeling, and nice and precise as well. Have you all got my English translation? [*She climbs down from her stool.*]

THE PUPILS. Yes, Miss Ronberry.

MISS RONBERRY. Are you all quite sure of the meaning of "Thou lovedest him, fair maid, that doth not love thee back?"

[*Four older people follow with motion of lips.*]

THE PUPILS. Yes, Miss Ronberry.

[*Four people speak the line after the others have said it.*]

OLD TOM [*singing stentoriously, in broken English*]. "That doth not luff thee . . . ba-a-ck!"

MISS RONBERRY. Capital, Mr. Tom. [*She takes a small handbell from a hook beneath the stairs, rings it vigorously, and hangs it up again; nobody moves*] Home sweet home, children! Boys and girls, come out to play!

[MISS PUGH *nudges* IDWAL.]

IDWAL. Please, Miss Ronberry, can we have some more?

MISS RONBERRY. Well, just the tiniest lesson. We must keep to the curriculum. [*Steps upon stool again*] Now what would you like?

IDWAL. Please, Miss Ronberry, how do you spell it?

MISS RONBERRY. What, dear?

OLD TOM. Curriculum!

MISS RONBERRY. What would you like? The rivers of Europe or King Alfred and the cakes?

OLD TOM. Multiplication table!

[*Some say "Yes." Others repeat "multiplications."*]

MISS RONBERRY. Well twice six are twelve!

[*One old man does not recite. He smiles.*]

THE PUPILS. Twice seven are fourteen—twice eight are sixteen—

[*They complete the table.*]

OLD TOM. Twice thirteen are twenty-six!

MISS RONBERRY. Capital—school dismiss!

[IDWAL *crosses front of desk to window. All rise except* BESSIE.]

GLYN THOMAS. Be'di'r gloch, Merry?

1ST GIRL. Chwarter i bump.

A MOTHER. What iss the next thing in the multiplication?

A BOY. Wn i ddim yn wyr—gofyn iddi—[*Rises.*]

A MOTHER. Why isn't there any geography now?

SARAH PUGH. Friday geography, Thursday today . . .

AN OLD LADY. Pnawn dydd Iau, te, hanner awr wedi tri—

IDWAL. Dyma'r fistress!

[MISS MOFFAT *walks in from the garden. All rise but* BESSIE. *She is more alert and businesslike than ever. She is studying an exercise book. She goes into the kitchen.*]

SARAH PUGH. Miss Moffat.

A YOUNG FATHER. Oh, yes.

SARAH PUGH.

Mi ddylaswn fod yn pobi heddyw—
A dwidi gadal y cig yn y popdy—

A MOTHER. Mi fydd eich cegin chi ar dan, Mrs. Pugh—

IDWAL. 'Nhad, gai fynd i chwara yn nghae John Davies—

A FATHER. [*Answering him*] Ddim heddyw—dwisho ti gartre—

1ST GIRL. Yforty d'wi am drio sgwennu llythyr —[*Crossing to* 2ND GIRL.]

2ND GIRL. Os gynnachi steel-pen golew?

WILL HUGHES. Mae'na gymaint o flots!

3RD GIRL. Dwi wedi sgwennu llythyr at fy nain, wni ddim be didi'thi.

WILL HUGHES. Welsochi 'rioed eiriau fel one?

SARAH PUGH. Fedri'thi ddim canu fel Cymraes, digon siwr—

ROBBART ROBBATCH. Mae'r hen ddyn am ofyn rwbeth iddi eto—drychwch arno—

SARAH PUGH.

Mi gollith'o ei Gymraeg cyn bo hir—

Idwal, what you looking so sorry—always wanting to know something—

3RD GIRL.

Mae genni just ddigon o amswer i gyrraedd at y llyn—

Mae'r dwr yn rhy oer i ymdrochi—

SARAH PUGH.

Nag ydi—mae'r haul wedi bod yn rhy boeth heddyw—

[*The crowd finally trickle out, shepherded by* Miss RONBERRY. *Besides* BESSIE, *there are left* OLD TOM, *studying,* MISS RONBERRY *and* IDWAL.]

IDWAL. Miss Ronberry, please, what is four times fourteen?

MISS RONBERRY. Thank you so much for the flowers, Idwal, dear.

IDWAL. Yes, Miss Ronberry. [*He follows the others; leaves door open.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Is there anything you would like to know, Mr. Tom?

OLD TOM. Where iss Shakespeare?

MISS RONBERRY. Where? Shakespeare, Mr. Tom, was a very great writer.

OLD TOM. Writer? Like the Beibl?

MISS RONBERRY. Like the Bible.

OLD TOM. Dear me, and me thinkin' the man was a place. [*Following the others, muttering sadly*] If I iss been born fifty years later, I iss been top of the class.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, dear . . . [*Tidying the desks.* BESSIE *crawls over seats to small desk*] Miss Moffat has been doing grammar with Form Two under the pear tree for an hour, she must be dead. . . . Why did you not get up when she crossed? [*She takes a pumice stone from a drawer.*]

BESSIE. My foot went to sleep. [*Her manner is more impudent than ever.*]

MISS RONBERRY. That, dear, is a naughty fib.

BESSIE [*sits*]. If you want to know, Miss Ronberry, I feel quite faint sometimes, as if my heart'd stopped and the world was coming to an end.

MISS RONBERRY [*with guileless solicitude*]. Bessie, dear, how horrid!

MR. JONES. It may be in the nature of a premonition.

MISS RONBERRY. A what?

MR. JONES. I had a premonition once. Like a wave of the ocean breakin' on a sea shell. Something had said to me that mornin': "Walk, and think, and keep off the food, for thirteen hours." So I ordered my supper, and I went. Towards the end of the day [MISS MOFFAT *enters from kitchen*] I was sittin' on a stile in a cloak of meditation; and a voice roared at me: "John Goronwy Jones, tomorrow morning is the end of the world!"

MISS MOFFAT. And was it?

MR. JONES [*sadly*]. It was eight years ago. It was a splendid experience.

MISS MOFFAT. Which proves how much the gift of prophecy can owe to an empty stomach. . . . Anybody seen a Greek book? [*Picking up a tiny volume*] Here it is . . . [*Starting toward stairs.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Greek, Miss Moffat?

MISS MOFFAT. Morgan Evans is starting Greek this month.

MISS RONBERRY. No! I didn't know you knew Greek?

MISS MOFFAT. I don't; I've just got to keep one day ahead of him and trust to luck. [*She disappears into her bedroom.*]

MISS RONBERRY. To think that two years ago he hardly knew English!

BESSIE. Stuck-up teacher's pet.

MISS RONBERRY. You must not think that, dear, Miss Moffat says he is clever.

BESSIE. He always looks right through me, so I don't know, I'm sure. Stuck-up teacher's pet. . . . I got some scent on my hands, Mr. Jones, like to smell them?

MR. JONES. No, thank you, Bessie, I can smell them from here, thank you.

BESSIE [*sniffling her hands, softly*]. Ooh, it's lovely. . . .

MISS RONBERRY. She has some wonderful plans for him—I can tell by her manner. I think she is trying to send him to one of those Church schools so that he can get a curateship. Would not that be exciting?

BESSIE [*indolently*]. I think she's ridin' for a fall.

[JONES *turns, looks, and goes back to his work.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Bessie! Why?

BESSIE. All this orderin' 'im about. I've got eyes in my head, if she hasn't, and he's gettin' sick of it. I think a lady ought to be dainty. She's no idea.

[MISS MOFFAT *appears at the top of the stairs.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Evans! [*A pause,* MORGAN *comes in from the study. He is now seventeen. He is dressed in a shabby country suit, and is at the moment the submissive schoolboy, very different from the first act He carries a sheet of writing and a pen.* MISS MOFFAT'S *attitude to him seems purely impersonal. The others watch them*] Finished?

MORGAN. Yes, Miss Moffat.

[MISS RONBERRY *rubs ink off her hands with pumice stone.*]

MISS MOFFAT. How many pages?

MORGAN. Nine.

MISS MOFFAT. Three too many. Boil down to six. Have you got those lines of Voltaire?

MORGAN. Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT. It's just five—have your walk now, good and brisk. . . .

[MORGAN, *taking his cap from a peg, starts for the front door.*]

MORGAN. Yes, Miss Moffat. [*Stops.*]

MISS MOFFAT. But kill two birds and get the Voltaire by heart. If you can ever argue a point like that, you'll do. Back in twenty minutes—and take your pen from behind your ear. [*She disappears into her bedroom. Her manner is too matter of fact to be unkind, but* MORGAN *is not taking it well. He throws his pen on to a desk.*]

BESSIE. Now turn a somersault and beg. [*He looks at her with contempt. She returns his stare brazenly. She turns to see if the others are noticing.* MISS RONBERRY *is busy with her pumice stone and* MR. JONES *is engrossed in his work.* BESSIE *looks away from them all, suddenly soft and mysterious*] Can you smell scent?

MORGAN. Yes.

BESSIE [*dreamily*]. Nice, isn't it?

MORGAN. I don't know, I never come across scent before. [*Correcting himself unwillingly*] I did never come across—scent before. . . .

BESSIE. Bright, aren't you? Don't you ever get tired of lessons? [JONES *looks in disapproval. She begins to sing "With His Bell Bottom Trousers." He goes to the front door, turns, then goes, banging the door. She flings down her slate*] There we go. And my mummy ought to be back soon, and then we'll know somethin'.

MR. JONES. What is the matter? Where has she gone?

BESSIE. One of her prayer meetings. Twenty miles to shake a tambourine in the open air. I think it's wicked. . . . She ought to be just in time, and then we'll know.

MR. JONES. Know what?

BESSIE. About that horrid Morgan Evans. It's been lessons every night with teacher, hasn't it, since we left the mine? And long walks in between, to blow the cobwebs away? But the last week or two we've been breaking our journey, so we've heard.

MR. JONES. How do you mean?

BESSIE. A glass of rum next door at the Gwesmor Arms and then another, and then another!

MR. JONES [*perturbed*]. Oh. . . . Whoever told you that?

BESSIE. A little bird. And if my mummy's sciatica's better she's going to jump up and look over the frosty part, and then we'll *know*. [MRS. WATTY *hurries in through the front door, in high spirits. She wears an ill-fitting Militant Righteousness Corps uniform, and carries an umbrella and a brown-paper parcel.*]

MRS. WATTY. Guess what's 'appened to me!

BESSIE. What?

MRS. WATTY. I'm a Sergeant-Major!

[MISS MOFFAT *has come out on to the landing; her hair is down and she is brushing it.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Watty, you're not!

[JONES *turns to* MISS MOFFAT.]

MRS. WATTY. Oh, ma'am, I didn't see you . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Tell me more!

MRS. WATTY. You remember Sergeant-Major 'Opkins desertin' in Cardiff and marryin' a sailor?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes?

MRS. WATTY. Well, last week, not two months after she give up the Corpse, she was dead!

MISS MOFFAT. And you've stepped into her shoes?

MRS. WATTY. They're a bit on the big side; but I can put a bit of paper in. The uniform fits lovely, though. I'll get you a cup o' tea and an egg, ma'am, you never 'ad that cold meat, ma'am, I'll be bound?

MISS MOFFAT. Folk eat too much anyway. [*She goes back into her bedroom.*]

BESSIE. Did you jump?

MRS. WATTY [*coming back into the room*]. Just caught 'im. [*To* MR JONES, *sorrowfully*] He was 'avin' a good drink, sir. . . . [*To* BESSIE] Don't you dare tell '*er*, you little dollymop,[7] or I'll rattle your bones.

[MISS MOFFAT *reappears and comes downstairs.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Was it a nice service, Watty?

MRS. WATTY. Beautiful, ma'am. They said they 'oped the late Sergeant-Major was gone where we all want to go, but with 'er having deserted they couldn't be sure. Then we saved three sinners. You ought to been there. . . . And the collection! [*Starts for kitchen*] I 'adn't seed so much oof since the Great Liverpool Exhibition.

MISS RONBERRY. But they didn't make a collection at the Liverpool Exhibition, did they?

MRS. WATTY. No, but I did.

[MR. JONES *takes blackboard to settle.* MISS RONBERRY *gets book from dresser.* MRS. WATTY *goes to kitchen.*]

BESSIE. Please, Miss Moffat, can I have the money for my ticket?

[MR. JONES *draws diagram on blackboard.*]

MISS MOFFAT. What ticket?

BESSIE. For Tregarnar Fair tomorrow. You said I could go.

[7] prostitute.

MISS MOFFAT. On the contrary, I said you couldn't. Not in school hours.

MISS RONBERRY. Are you feeling better, dear?

BESSIE. No, Miss Ronberry. It's all this sittin' down. It's been going on for two years now. I heard tell it ends in everythin' rottin' away.

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting at desk*]. What's rotting away?

MISS RONBERRY. Bessie says she's been sitting down for two years.

MISS MOFFAT. She's lucky. My feet feel as if I've been standing for the same length of time. What are these, Ron?

MISS RONBERRY. Two more accounts, I fear.

MISS MOFFAT. Oh, yes. The Liddell and Scott and Evans's new suit. Tch . . . [*Cheerfully*] I shall have to sell out a couple more shares, I expect.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, dear.

MISS MOFFAT. Not at all. It's easy to squander money, and it's easy to hoard it. The most difficult thing in the world is to use it. And if I've learned to use it, I've *done* something. That's better. . . . My plans are laid, Ron, my dear, my plans are laid! But don't ask me what I'm hatching, because I can't tell you till tomorrow.

MISS RONBERRY. You are wonderful!

MISS MOFFAT. Go to Halifax. [MISS RONBERRY *sits on couch and studies from book*] I'm enjoying myself. [*Huge sigh from* BESSIE] Bessie Watty, what is this dying-duck business?

BESSIE. Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT. Don't "yes, Miss Moffat" me. Explain yourself.

BESSIE. My mummy said all these lessons is bad for my inside.

MISS MOFFAT. She told me they stop you eating sweets, but perhaps I am telling the lie.

BESSIE. Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT. What's the matter with your inside?

BESSIE. It goes round and round through sittin' down. P'r'aps what I want is a change.

MISS MOFFAT [*muttering*]. "Adelphos, a brother" . . . There is nothing to prevent you going for walks between lessons. You can go for one now, as far as Sarah Pugh Postman, to see if my new chalks have arrived. [*Looking at* BESSIE, *as the latter stares before her without moving*] Quick march.

BESSIE. I'm not goin'.

MISS MOFFAT. What did you say?

BESSIE. I'm not goin'. Everybody's against me. . . . I'm goin' to throw myself off of a cliff, an' kill myself. . . . It'll make a nice case in the papers, me in pieces at the bottom of a cliff! I'm goin' mad, mad, and I'm goin' to kill myself, nothin' goin' to stop me—stone dead at the bottom of a cliff—ah—ah—ah . . .

[MRS. WATTY *strides in from the kitchen with a cupful of cold water which she throws into her daughter's face.*]

MRS. WATTY [*to* MISS MOFFAT]. I made a mess o' your rug, ma'am, but it's worth it. She's got bad blood, this girl, mark my word.

MISS RONBERRY. She'll catch her death!

MRS. WATTY. Nothing like cold water, ma'am. I learnt that with her father. 'E was foreign, you know. [*She goes back into the kitchen.* MISS MOFFAT *studies* BESSIE *with distaste.*]

MISS MOFFAT. And how do you feel after that?

BESSIE. I can't remember anything. I'm in a comma.

MISS MOFFAT. [*taking her by the arm, starts pushing her upstairs*]. We'll sit on our bed for an hour with the door locked, shall we, and *try* to remember? And next week you go away into service and see how we like that. . . . [*She pushes her out of sight into the passage, a door bangs, the noise of a lock turning.* MISS MOFFAT *comes downstairs, tucking the key into her petticoat pocket*] I must count her as one of my failures. Fish out of water, of course. Guttersnipe species—if there is such a fish. She'll be more at home in service. . . . [*Muttering*] "Dendron, a tree—"

MISS RONBERRY. I beg your pardon . . . ? Oh, Miss Moffat, I am bursting with curiosity—your plans for Morgan Evans—is it a curateship?

MISS MOFFAT [*slowly, amused*]. No, it isn't a curateship. [*She laughs happily, walks towards the desk and takes up an exercise book.*]

MISS RONBERRY. I really don't see anything funny about curates [*To* MR. JONES] I mean, there is nothing *wrong* with curates, is there?

MR. JONES. No, except that they ought to go to chapel.

MISS MOFFAT. Who has been writing in here?

[MRS. WATTY *appears at the kitchen door.*]

MRS. WATTY. Your egg, ma'am!

MISS MOFFAT. "Bessie Watty has the face of an angel!"

[JONES *takes hat from peg, goes to door.*]

MISS RONBERRY. What an extraordinary . . .

MISS MOFFAT. But I know the writing. John Goronwy Jones, I'm ashamed of you.

MR. JONES. I shall see you tomorrow if we are spared.

MISS RONBERRY [*shocked*]. Oh!

MR. JONES. You all misjudge that little girl. She has the face of a good woman in the melting pot.

Miss Moffat. I've got the face of a good woman, too, and well out of the melting pot, but I don't think I'd ever find it in writing. [*She goes into the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Watty. I never thought I'd live to call *you* a naughty old man. [*She follows* Miss Moffat *into the kitchen.* Mr. Jones *goes out through the front door.* Miss Ronberry *gets her hat and shawl and crosses to small mirror in bookcase. The front door opens abruptly and* Morgan *appears. He is dishevelled, and it is fairly apparent that he has been drinking. His manner is defiant. The door bangs behind him.*]

Miss Ronberry. Oh, it's you, Morgan. . . . [*Back at the mirror*] Miss Moffat is having something to eat.

Morgan. And I have been having something to drink, so we are quits.

Miss Ronberry [*looking at him sharply, the unpleasant truth dawning on her*]. I will tell her that you are back. . . .

Morgan. I don't want to see no Miss Moffat.

Miss Ronberry. You mean "I don't want to see Miss Moffat." The double negative. . . .

Morgan. Now don't you start! . . . I like the double negative, it says what I want the way I like, and I am *not* goin' to stand *no* interferences from *no*body! Voltaire indeed . . . [*Crumples paper, kicks it savagely into a corner.*]

Miss Ronberry. Morgan! I've never seen you like this before!

Morgan. You haven't, have you? [*In a rising torrent of invective*] Well, now I come to think of it, I haven't neither, not for two years, and I'm surprised by meself, and shocked by meself! Goin' inside one o' them public houses and puttin' me nice clean boots on that dirty rail, and me dainty lady fingers on that detestable mucky counter! Pourin' poison rum down me nice clean teeth, and spittin' in a spittoon. What's come over you, Morgan Evans? You come back to your little cage, and if you comb hair and wash hands and get your grammar right and forget you was once the Middleweight Champion of the Glasynglo Miners, we might give you a nice bit of sewin' to do . . . Where's that Bessie Watty, sendin' her mother to spy on me, I'll knock her bloody block off. . . .

Miss Ronberry [*outraged*]. Morgan Evans, *language!* Don't you dare use an expression like that to me again!

Morgan [*facing her, leaning over couch*]. I got plenty of others, thank you, and they are all comin' out. I am goin' to surprise quite a few . . .

[Miss Moffat *enters from the kitchen.*]

Miss Moffat. Have a good walk, Evans?

Morgan. Yes, Miss Moffat.

Miss Moffat. Can you repeat the Voltaire? [*Sitting on the sofa, drinking milk.*]

Morgan. Not yet.

Miss Moffat. It's very short.

Morgan. Paper blowed away.

Miss Moffat. Oh. Copy it again, will you, and bring it to me.

Morgan [*muttering*]. Yes, Miss Moffat.

Miss Moffat [*holding out the jug*]. Would you like a drink?

[Morgan *stops.*]

Morgan. No, thank you. [*He goes into the study.*]

Miss Moffat. I hope he's not going to be slow at French. It'll make the Greek so much more difficult. . . .

Miss Ronberry. You don't think perhaps all this —in his situation—is rather sudden for him? I mean . . .

Miss Moffat. Not for him, my dear. He has the most brilliantly receptive brain I've ever come across. Don't tell him so, but he has.

Miss Ronberry. I know his *brain* is all right. . . .

Miss Moffat. I'm very pleased with his progress, on the whole. . . . [*A knock at the front door.* Miss Ronberry *moves towards the door.* Miss Moffat *stops her*] Wait a minute! [*Crosses to alcove window. Peering out towards the front door*] Yes, it is. . . .

Miss Ronberry. Who?

Miss Moffat. Royalty, the Conservatives and all the Grand Lamas rolled into one. The Squire.

Miss Ronberry. The Squire! Oh, *my!*

Miss Moffat. It is indeed. Oh, my—let me have your shawl.

Miss Ronberry. But he hasn't been here since that dreadful evening. . . .

Miss Moffat. I [*Going upstairs*] behaved more stupidly that night than I ever have in my life, and that's saying something. . . .

Miss Ronberry. But why is he here now?

Miss Moffat. Never you mind. . . . All I can tell you is that it is to do with Morgan Evans, and that it is vital I make the right impression.

Miss Ronberry [*as* Miss Moffat *runs upstairs*]. What sort of impression?

Miss Moffat [*on last step*]. Helpless and clinging, or as near as dammit[8] . . . [*She disappears into her room, as there is a second impatient knock at the front door.*]

Miss Ronberry. Come in!

[8] Very nearly.

[*The door opens and the* GROOM *appears.*]

THE GROOM [*announcing*]. The Squire.

[*The* SQUIRE *follows the* GROOM, *who retires and shuts the door.*]

THE SQUIRE. Good afternoon. [*He is dressed in a summer lounge suit, and holds his hat in his hand.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Your hat, Squire . . .

THE SQUIRE. No, thank you, I am not staying.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, dear, I do look a sketch . . .

THE SQUIRE [*looks around*]. So this is the seat of learning.

MISS RONBERRY. We are always on the point of a good spring-clean. How dreadful that we have no refreshment to offer you!

THE SQUIRE. You can tell her from me that I am not here to be insulted again.

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, I'm sure you aren't! I mean . . .

THE SQUIRE. She called me an addle-headed nincompoop.

[MISS MOFFAT *comes downstairs, a lace shawl draped over her shoulder. She carries a bowl of flowers.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Miss Ronberry, dear, my roses are dying. . . . Would you pour out a little water for them, I have such a headache I don't think . . . [*Feigning surprise*] Squire!

THE SQUIRE. You wrote to me. Perhaps you have forgotten.

MISS MOFFAT. How could I forget! I only thought that after the overwrought fashion of my behaviour at our last meeting you must ignore my very nervous invitation. Miss Ronberry, a chair, dear, for the Squire. . . .

[*Startled,* MISS RONBERRY *takes a small chair from desk.*]

THE SQUIRE. I have not a great deal of time to spare, I fear.

MISS MOFFAT. Of course you haven't, I was just saying to Miss Ronberry, he's so busy he'll *never* be able to fit it in! Miss Ronberry, dear, would you get some water for them? [*She hands the bowl to* MISS RONBERRY, *who passes the* SQUIRE *and goes into the garden bewildered*] Tell me, Squire, how did your prize-giving fare this afternoon?

THE SQUIRE. Rather a bore, y'know.

MISS MOFFAT. I had so hoped to see you judge. I love flowers.

THE SQUIRE. It wasn't flowers. It was cows.

MISS MOFFAT. Oh. It was your speech I wanted to hear, of course; I heard you made such an amusing one at the Croquet.

THE SQUIRE. Oh, did they tell you about that? Rather a good pun, eh? [*laughing*] Ha, ha . . . I—may I sit down?

MISS MOFFAT. Do!

THE SQUIRE. I thought Griffith, the butcher, was going to laugh his napper[9] off.

MISS MOFFAT. Indeed . . . Do you know, Squire, that makes me rather proud?

THE SQUIRE. Proud? Why?

MISS MOFFAT. Because he would not have understood a word if his little girls hadn't learnt English at my school.

THE SQUIRE. Oh. Never thought of it like that. . . . [*As she puts her hand to her head, says "Oh"*] Headache?

MISS MOFFAT. Squire, you see before you a tired woman. We live and learn, and I have learnt how right you were that night. I have worked my fingers to the bone battering my head against a stone wall.

THE SQUIRE. But I heard you were a spiffing[10] success.

MISS MOFFAT. Oh, no.

THE SQUIRE [*muttering*]. It's fair of you to admit it, I must say.

MISS MOFFAT. You see, in one's womanly enthusiasm one forgets that the qualities vital to success in this sort of venture are completely lacking in one: intelligence, courage and authority. . . . The qualities, in short, of a man.

THE SQUIRE. Come, come, you mustn't be too hard on yourself, y'know. After all, you've meant well.

MISS MOFFAT. It's kind of you to say that.

THE SQUIRE. What about this Jones chappie?

MISS MOFFAT. He's a dear creature, but . . . I have no wish to be fulsome. I mean a man like yourself.

THE SQUIRE. I see.

MISS MOFFAT. One gets into such muddles! You'd never believe!

THE SQUIRE. Well . . . I've never been on your side, but I'm sorry to hear you've come a cropper. When are you giving it up?

MISS MOFFAT. Oh . . . That again is difficult; I have all my widow's mite, as it were, in the venture. . . .

[MORGAN *appears from the study carrying a paper. He has regained his self-control.*]

MORGAN [*stops*]. Please excuse me—

MISS MOFFAT. It's all right, Evans. Have you copied it? On my desk, will you?

[9] head [10] startling.

MORGAN. Excuse me, sir . . . Good afternoon, sir.

THE SQUIRE. Good afternoon, my boy.

MORGAN. Excuse me, sir . . . Thank you. [*He goes.*]

THE SQUIRE. Nice well-spoken lad. Relative?

MISS MOFFAT. No. A pupil. He used to be one of your miners.

THE SQUIRE. No!

MISS MOFFAT. I'm glad you thought he was a nice well-spoken lad.

THE SQUIRE. Yes . . . One of my miners, interesting . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Because he is the problem I should like your advice about.

THE SQUIRE. What's he been up to, poaching?

MISS MOFFAT. No.

THE SQUIRE. A bit o' muslin?

MISS MOFFAT [*amused*]. No, no . . . There are none, anyway. . . .

THE SQUIRE [*suddenly shrewd*]. What about the little Cockney filly?

MISS MOFFAT. Bessie Watty? Oh, no, I assure you—she's a schoolgirl. . . .

THE SQUIRE. I dunno, all these young people growing up together, y'know—eh?

MISS MOFFAT. I think it's good for them . . . No, there's nothing of that sort—but he's a problem just the same. And like a true woman I have to scream for help to a man. To you.

THE SQUIRE [*completely won*]. Scream away, dear lady, scream away!

MISS MOFFAT. Well, he's—clever.

THE SQUIRE. Oh, is he? Good at figures, and all that? Because if he is, there's no reason why I shouldn't put him in my Mine Office, as junior office boy. What d'ye think of that?

MISS MOFFAT. No. Figures aren't his strong point.

THE SQUIRE. Thought you said he was clever.

MISS MOFFAT. To begin with, he can write.

THE SQUIRE. Oh. Well?

MISS MOFFAT. Very well.

THE SQUIRE. Then he could make fair copies. Eh?

MISS MOFFAT. No. [*Choosing her words carefully*] This boy—is quite out of the ordinary.

THE SQUIRE. Sure?

MISS MOFFAT. As sure as one of your miners would be, cutting through coal and striking a diamond without a flaw. He was born with very exceptional gifts. They must be—they ought to be given every chance.

THE SQUIRE. You mean he might turn into a literary bloke?

MISS MOFFAT. He might, yes.

THE SQUIRE. I'm blowed! How d'ye know?

MISS MOFFAT. By his work. It's very good.

THE SQUIRE. How d'ye know it's good?

MISS MOFFAT. How does one know Shakespeare's good?

THE SQUIRE. Shakespeare? What's he got to do with it?

MISS MOFFAT. He was a literary bloke.

THE SQUIRE. Ye-es. *He* was good, of course.

MISS MOFFAT. This little tenant of yours, Squire, has it in him to bring great credit to you.

THE SQUIRE. Yes, he *is* a tenant of mine, isn't he?

MISS MOFFAT. Imagine if you could say that you had known—well, say, Lord Tennyson, as a boy on your estate!

THE SQUIRE. Rather a lark, what? Though it's a bit different, y'know. Tennyson was at Cambridge. My old college.

MISS MOFFAT. Oh . . . Poor Evans. What a pity he was not born at the beginning of the eighteenth century!

THE SQUIRE. Beginning of the eighteenth century . . . Now when was that . . . ?

MISS MOFFAT. He would have had a protector. [*Takes two books from bookcase.*]

THE SQUIRE. What against?

MISS MOFFAT. A patron. Pope, you recall, dedicated the famous "Essay on Man" to his protector. [*Crosses front of small desk.*]

THE SQUIRE. "To H. St. John Lord Bolingbroke." Mmm . . . I *have* heard of it, now I remember. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Isn't it wonderful to think that that inscription is handed down to posterity? [*Reading from the other book*] "To the Right Honourable Earl of Southampton . . . Your Honour's in all duty, William Shakespeare."[11]

THE SQUIRE. Oh.

MISS MOFFAT. I often think of the pride that surged in the Earl's bosom when his encouragement gave birth to the masterpiece of a poor and humble writer!

THE SQUIRE. Funny, I never thought of Shakespeare being poor, somehow.

MISS MOFFAT. Some say his father was a butcher. The Earl realised he had genius, and fostered it.

THE SQUIRE. Mmm! If this boy really is clever, it seems a pity for *me* not to do something about it, doesn't it?

[11] from the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*

MISS MOFFAT. A great pity. And I can tell you exactly how you can do something about it.

THE SQUIRE. How?

MISS MOFFAT. There's a scholarship going.

THE SQUIRE. Scholarship? Where?

MISS MOFFAT. To Oxford.

THE SQUIRE [*staggered*]. Oxford?

MISS MOFFAT [*moves closer*]. A scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford, open to boys of secondary education in the British Isles. My school hardly comes under the heading of secondary education, and I wrote to your brother at Magdalen; he pulled some strings for me, and they have agreed to make a special case of this boy, on one condition. That you vouch for him. Will you?

THE SQUIRE. My dear lady, you take the cake . . . Can't he be just as clever at home?

MISS MOFFAT. No, he can't. For the sort of future he ought to have, he must have polish—he has everything else. The background of a university would be invaluable to him. . . . [SQUIRE *rises*] Will you?

THE SQUIRE. Well, the 'Varsity, y'know, hang it all . . . Mind you, he'll never get it.

MISS MOFFAT. I know, but he *must* have the chance. . . .

THE SQUIRE. Still, y'know, even the mere prospect of one o' my miners . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Think of Shakespeare!

THE SQUIRE. All serene. [MISS MOFFAT *rises*] I'll drop a line to Henry next week. Rather a lark, what? I must be off . . .

MISS MOFFAT. I should be most obliged if the letter could be posted tomorrow. Would you like me to draft out a recommendation and send it over to the Hall? You must be so busy with the estate. . . .

THE SQUIRE. I am rather. Polka supper tomorrow night . . . Yes, do do that. Good-bye, dear lady!

MISS MOFFAT. Thank you so very much, Squire. . . .

THE SQUIRE. Happier conditions, and all that! Glad you've come to your senses!

MISS MOFFAT. Thank you so very much, Squire!

THE SQUIRE. Not at all, I'm all for giving a writer-fellow a helping hand. Tell my brother that, if you like . . . Good-bye—Good-bye. [*Exits.* MISS MOFFAT *closes door.* MISS RONBERRY *hurries in from the garden, carrying the bowl of roses. The afternoon sun begins to set.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Well? [*Puts vase on desk.*]

MISS MOFFAT. That man is so stupid it sits on him like a halo.

MISS RONBERRY. What happened?

MISS MOFFAT. In ten minutes I have given the Squire the impression that he spends his whole time fostering genius in the illiterate.

MISS RONBERRY. But how?

MISS MOFFAT. Soft soap and curtseying; with my brain, my heart and my soul. I've beaten you at your own game, my dear; at my age and with my looks, I flirted with him! And he is going to write to Oxford; at least, I am going to write to Oxford for him. Hallelujah.

MISS RONBERRY. Oxford?

MISS MOFFAT. I am entering my little pit-pony for a scholarship to Oxford, child, Oxford University!

MISS RONBERRY [*incredulous*]. But they don't have miners at Oxford University!

MISS MOFFAT. Well, they're going to. The lad is on this earth for eighty years at the most out of a few millions; let the proud silly ones grovel and be useful for a change, so he can step up on their backs to something better! I was bursting to say that to the Lord of the Manor, so I must vent it on you . . . Thank you for your shawl, my dear—and now you've served your purpose, you can go home—but you'd better watch out, I may beat you to the altar yet. . . . [*She shuts the front door on her, and comes back into the room, gets papers, then crosses to table—moves table, moves milk jug to sideboard and sits at table. Seated before she calls*] Evans! [MORGAN *comes in from the study, carrying a pen, books and papers. His mantle of reserve has descended on him again; his inward rebellion is only to be guessed at from his eyes, which she does not see. He pulls the chair up to the table and sits opposite her. The daylight begins to wane*] Is this your essay on the Wealth of Nations?[12]

MORGAN. Yes.

MISS MOFFAT [*reading briskly*]. Say so and underline it. Nothing irritates examiners more than that sort of vagueness. [*She hands him the exercise book*] I couldn't work this sentence out.

MORGAN. "The eighteenth century was a cauldron. Vice and elegance boiled to a simmer until the kitchen of society reeked fulminously, and the smell percolated to the marble halls above." [*Hands paper back.*]

MISS MOFFAT. D'ye know what that means?

MORGAN. Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT. Because I don't. Clarify, my boy,

[12] Adam Smith's classic on political economy (1776).

clarify, and leave the rest to Mrs. Henry Wood.[13] . . . "Water" with two t's . . . that's a bad lapse. . . . The Adam Smith sentence was good. Original, and clear as well. Seven out of ten, not bad, but not good—you *must* avoid long words until you know exactly what they mean. Otherwise domino.[14] . . . Your reading?

MORGAN. Burke's "Cause of the Present Discontents."[15]

MISS MOFFAT. Style?

MORGAN. His style appears to me . . . as if there was too much of it.

MISS MOFFAT. His style struck me as florid.

MORGAN. His style struck me as florid.

MISS MOFFAT. Again.

MORGAN. His style struck me as florid.

MISS MOFFAT. Subject matter?

MORGAN. A sound argument, falsified by—by the high color of the sentiments.

MISS MOFFAT. Mmm. "The high color of the sentiments" . . . odd but not too odd, good and stylish. . . . For next time. [*Dictating as* MORGAN *writes*] Walpole[16] and Sheridan[17] as representatives of their age; and no smelly cauldrons. [*Opening another book*] By the way, next Tuesday I'm starting you on Greek.

MORGAN [*looking up, feigning interest*]. Oh, yes?

MISS MOFFAT [*subduing her excitement*]. I am going to put you in for a scholarship to Oxford. [*He looks up at her, arrested.*]

MORGAN. Oxford? Where the lords go?

MISS MOFFAT [*amused*]. The same. I've made a simplified alphabet to begin with. It's jolly interesting after Latin. . . . [*The matter-of-factness with which she is controlling her excitement over the scholarship seems to gall him more and more; he watches her, bitterly*] Have a look at it by Tuesday, so we can make a good start. Oh, and before we go on with the lesson, I've found the nail file I mentioned. . . . [MORGAN *slams a book*] I'll show you how to use it. I had them both here somewhere. . . .

MORGAN [*quietly*]. I shall not need a nail file in the coal mine.

MISS MOFFAT. In the what?

MORGAN [*turns to her*]. I am going back to the coal mine.

MISS MOFFAT. I don't understand you. Explain yourself.

MORGAN. I do not want to learn Greek, nor to pronounce any long English words, nor to keep my hands clean.

MISS MOFFAT [*staggered*]. What's the matter with you? Why not?

MORGAN. Because . . . because [*Leans over, both hands on table*] I was born in a Welsh hayfield when my mother was helpin' with the harvest—and I always lived in a house with no stairs, only a ladder—and no water—and until my brothers was killed I never sleep except three in a bed. I know that is terrible grammar but it is true.

MISS MOFFAT. What on earth has three in a bed got to do with learning Greek?

MORGAN. It has—a lot! The last two years I have not had no proper talk with English chaps in the mine because I was so busy keepin' this old grammar in its place. Tryin' to better myself . . . Tryin' to better myself, the day and the night . . . ! You cannot take a nail file into the Gwesmor Arms public bar!

MISS MOFFAT. My dear boy, file your nails at home! I never heard anything so ridiculous. Besides, you don't go to the Gwesmor Arms!

MORGAN. Yes, I do, I have been there every afternoon for a week, spendin' your pocket money, and I have been there now, and that is why I can speak my mind!

MISS MOFFAT. I had no idea that you felt like this.

MORGAN. Because you are not interested in me.

MISS MOFFAT. Not interested in you?

MORGAN [*losing control*]. How can you be interested in a machine that you put a penny in and if nothing comes out you give it a good shake? "Evans, write me an essay; Evans, get up and bow; Evans, what is a subjunctive!" My name is Morgan Evans, and all my friends call me Morgan, and if there is anything gets on the wrong side of me it is callin' me Evans! . . . And do you know what they call me in the village? Ci bach yr ysgol! The schoolmistress's little dog! What has it got to do with you if my nails are dirty? Mind your own business! [*He buries his head in his hands.*]

MISS MOFFAT. I never meant you to know this. I have spent money on you—I don't mind that, money ought to be spent. But time is different. Your life has not yet begun, mine is half over. And when you're a middle-aged spinster, some folk

[13] Ellen Wood (1814-87), English novelist, author of *East Lynne*.

[14] It's the end for you (as in the game of dominoes).

[15] Edmund Burke's discussion of the friction between England and the colonies (1770).

[16] See I, p. 974. [17] See I, p. 985.

say it's pretty near finished. Two years is valuable currency. I have spent two years on you. Ever since that first day, the mainspring of this school has been your career. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, when I have been desperately tired, I have lain awake, making plans. Large and small. Sensible and silly. Plans, for you. And you tell me I have no interest in you. If I say any more I shall start to cry; and I haven't cried since I was younger than you are, and I'd never forgive you for that. I am going for a walk. I don't like this sort of conversation; please never mention it again. If you want to go on, be at school tomorrow. [*Going*] If not, don't.

MORGAN. I don't want your money, and I don't want your time! . . . I don't want to be thankful to no strange woman—for anything!

MISS MOFFAT. I don't understand you. I don't understand you at all. [*Taking her cloak that is hanging on door, she goes out by the front door.* MORGAN *folds his arms, takes a drink, puts bottle on the table. There is a book there. He moves book.* BESSIE *comes in from the garden. She has put her hair half up and wears earrings.*]

BESSIE. Hello! [*She clutches her leg*] Caught my knee climbin' down the rainpipe, ooh. . . . [*As he takes no notice, she crosses to kitchen door*] P'r'aps I'm invisible. . . . [*She marches into the kitchen, singing "Bell Bottom Trousers" and bangs the door behind her. Far away, the sound of singing: Men returning from the mine, harmonising their familiar melody, "Yr Hufen Melyn."* BESSIE *returns from the kitchen*] Mum's gone out. [*After a pause*] Expect she's gone to tell Mrs. Roberts about her meetin'. Though how she manages with Mrs. Roberts knowin' no English an' deaf as well . . . [*After a pause*] Talking a lot, aren't I?

MORGAN. Yes.

BESSIE. Well, I'm not deaf.

MORGAN. Been spyin'?

BESSIE. If people lock me in and take the key out of the keyhole, they can't blame me for listenin' at it. Ooh, I think she's wicked.

MORGAN. Mind your own business!

BESSIE. I won't. I like to know about everything; I like doin' all the things I like; I like sweets, I don't care if it does make me fat, and I *love* earrings. I like to shake my head like a lady. . . . [*The singing stops. A pause*] It's funny. . . . We never been by ourselves before. [*She begins to sing in Welsh. The tune is "Llw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf"*] Didn't know I knew Welsh, did you? . . . You like that song, don't you? That's why I learnt it.

MORGAN. You are different when you sing.

BESSIE. Am I? . . . What's this, medicine? [*Picks up rum bottle, drinks. He takes bottle from her, takes a drink and puts it in his pocket*] Tastes like rubber. Nice, though. . . . You know—you was quite right to put her in her place. Clever chap like you learnin' lessons off a woman!

MORGAN. That's right. . . .

BESSIE [*soft, persuasive*]. You don't 'ave to go to Oxford! Clever chap like you!

MORGAN [*in a whisper*]. That's right. . . . [*He turns slowly and looks at her.*]

BESSIE. What a man wants is a bit o' sympathy! [*He looks at her, his hand on the back of the chair. It is growing faintly darker. She laughs, and begins to sing again; she turns, still singing, looks up at him, and smiles. He pushes away the chair, seizes her with violence, and kisses her passionately. Their arms entwine and the chair crashes to the floor.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

A morning in November, three months later. The room is much as it was; the potted plants have been removed; the daylight is so poor that the lamps are lit.

MRS. WATTY *is carrying in from the kitchen a small table, new and light. On it blotter, ink, pens, pencil, a duster and a cup of tea.* MISS RONBERRY *is pushing the armchair in from the study past the sofa into its old place, next to the isolated desk.*

MRS. WATTY [*singing*]. "I'm saved I am, I'm saved I am. . . ." [MRS. WATTY *moves the large table a bit, so as to get through, picks up small table, places it well downstage*] What would the armchair be for, miss?

MISS RONBERRY. The Squire's coming. He's invigilating. [*She opens desk drawer, and takes out package with sealed Oxford papers.*]

MRS. WATTY. *What* was that, please, miss?

MISS RONBERRY. The Oxford people have appointed him and Miss Moffat to watch Morgan Evans while he is sitting the scholarship, so that he cannot cheat.

MRS. WATTY. What a shame. . . . [*Still arranging furniture*] You'd never think it was nearly nine in the morning, would you?

MISS RONBERRY. It's stopped snowing.

MRS. WATTY [*peering out of the window*]. Only just. The milkman said the road was blocked down by the bridge.

MISS RONBERRY. How terrible if Morgan couldn't get through!

MRS. WATTY. Countin' sheep all night, I was. [*Picking up two envelopes from the floor, near the front door*] She didn't 'ave a wink neither. I could 'ear her thinkin'.

MISS RONBERRY. It is a very important day for her.

MRS. WATTY. Looks like that one's Bessie. Would you mind?

MISS RONBERRY. That means Sarah the Post got through. . . .

MRS. WATTY. She'd come the other way, down the 'ill. . . .

MISS RONBERRY. That's true . . . [*Reading*] "Dear Mum"—to think I taught her to write—"Cheltenham is terrible. Can I have a shilling? I do the steps. Madam is terrible. Your obedient girl."

MRS. WATTY. Obedient. [*Laughs*] I like that. . . . [*Throwing the letter into the wastepaper basket*] She's been away three months now, she ought to be gettin' used to it.

MISS RONBERRY. But do you not miss her?

MRS. WATTY [*emphatically*]. No! I don't like 'er, you know, never 'ave.

MISS RONBERRY. But, Mrs. Watty, your own daughter!

MRS. WATTY. I know, but I've never been able to take to 'er. First time I saw 'er, I said, "No." [*Going*] With 'er dad being foreign, you see.

MISS RONBERRY. But couldn't your husband have taken her abroad to his own family?

MRS. WATTY. Oh, my 'usband was quite different. British to the core. [*She goes into the kitchen.* MISS RONBERRY *blinks after her, and places writing pad on the little table.* MISS MOFFAT *comes slowly downstairs. She is alert, but more subdued than the audience has yet seen her.* MISS RONBERRY *takes up the cup of tea, and watches her apprehensively.*]

MISS MOFFAT. It's stopped snowing.

MISS RONBERRY. It's a white world, as they say . . . Do you think he will get through the snow?

MISS MOFFAT. This morning he would get through anything.

MISS RONBERRY. I am so glad. I thought perhaps he—he had not been working satisfactorily. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. At ten o'clock last night I had to take his books away from him.

MISS RONBERRY. I *am* glad.

MISS MOFFAT. I hope he won't get wet—he must not [*Picks up string, plays with it*] be upset in any way. What made you think he wasn't working well?

MISS RONBERRY. Nothing, only . . . you remember the night you went for that long walk, when he might be going back to the mine?

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause*]. Yes?

MISS RONBERRY. The next morning he started studying again, and yet it seemed so different.

MISS MOFFAT. How?

MISS RONBERRY. Almost strained . . . what a silly thing to say . . . I mean, as you did not say anything more about the mine . . .

MISS MOFFAT. He didn't say any more himself. He just turned up. I didn't embrace him on both cheeks, but I said "Righto." Since which time, he has never stopped working.

MISS RONBERRY. I *am* so glad . . . Oh, this arrived from the Penlan Town Hall! It must be his birth certificate. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Good. . . . I must send it off to the President of Trinity. Rather a nervous post-mortem from him last night; two pages to ask if the youngster's legitimate. [*Opens envelope, looks at birth certificate*] Thank Heaven he is. And no conviction for drunkenness; references have been spotless. That will help, I hope.

MISS RONBERRY. Would it not be splendid if he —won!

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause*]. Not very likely, I am afraid. [*Moving about, nervously*] The syllabus rather attaches importance to general knowledge of the academic sort. His is bound to be patchy—on the exuberant side—I have had to force it; two years is not enough even for him. If he checks himself, and does not start telling them what they ought to think of Milton, with fair luck he might stand a chance. He will have some pretty strong public-school candidates against him, of course. Bound to. It depends on how much the examiners will appreciate a highly original intelligence.

MISS RONBERRY [*seated on couch*]. But wouldn't it be *exciting*!

MISS MOFFAT. Yes, it would. People run down the Universities, and always will, but it would be a wonderful thing for him. It would be a wonderful thing for rural education all over the country.

MISS RONBERRY. And most of all, it would be a wonderful thing for you!

MISS MOFFAT [*almost soliloquising*]. I suppose so . . . It is odd to have spent so many hours with another human being, in the closest intellectual

communion—because it has been that. I know every trick and twist of that brain of his, exactly where it will falter and where it will gallop ahead of me—and yet not to know him at all. I woke up in the middle of the night thinking of Henry the Eighth. I have a feeling there may be a question about the old boy and the Papacy. [*Crosses to bookshelves. Takes book from shelf and makes notations on a piece of writing paper*] I'll cram one or two facts into him, the last minute . . . [*Suddenly, in a sob, with all the inward conviction of which she is capable*] Oh, God, he must win it . . . [Mrs. Watty *comes in from the kitchen, carrying a steaming cup of tea*] He must.

Mrs. Watty [*hands her cup of tea*]. Cup a tea! Now, ma'am, don't get in a pucker! Six more Saturday mornin's like this in the next 'alf-year, [*Gets* Miss Ronberry's *cup from table*] remember!

Miss Moffat. The first paper is the important one—I expect we'll get more used to the others. . . .

Miss Ronberry. Suppose the Squire doesn't come!

Miss Moffat. He will. He has got to the point of looking on the lad as a racehorse.

Miss Ronberry. You don't think the snow might deter him?

Mrs. Watty. I just seed 'is nibs' gardener clearin' a way from the gates. Shame the red carpet gettin' so wet. [Mrs. Watty *goes back into the kitchen.*]

Miss Ronberry. Surely it is getting brighter this side . . . [*Looks out of the window*] Oh, I can see him! Morgan, I mean!

Miss Moffat. Can you?

Miss Ronberry. Coming up the Nant, do you see? Ploughing through!

Miss Moffat. What is the time? [*Looks at her breast watch.*]

Miss Ronberry. Ten minutes to!

Miss Moffat [*sitting at her desk*]. He will have just two minutes . . . [*A knock at the front door*] Good. There's the Squire . . .

Miss Ronberry [*running to the door*]. He is as excited as any of us . . . [Bessie *enters the room, followed by* Mr. Jones] Bessie . . . But it cannot be you, your mother has just received . . .

Bessie. I left the same day I posted it. [*She is shabbily dressed, in semi-grown-up fashion, and wears a cloak. Her manner is staccato, nervy and defiant.* Mr. Jones *closes door, leaves* Bessie's *bag near desk. She faces* Miss Moffat, *who stares at her, puzzled.*]

Miss Moffat. This is unexpected.

Bessie. Isn't it just? I have been travellin' all night, quite a wreck. I woke Mr. Jones up and he got the stationmaster to drive us over in his trap, in the snow—nice, wasn't it? [*She is trying not to be frightened, and not succeeding. The conversation from now on quickens and grows more nervous.*]

Miss Moffat. You have arrived at an inconvenient time.

[Miss Ronberry *crosses Left above table.*]

Bessie. Fancy.

Miss Moffat. Have you come to see your mother?

Bessie. No. [*She plucks up courage and sits suddenly in the armchair.* Miss Moffat *frowns and rises.*]

Miss Moffat. Then why are you here?

Bessie. Questions and answers, just like school again!

Miss Moffat. Why have you brought this girl here this morning?

Mr. Jones. I did not bring her, Miss Moffat, she brought me. . . .

Miss Moffat. Whom have you come to see?

Bessie. You.

Miss Moffat. Me? [Bessie *does not speak*] I can give exactly one minute of my time. [*Pause*] Is it money? [*As* Bessie *does not answer, impatiently to the others*] Will you wait in the study? [Mr. Jones *follows* Miss Ronberry *into the study*] One minute. . . . Quickly!

Bessie. Why?

Miss Moffat. Morgan Evans is sitting for his Oxford examination here this morning.

Bessie. Well, 'e needn't.

Miss Moffat. What do you mean?

Bessie. Because he won't ever be goin' to Oxford.

Miss Moffat. Why not?

Bessie. Because there's goin' to be a little stranger. [*A pause*] I'm going to have a little stranger. [*She begins to whimper into her handkerchief, half acting, half nerves and excitement.* Miss Moffat *stares at her.*]

Miss Moffat. You're lying.

Bessie. Doctor Brett, The Firs, Cheltenham . . . And if you don't believe it's Morgan Evans, you ask 'im about that night you locked me up—the night you had the words with him!

Miss Moffat. I see . . . [*With a sudden cry*] Why couldn't I have seen before! [*Her eyes rest on the examination table. She collects herself, desperately*] Does he know?

Bessie. I've come to tell 'im! I was ever so upset, of course, and now I've lost me place. Oh, she was

artful. He'll have to marry me, or I'll show him up, 'cause I must give the little stranger a name. . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*exasperated beyond endurance*]. Stop saying "little stranger"! If you must have a baby, then call it a baby! . . . Have you told anybody?

BESSIE. Mr. Jones, that's all. . . .

MISS RONBERRY [*peering timidly through the study door*]. The Squire is coming up the road! [*She goes back into the study.*]

BESSIE. I'll wait here for him.

MISS MOFFAT. For the next three hours, he must not be disturbed. You are not going to see him . . .

BESSIE. You can't bully me, the way I am! [*Rising, and facing her across the examination table, the resentment of two years pouring out, real hysteria this time*] 'Asn't sunk in yet, 'as it? I'm teaching *you* something, am I? You didn't know things like that went on, did you? Why? You couldn't see what was goin' on under your nose, 'cause you're too busy managin' everythin'! Well, you can't manage him any longer, 'cause he's got to manage me now, the way I am, he's got to—

[MR. JONES *pokes his head round the study door; he is in a state of panic.* MISS RONBERRY *hovers behind him.*]

MR. JONES. Morgan Evans has turned the corner up the hill . . .

MISS RONBERRY. So there isn't much time!

[MR. JONES *follows* MISS RONBERRY *back into the study.*]

MISS MOFFAT. I'm afraid I am going to do a little managing now. You are going into the kitchen, where your mother will make you breakfast; you will then lie down, and as soon as this session is finished we will go upstairs and talk it all over when we are a little calmer.

[*A knock at the front door.*]

BESSIE. He's here! I got to see him! [BESSIE *starts up.* MISS MOFFAT *detains her.*]

MISS MOFFAT. If you try and disobey me, I shall not answer for the consequences. [*Holds her wrist.*]

BESSIE [*cowed*]. You wouldn't dare lay a finger on me . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Oh, yes, I would. If you attempt to stay in this room, or to blab to anybody about this before we have had that talk—even your mother . . . I am in a pretty nervous state myself, this morning, and I shall strike you so hard that I shall probably kill you. . . . I mean every word of that.

[*Another knock, more impatient. She quells* BESSIE *with her look; crosses and holds open the kitchen door.*]

BESSIE [*laughs*]. I don't mind. Three hours'll go soon enough. [*She goes into the kitchen.* MISS MOFFAT *shuts the door after her, straightens herself, and opens the front door. The* SQUIRE *enters, in Inverness cape and hat, stamping the snow from his boots; he carries several periodicals, chiefly sporting and dramatic. The rest of the scene is played very quickly.*]

MISS MOFFAT [*takes his coat and hat*]. So very sorry—how kind of you—such a dreadful day . . . [*Hangs* SQUIRE'S *coat on door.*]

THE SQUIRE. Not at all, Mistress Pedagogue, anything for a lark. . . . Glad it isn't me, what . . . ? I've got a spiffy bit of news for you.

MISS MOFFAT. Yes?

THE SQUIRE. I've bought the barn from Sir Herbert, and we can move the whole shoot next door by March. What d'ye think?

MISS MOFFAT. Wonderful . . .

THE SQUIRE. We can knock a door straight through here to the barn—aren't ye pleased about it?

MISS MOFFAT [*going to the desk, hardly aware of what she is doing, as* MISS RONBERRY *runs in from the study*]. Yes, but you know, this examination, [*Knock at front door*] rather worrying . . .

MISS RONBERRY. Good morning, Squire! Terrible weather . . .

THE SQUIRE. Beastly—

[MISS RONBERRY *opens the front door and lets* MORGAN *in. She closes the door before she takes his overcoat, cap and muffler. He has been hurrying, but he is quiet and calm.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Wet?

MORGAN. No, thank you. Good day, sir . . .

MISS RONBERRY. Let me take your things . . .

MORGAN. Thank you . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Before I open the papers, I have a feeling they may bring up Henry the Eighth. Memorize these two facts, will you? [*Hands him a paper.*]

MISS RONBERRY [*puts down a sprig of white heather*]. White heather—just a thought! [*She runs into the study.*]

MORGAN. Thank you . . .

THE SQUIRE. Good luck, my boy.

MORGAN. Thank you, sir . . .

THE SQUIRE. Glad it isn't me!

[MORGAN *hands her the paper.*]

MR. JONES [*pops his head round the study door*]. Pob llwyddiant, ymachgeni!

MORGAN. Diolch—

[MISS MOFFAT *throws paper in the basket.* MR. JONES *goes back into the study.* MORGAN *sits at the table.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Name and particulars, to save time. And don't get exuberant.

MORGAN. No.

MISS MOFFAT. Or illegible.

MORGAN. No.

[*Pause.*]

THE SQUIRE. But aren't *you* going to wish my little protégé good fortune?

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause, to* MORGAN]. Good luck.

MORGAN. Thank you.

[*The clock begins to strike nine.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Ready? [MORGAN *nods. She cuts the envelope and places the examination paper in front of him. She looks at the duplicate paper of questions, smiles*] Henry the Eighth! [*She sits in the armchair. The* SQUIRE *embarks on his periodical.* MORGAN *begins to write.* MISS MOFFAT *raises her head, looks anxiously towards the kitchen, then steadfastly at* MORGAN, *her lip trembling. A pause. The only sound is the scratch of a pen.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

ACT THREE

SCENE—*An afternoon in July. Seven months later. The school has been moved next door, and the room is much less crowded, the small table is back in the window recess, the armchair is in its old position; the large table, however, is no longer behind the sofa with its chair, its place being taken by three small school desks facing the front door; between the front door and the bay window a blackboard on its easel faces the audience at an angle, with "Elizabeth, known as Good Q. Bess" written on it in block letters.*

MR. JONES *stands in command beside the blackboard. In two of the school desks sit* IDWAL *and* ROBBART, *each poring over his slate. On the settle sit the* SQUIRE, *downstage, his arms folded like a pupil, his eyes fixed on* MR. JONES, *and next to him* OLD TOM, *upstage, laboriously copying the inscription on to his slate.* MR. JONES *crosses to* IDWAL'S *desk, then to* ROBBART'S *desk; looks at their work.*

OLD TOM [*muttering, as he writes*]. Elissabeth—known—as—what in goodness is a "k" doin' there, that iss a pussell for me . . .

MR. JONES. "I wandered lonely as a cloud." From "The Daffodils," by Wordsworth.

[*The boys scratch busily. The* SQUIRE *begins to nod sleepily.* MISS RONBERRY *hurries in from the garden.*]

MISS RONBERRY. What is the capital of Sweden?

MR. JONES. Stockholm.

MISS RONBERRY. Thank you. [*She hurries back into the garden.*]

OLD TOM. Please, sir, how many l's in "daffodils"?

THE SQUIRE. Damned if I know.

[JOHN OWEN *comes in by the study door.*]

JOHN. Please, Mistar Jones, Form Two Arithmetic Report—Miss Moffat says will you come in school with it. [*He goes back.* MR. JONES *follows him through the study after getting book and papers from the sideboard. The* SQUIRE *snores.*]

ROBBART. Mae o'n cysgu. Tyd. Idwal . . .

OLD TOM. Plenty Welsh at home, not in the class, please, by request, scoundrels and notty boys!

IDWAL [*rises*]. Squire iss 'avin' a snore. Nai ddangos rwbeth ichi—[*He rises, runs to the blackboard, takes the chalk and the duster, and swiftly rubs out and adds to the inscription till it reads: "NO . . . GOOD . . . BESSIE." The* SQUIRE *grunts. As he strikes the period the* SQUIRE *sticks his foot out. He says "Na-fe."*]

MR. JONES [*returning*]. Now history. [*Stumbles over the* SQUIRE'S *foot. Crosses to blackboard*] Excuse me . . . Elizabeth . . . [*He sees the inscription and stops short. He turns on the others, grave and perturbed*] Who did this?

IDWAL. Please, Mr. Jones, perhaps it iss some terrible dunce that want to know what iss Bessie Watty been doin' the last few months.

[*A pause.*]

MR. JONES. Who ever it was . . . [SQUIRE *rises*] I am going to cane him! It was not you, sir, by any chance?

THE SQUIRE. Not guilty. . . . Bessie Watty? Little Cockney thing? Nice ankles?

MR. JONES. I do not know, sir . . . [*Boys snicker*] Silence, boys! Where is my duster?

[SQUIRE *goes to window and looks out.*]

THE SQUIRE. Still no sign of him.

MR. JONES. You mean Morgan Evans, sir? [*Boys look up*] He is not expected before the train leaving Oxford half-past one . . .

THE SQUIRE. There's a sporting chance the Viva[18] finished yesterday, and I sent the wagonette to meet the one-ten.

MR. JONES. Do you think that he may know the result when he arrives?

THE SQUIRE. I doubt it. Miss Moffat said we'll hear by letter in a day or two. . . . [*Rising restlessly and going towards the front door*] Think I'll propel the old pins down the highway, just in case . . .

IDWAL. Please, sir, what sort of a place is Oxford?

THE SQUIRE. Dunno, I'm sure. Cambridge myself. [*He goes. Leaves door open.*]

MR. JONES [*at blackboard*]. Now history. Repeat after me . . .

IDWAL. Please, Mr. Jones, tell us about Bessie Watty?

MR. JONES. If you are kept in tomorrow, I will give you religion. Repeat after me . . . [*The school bell rings*] Dismiss! [ROBBART *rises and straps books.* MR. JONES *goes to desk and tidies papers.* SARAH *hurries in from the front door. She is dressed in her best, in the traditional Welsh peasant costume with a steeple hat.*]

SARAH. Please, sir, have you got my father—[*Seeing* OLD TOM] uddona, 'nhad, ma'dy frwas di'n oeri . . .

OLD TOM. English, daughter, in the class, pliss!

SARAH. You are an old soft, your porridge it iss gettin' cold and you have not got your sleep . . .

OLD TOM. But I got my Queen Elizabeth . . .

[SARAH *takes his slate, puts it on* ROBBART'S *desk.*]

SARAH. And in the mornin' you got your rheumatics—come on! [SARAH *helps* OLD TOM *to rise.* MISS RONBERRY *comes in from the garden.*]

ROBBART. Sarah Pugh, what you all clobbered up[19] for?

SARAH. Because for Morgan Evans.

MR. JONES. Is there some news?

MISS RONBERRY. About Morgan? Oh, quickly!

SARAH. Not yet, Mistar Jones. But when it comes, I know it iss good news, so what do I do? I open the dresser, out the lavender bags and into my Sundays! Home [*Starts to door with* OLD TOM], dada, for Sundays . . .

MR. JONES. Before we have definite news, that is unwise . . .

SARAH. John Goronwy Jones, pliss, sir, you are an old soft. Everybody is ready to meet him by the Nant! The grocer got his fiddle . . .

IDWAL. And William Williams the public got his cornet!

ROBBART. And with me on me mouth organ . . [*Strikes chord on mouth organ.*]

SARAH. And me singin'!

ROBBART. Tyd, Idwal—[*He runs out by the front door, followed by* IDWAL.]

MISS RONBERRY. Perhaps preparing for news to be good means that it will be.

MR. JONES. Everything is pre-ordained. Morgan Evans has either won the scholarship, or lost it.

MISS RONBERRY. Let us all say together, "Morgan Evans has won the scholarship!"

ALL [*except* MR. JONES]. "Morgan Evans has won the scholarship!"

SARAH [*to* OLD TOM]. Tiddana, 'nhad—

OLD TOM. I never got a letter yet, and nobody never put Sundays on for me. . . . [*He goes out by the front door.* SARAH *starts to go,* MISS RONBERRY'S *eye catches the blackboard.*]

MISS RONBERRY. "No . . . [SARAH *comes back*] good . . . Bessie." Good gracious!

MR. JONES. Where *is* my duster? [*Looks behind blackboard.*]

MISS RONBERRY. What does that mean?

SARAH. Bessie Watty. Miss Ronberry, where is she?

[MR. JONES *finds duster at* IDWAL'S *desk.*]

MISS RONBERRY. I don't know, dear.

SARAH. Miss Moffat she hears from her, in my post office. [JONES *erases blackboard*] We wass all wonderin'. [*She goes out by the front door.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Well, I have been wondering too! She came back that morning and just went away again. Morgan Evans was telling me only the day he left for Oxford that he didn't even *see* her. Where is she?

MR. JONES. It is more important to know if Morgan Evans has won or not.

MISS RONBERRY. I know . . . If he hasn't, it will break her heart.

MR. JONES. Would she feel it so keen as all that?

MISS RONBERRY. I used not to think so, but since that day they have been so much better friends, it has been a pleasure to hear them conversing. Perhaps it is the strain of all these examinations . . .

[MISS MOFFAT *comes in from the study with exercise book, chuckling.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Gwyneth Thomas, the plasterer's eldest, essay on Knowledge. "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever"—I wonder if the Reverend Kingsley[20] had any idea what a smack

[18] *viva-voce* or oral examination

[19] dressed up.

[20] Charles Kingsley (1819-75), English novelist, poet and reformer. The quotation is from his poem *A Farewell.*

in the eye that was for lady teachers? And then Gwyneth Thomas starts [*Reading*]: "It is not nice to know too much, I wish to be like Miss Ronberry, Miss Moffat is different, she knows everything." Any news?

MR. JONES. Not yet.

MISS MOFFAT. I thought not. . . . [*A pause*] Where is the Squire?

MR. JONES. Gone to see if there is any sign.

MISS MOFFAT. Thank the Lord. That man is really becoming a nuisance. He gave up Henley to be here this week. Did you know?

MR. JONES. You do not appear nervous?

MISS MOFFAT. I am past being nervous. If he has won, I shan't believe it. Flatly.

MISS RONBERRY. And if he has lost?

MISS MOFFAT. If he has lost . . . [*After a pause*] We must proceed as if nothing had happened. The sun rises and sets every day, and while it does we have jolly well got to revolve round it; the time to sit up and take notice will be the day it decides not to appear. In the meantime, Mr. Jones, your report is on your desk. Miss Ronberry, Form Two are waiting for your music like a jungle of hungry parakeets.

MISS RONBERRY. Yes, Miss Moffat. [*They retire meekly through the study.* MISS MOFFAT *is alone. She looks at her watch; her armour loosens perceptibly; she is on edge and apprehensive. She goes towards the stairs, but before she reaches them the garden door opens suddenly and* MORGAN *appears. He wears a new dark suit, carries a travelling bag and his cap, and looks dusty and tired. His manner is excited and unstable; he is alternately eager and intensely depressed. She stares at him, not daring to speak.*]

MORGAN. I caught the early train. I knew they would all be watching for me, so I got out at Llanmorfedd and got a lift to Gwaenygam.

MISS MOFFAT. Does that mean . . . ?

MORGAN. Oh, no news. Except that I am not hopeful.

MISS MOFFAT. Why not?

MORGAN. They talked to me for one hour at the Viva . . .

MISS MOFFAT. That doesn't mean anything. Go on.

MORGAN. They jumped down hard on the New Testament question. As you said they would. . . . You are very pale.

MISS MOFFAT. Better than a raging fever. Go on.

MORGAN. I spent five minutes explaining why Saint Paul sailed from a town three hundred miles inland.

MISS MOFFAT. Oh, dear. [*Their manner together has changed since we last saw them together. They are hardly at all teacher and pupil, superior and inferior, adult and child. They are more like two friends held solidly by a bond unsentimental and unself-conscious.* MORGAN's *English has immensely improved, and he expresses himself with ease.*] Parnell?[21]

MORGAN. Parnell . . . [*Smiles*] Oh, yes . . . I was going to stick up for the old chap, but when they started off with "that fellow Parnell," I told the tale against him for half an hour. I wasn't born a Welshman for nothing.

MISS MOFFAT. Ha . . . And the French?

MORGAN. Not good. I said "naturellement" to everything, but it didn't fit every time.

MISS MOFFAT. And the Greek verbs?

MORGAN. They were sarcastic.

MISS MOFFAT. Did the President send for you?

MORGAN. I had half an hour with him . . .

MISS MOFFAT. You did?

MORGAN. Yes, but so did the other nine candidates! He was a very kind and grand old gentleman sitting in a drawing room the size of Penlan Town Hall. I talked about religion, the same as you said . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*correcting him, mechanically*]. Just as you advised . . .

MORGAN. Just as you advised. He asked me if I had ever had strong drink, and I looked him straight in the eye and said "No."

MISS MOFFAT. Oh!

MORGAN. I was terrible—terribly nervous. My collar stud flew off, and I had to hold on to my collar with one hand, and he did not seem impressed with me at all! . . . He was very curious about you. [*Rises*] Did you know there was an article in the *Morning Post* about the school?

MISS MOFFAT. Was there? . . . But what else makes you despondent?

MORGAN. The other candidates. They appeared to me brilliant. I had never thought they would be, somehow! Two from Eton and one from Harrow—one of them very rich. I had never thought a scholarship man might be rich. He had his own servant.

MISS MOFFAT. Gosh!

MORGAN. And the servant looked so like my father I thought it was at first. . . . And, as I was leaving, the examiners appeared to be sorry for me in some way, and I received the impression that I had failed. I . . .

[21] Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), Irish statesman, champion of Home Rule

MISS MOFFAT. When shall we know?

MORGAN. The day after tomorrow. They are writing to you.

MISS MOFFAT. The villagers are all in their best, and talking about a holiday tomorrow. It is very stupid of them, because if you have failed it will make you still more sick at heart . . .

MORGAN. If I have failed? [*In sudden desperation*] Don't speak about it!

MISS MOFFAT. But we must! You faced the idea the day you left for Oxford . . .

MORGAN. I know, but I have *been* to Oxford, and come back, since then! I have come back—from the world! Since the day I was born, I have been a prisoner behind a stone wall, and now somebody has given me a leg-up to have a look at the other side. . . . They cannot drag me back again, they cannot. They *must* give me a push and send me over!

MISS MOFFAT. I've never heard you talk so much since I've known you.

MORGAN. That is just it! I *can* talk, now! The three days I have been there, I have been talking my head off.

MISS MOFFAT. Ha! If three days at Oxford can do that to you, what would you be like at the end of three years?

MORGAN. That's just it again. It would be everything I need, everything! Starling and I spent three hours one night discussin' the law—Starling, you know, the brilliant one. . . . The words came pouring out of me—all the words that I had learnt and written down and never spoken. I suppose I was talking nonsense, but I was at least holding a conversation! I suddenly realised that I had never done it before—I had never been *able* to do it. [*With a strong Welsh accent*] "How are you, Morgan? Nice day, Mr. Jones! Not bad for the harvest." A vocabulary of twenty words; all the thoughts that you have given to me were being stored away as if they were always going to be useless—locked up and rotting away—a lot of questions with nobody to answer them, a lot of statements with nobody to contradict them. . . . And there I was with Starling, nineteen to the dozen. I came out of his rooms that night, and I walked down the High. That's their High Street, you know.

MISS MOFFAT [*nodding, drinking in the torrent with the most intense pleasure*]. Yes, yes. . . .

MORGAN. I looked up, and there was a moon behind Magd—Maudlin. Not the same moon I have seen over the Nant, a different face altogether. Everybody seemed to be walking very fast, with their gowns on, in the moonlight. The bells were ringing, and I was walking faster than anybody and I felt—well, the same as on the rum in the old days!

MISS MOFFAT. Go on.

MORGAN. All of a sudden, with one big rush, against that moon, and against that High Street—I saw this room; you and me sitting here studying, and all those books—and everything I have ever learnt from those books, and from you, was lighted up—like a magic lantern: Ancient Rome, Greece, Shakespeare, Carlyle, Milton. . . . Everything had a meaning, because I was in a new world—my world! And so it came to me why you worked like a slave to make me ready for this scholarship. [*Lamely*] I've finished.

MISS MOFFAT. I didn't want you to stop.

MORGAN. I had not been drinking.

MISS MOFFAT. I know.

MORGAN. I can talk to you too, now.

MISS MOFFAT. Yes. I'm glad.

[THE SQUIRE *comes in from the front door.* MORGAN *rises.*]

THE SQUIRE. No sign of the feller-me-lad, dang it . . . [*Hangs hat on door*] Evans! [*Goes to* MORGAN, *shakes hands*] There you are!

MORGAN. Good day, sir.

THE SQUIRE. Well?

MORGAN. They are sending the result through the post.

THE SQUIRE. The devil they are [*To* MISS MOFFAT, *as he sits in armchair*] D'ye know I am finding this waiting a definite strain? [MR. JONES *runs in from the study, stops at foot of stairs.*]

MR. JONES. Somebody said they had seen Morgan . . .

MORGAN. Day after tomorrow.

MR. JONES. Oh. . . .

THE SQUIRE. Examiners all right, my boy?

MORGAN. Rather sticky, sir.

THE SQUIRE. Lot of old fogies, I expect. Miss Moffat, I told you you ought to have made inquiries at the other place. However . . .

[MISS RONBERRY *runs in from the study.*]

MISS RONBERRY. Somebody said they had seen . . .

THE SQUIRE AND MR. JONES. The day after tomorrow!

MISS RONBERRY. Oh . . . How are you, Morgan, dear . . . ?

MR. JONES [*wandering out to the porch*]. The suspense is terrible.

THE SQUIRE. I know.

MR. JONES. Even the little children are worrying about— [*He stops short; he has seen somebody*

coming down the village street; he looks again, doubtfully; starts, then peers anxiously into the room. Everybody is preoccupied. He comes into the room, shuts the door, and stands a moment with his back to it] Morgan, my boy, are you not exhausted after your journey? Would you not like something to eat?

MORGAN. I am rather hungry, yes . . .

MISS MOFFAT. But how stupid of me! Watty will boil you an egg . . . Come along . . .

MORGAN [*rising*]. Thank you. Excuse me . . . [*He follows* MISS MOFFAT *out.*]

MISS MOFFAT [*as she goes into the kitchen*]. Did they spot the Dryden howler?

MORGAN. No.

[MR. JONES *goes to the kitchen door and closes it after them.*]

THE SQUIRE. You seemed very anxious to get 'em out of the room. What's the matter . . . ?

[*The front door opens and* BESSIE *walks in. She has completely changed; she might be ten years older. Her hair is up; she wears a cheaply smart costume, with a cape, and looks dazzlingly pretty in a loose opulent style. Her whole personality has blosssomed. A pause. They stare at her.*]

BESSIE. Hallo!

THE SQUIRE. How d'ye do . . . ?

BESSIE. I'm very well indeed, thanks, and how are you, blooming? [*Her accent is nearer the lady-like than it has been yet.*]

THE SQUIRE. Yes, thanks . . . What *is* this?

MISS RONBERRY. I really couldn't say . . . Good gracious, it's Bessie W—

BESSIE. Right first time. Hello, Miss Ronberry, how's geography, the world still goin' round in circles? Hello, Mr. Jones, flirty as ever?

THE SQUIRE. And to what do we owe this honor?

BESSIE. Well, it's like this . . .

MR. JONES [*desperately*]. Miss Ronberry, will you please return to your class . . . ?

MISS RONBERRY. They are quite safe. I left Mary Davies in charge . . .

BESSIE. No, you don't. We've had too many secrets as it is.

MR. JONES. Three days ago she sent money to you. Did you not receive the letter?

BESSIE. Yes, I did, and all the others, till I was sick of 'em.

THE SQUIRE. What *is* all this?

BESSIE. Last week I was glancing through the *Mid-Wales Gazette*, and I'm here to congratulate a certain young gent in case he has won that scholarship.

MR. JONES. Oh!

MISS RONBERRY. But what has that got to do with you?

BESSIE. You see, Miss, it's like this . . .

MR. JONES [*in a last effort to stop her*]. Don't say it—don't say it!

BESSIE. Four weeks yesterday, I had a baby.

[*A pause.* MISS RONBERRY *and* THE SQUIRE *stare at her.* MR. JONES *gives a sigh of impotent despair.*]

THE SQUIRE. You had a what?

BESSIE. A baby. Seven pounds thirteen ounces.

THE SQUIRE. Good God, how ghastly.

MR. JONES [*turns to her*]. It is a disgustin' subject and . . .

BESSIE. It isn't disgusting at all. If I had a wedding ring you'd think it was sweet.

[MRS. WATTY *hurries in from the kitchen.*]

MRS. WATTY. Morgan Evans's luggage. Excuse me, sir. [*Catches sight of the* SQUIRE'S *serious face*] Oh! . . . [*Fearfully*] Any news?

THE SQUIRE. Well, yes. . . .

MRS. WATTY. Bessie! [*Drops the bag in her excitement*] My, you do look a dollymop! Excuse me, sir . . .

THE SQUIRE. Say anything you like . . .

MRS. WATTY. Where d'you get them bracelets?

BESSIE. Present.

MRS. WATTY. Oh, that's all right. Where 'ave you been, you madam?

BESSIE. Turnin' you into a granny.

MRS. WATTY. A gra— [*Both laugh*] Well, *fancy!*

[MISS MOFFAT *comes in from the kitchen.*]

MISS MOFFAT. And I should try and have a sleep if I were you . . .

MRS. WATTY. You could 'ave knocked me down with a feather!

BESSIE. Hello. [MISS MOFFAT *stops short*] I've just been telling them you-know-what. [*It is plain she is no longer afraid of* MISS MOFFAT. *The latter looks from one to the other, helplessly.*]

THE SQUIRE. And now I think it's time you told us who the fellow is. I am going to take drastic proceedings . . .

MRS. WATTY. That's right, dear. Who is it?

BESSIE. Well, as a matter of fact . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*with a cry*]. No! I'll pay you anything . . . Anything!

BESSIE. It's no good, miss. [MISS MOFFAT *turns away*] It's Morgan Evans.

[*A pause.*]

THE SQUIRE. What!

MISS RONBERRY [*dazed*]. I don't believe it . . .

MRS. WATTY [*really upset, to* MISS MOFFAT]. Oh, ma'am.

MISS MOFFAT. I've been dreading this, for months. In a terrible way it's a relief.

BESSIE. Bamboozlin' me every week he was in the gutter!

MISS MOFFAT. Lies, all lies, and I was glad to be telling them . . .

MISS RONBERRY [*suddenly articulate*]. I can't go on listening! I can't bear it! It all comes of meddling with this teaching. She was in my class . . . What *would* Papa have said! This horrible unnatural happening . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*exasperated beyond endurance*]. Don't talk nonsense! It isn't horrible, and it isn't unnatural! On the contrary, it's nature giving civilisation a nasty tweak of the nose. The schoolmistress *has* learnt a lesson, but it's a little late now.

BESSIE [*rising*]. Where is he?

MRS. WATTY. Over my dead body, my girl . . .

BESSIE. She's right, mum, it's too late. I got a four-weeks-old baby, kickin', healthy and hungry, and I haven't got a husband to keep him, so his father's got to turn *into* my husband. That's only fair, isn't it?

THE SQUIRE [*rises*]. I'm sorry, Miss Moffat, but I'm inclined to agree . . .

BESSIE. I'll call him . . .

MR. JONES. There is no need to call him!

THE SQUIRE. What's the matter with you?

MR. JONES. I am sorry to say that I have a strong feeling of affection for this young woman.

BESSIE [*sitting again on the sofa, amused*]. Oh, yes—I've got the face of an angel, haven't I?

MR. JONES. And I am willing to do my duty by rehabilitating her in wedlock, and bestowing on the infant every advantage by bringing it up a Baptist.

THE SQUIRE. Are you serious?

MR. JONES. I am always serious.

BESSIE [*to* MISS MOFFAT]. You'd like that, wouldn't you?

MRS. WATTY. Now we're not pretendin' it's a windfall, but for a girl who's took the wrong turnin' it's a present! And you'd 'ave your own way in everything—wouldn't she, sir?

MR. JONES. [*eagerly*]. Of course . . .

MRS. WATTY. Well, will you?

BESSIE. No. I won't. I'd like to oblige . . . [*laughs*] but, really, I couldn't! [MR. JONES *turns away*] Besides, my friend would be furious.

MRS. WATTY [*clutching at straws*] Your friend?

BESSIE. Ever such a nice gentleman, sporting, quite a swell, owns a race-course. [MRS. WATTY *looks suspicious*] You needn't look like that. I only met him ten weeks ago. I'd started servin' behind a bar for fun. I was the picture of health and ever so lucky in the counter bein' very high.

THE SQUIRE. I have never heard such a conversation outside a police court. I am seeking the safety of my own quarters. Anything I can do, Miss Moffat . . .

BESSIE. I suppose *you* wouldn't care to stake a claim?

THE SQUIRE. Good gracious . . . [*Exits.* BESSIE *laughs.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Doesn't this man of yours want to marry you?

BESSIE. 'E won't talk of anything else, but he won't have the baby. He says it would be different if the father'd been a pal of his—you can understand it, really, can't you? So I've got to give up my friend and marry Morgan Evans. Pity, 'cos my friend worships me. Ever since I left he keeps on sending me telegrams. I just got two at the station, and I expect I'll get some more tonight, isn't it rich? [*Laughs*] Mr. Jones wouldn't consider the baby without me?

MISS RONBERRY. The baby without you! Your child! What about your—your mother love?

BESSIE. I expect you'll think I'm a wicked girl, but d'you know, I haven't got any!

MISS RONBERRY. Oh, what a vile thing to say, vile . . .

BESSIE [*rising*]. Now listen, dear. . . . You're seeing this baby as if it was yours, aren't you—you'd think the world of it, wouldn't you?

MISS RONBERRY. It would mean everything to me— [*Turns away*] my whole life. . . .

BESSIE. I have a pretty near idea how old you are. When I'm your age I'll love the idea of a baby, but life hasn't begun yet for me. I'm just getting a taste for it. What do *I* want with a baby?

MRS. WATTY. That's what we all want to know!

BESSIE. Yes, mum, but you know what it is . . .

MISS RONBERRY. You're inhuman, that's what you are! To think you don't want it. . . . [*She is on the point of bursting into foolish tears, and runs into study.*]

BESSIE. I didn't mean to be nasty—but inhuman indeed! I didn't want the baby, nobody would have, but I was careful so it'd be all right, and now it is all right I want it to have a good time. But *I* want a good time too! I *could* have left it on a doorstep, couldn't I? But I must see it's in good

hands—and that's why I've come to Morgan Evans.

Miss Moffat. You want to make him marry you, on the chance he will become fond enough of the child to ensure its future—your conscience will be clear and later you can go off on your own?

Bessie. I shouldn't be surprised . . .

Miss Moffat. In the meantime, it's worth while to ruin a boy on—on the threshold of . . .

Bessie. I don't know anything about that, I'm sure. [*Calling*] Morgan!

Miss Moffat. [*intercepting her, desperately*]. Ssh! Wait a minute, wait. . . . There may be a way out—there must be . . .

Mrs. Watty. Gawd bless us, ma'am—I got it!

Miss Moffat. What?

Mrs. Watty. Why can't you adopt it? [Bessie *and* Mr. Jones *stare from her to* Miss Moffat.]

Miss Moffat. Don't be ridiculous.

Mrs. Watty. Would that do you, Bessie?

Bessie. Well! I never thought . . .

Mrs. Watty. Would it, though?

Bessie [*after consideration*]. Yes, it would.

Miss Moffat. It *would*? . . . But . . . But what would *I* do with a baby? I—I don't even know what they look like!

Mrs. Watty. They're lovely little things. Now it's all arranged . . .

Miss Moffat. But it would be fantastic . . .

Bessie [*going up to her, eagerly*]. Oh, do, please, it'd put *everything* to rights! I would know the baby was safe. Morgan Evans need never know a thing about it. I can marry my friend, and it will all be beautiful! He might grow like his father and turn out quite nice, and anyway I'm not really so bad, you know. And he's on the bottle now—and I could give all the instructions before I go. And you could have it straight away, see, because if it's going I don't want to have it with me longer than I can help, see, because I'd only start gettin' fond of it, see . . .

Mrs. Watty. Come on, ma'am, you've been pushin' us about for three years, now we'll give *you* a shove!

Miss Moffat. But it's mad—I tell you . . .

Mrs. Watty. Not as mad as takin' *me* in was, with my trouble! You've allus been like that, you might as well go on . . .

Miss Moffat. But I was never meant to be a mother. I'm not like Miss Ronberry. Why, *she* is the one to do it . . .

Mr. Jones [*hastily*]. She would never agree. We were discussin' Marged Hopkins going to the work-house—and she said she could never hold with any child born like that.

Miss Moffat. Oh . . . I suppose it would worry some folk. . . . But, Watty, you're the grandmother, and surely you . . .

Mrs. Watty. Oh, I couldn't! I don't bear it no ill-will, but every penny I get goes to the Corpse. You're the one, dear, really you are.

Miss Moffat. Bessie Watty, do you mean that if I do not adopt this child, you . . .

Bessie. I will have to tell Morgan Evans, and he will have to marry me, I swear that.

Miss Moffat. And do you swear that you would never let Morgan Evans know the truth?

Bessie. I swear. If there are any questions, I'll say it was my friend's.

[*A pause.*]

Miss Moffat. Then—I give in.

Bessie. That's lovely. My friend *will* be pleased. I'll pop back to the public-house for his telegram and send him a nice one back. Good-bye, all, we'll arrange details later, shall we? My friend gave me this buckle, isn't it nice? He offered me a tiny one, real, but I think the false is prettier, don't you?

Mr. Jones [*as she turns to go*]. Are you going to take up a life of sin?

Bessie [*smiling*]. I shouldn't be surprised. I'm only really meself with a lot of gentlemen round me, y'know, and a nice glass o' port will never come amiss, neither. [*To* Mrs. Watty] That cold water didn't really do the trick, mum, did it? . . . [*To* Miss Moffat, *serious for a moment*] Good-bye . . . I only did it to spite you, y'know.

Mr. Jones. You are not fit to touch the hem of her garment.

Bessie. Oh, yes, I am! Just because she's read a lot o' books. Books, books! Look at 'em all! I got more out of life at my age than she has out o' them all her days—and I'll get a lot more yet! What d'you bet me? [*She goes out by the front door, leaves door open.* Miss Watty *closes the door after her.*]

Mrs. Watty. That's settled . . . [*Comes down.*]

[*The voices of children, in the barn, singing "Dacw'n-ghariad."*]

Mr. Jones [*making for the study door*]. For which we must be truly thankful . . .

[Morgan *walks in quickly from the kitchen. He goes straight to* Miss Moffat; *his face is white and shocked. They stare at him, instinctively silent.*]

Morgan. Has she gone?

MISS MOFFAT. Why?

MORGAN. The Squire just came in to see me.

MISS MOFFAT. The fool! The idiotic fool . . .

MORGAN. Then it's true . . . ! He thought I knew. [*Laughs*] Then he said it was for the best—that I ought to be told. . . . [*The singing stops in the barn*] It is funny. She and I, we do not know each other at all. It was a long time ago, and I never thought again about it—and neither did she. I know she didn't . . . And here we are . . . It is funny, too, because if you and I had not made that bad quarrel, it would never have happened . . . It ought to make me feel older—but I feel more—young than I have ever done before . . . Oh, God, why should this happen. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Steady . . .

MR. JONES. There is no need for you to upset yourself, my boy. Miss Moffat is going to take care of—of—

MORGAN. What?

MISS MOFFAT. I am going to adopt it.

MORGAN [*his old truculent self emerging*]. What in hell do you take me for?

MR. JONES. Morgan, swearing! Be haru ti . . .

MORGAN [*in a rage*]. I will swear some more too, if people talk to me like that! [*To* MISS MOFFAT] What do you take me for?

MR. JONES. Then what would you like to do, my boy . . . ?

MORGAN. What would I like to do? [*Getting more and more Welsh*] It is not a question of what I would like to do, or what I might be allowed, but what I am *going* to do—what any fellow with any guts in him must do! I am going to marry her!

MISS MOFFAT [*with a cry*]. I knew this would happen, I knew . . .

MORGAN. What else is there, when I have made a fool of myself and of her, and of the poor—the poor—I am not going to talk about any of it to anybody. All I will say is that Bessie Watty and I are going to get married as soon as we can, and that is final! [*He flings himself into the armchair.*]

MISS MOFFAT [*hopelessly*]. I see. [*A knock at the front door.* SARAH *hurries in agog with excitement. She runs to* MRS. WATTY.]

SARAH. Bessie's telegram from her friend, they send it from Penlan . . . I never seed one before!

MRS. WATTY. Poor chap, 'e'll be disappointed again. . . . [*Opens the telegram, and hands it to* MISS MOFFAT] What does it say, ma'am? . . . Read it, ma'am, take your mind off things . . .

[MISS MOFFAT *glances halfheartedly at the telegram. A pause. She looks up at* MORGAN.]

MISS MOFFAT. You have won the scholarship. [*Reading*] "First, Evans, Second, Fayver-Iles, Third, Starling. Congratulations." [SARAH *claps her hands and runs out by the front door, closes it.* MORGAN *laughs bitterly and turns away. Folding the telegram carefully, she tucks it into her belt, still quiet, burning with a slow-mounting and deliberate fervour*] Lock the school door, Watty, will you?

MRS. WATTY [*to* MR. JONES, *tremulously*]. Go in there, sir, I'll make you a cup of tea. . . . [MR. JONES *goes into the kitchen.* MRS. WATTY *locks the study door and follows him.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Look at me, Morgan. [MORGAN *faces her in the armchair, defiantly*] For the first time, we are together. Our hearts are face to face, naked and unashamed, because there's no time to lose, my boy; the clock is ticking and there's no time to lose. If ever anybody has been at the crossroads, you are now. . . .

MORGAN. It is no good. I am going to marry her.

MISS MOFFAT. And I am going to speak to you very simply. I want you to change suddenly from a boy to a man. I understand that this is a great shock to you, but I want you to throw off this passionate obstinacy to do the right thing. . . . Did you promise her marriage?

MORGAN. No, never . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Did you ever tell her that you were in love with her?

MORGAN [*repelled*]. No, never . . .

MISS MOFFAT. Then your situation now is the purest accident; it is to be regretted, but it has happened before and it will happen again. So cheer up, you are not the central figure of such a tragedy as you think . . .

MORGAN. That does not alter the fact that I have a duty to—to them both. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. She has her own plans, and she doesn't want the child; and I am willing to look after it if you behave as I want you to behave. If you marry her, you know what will happen, don't you? You will go back to the mine. In a year she will have left you—both. You will be drinking again, and this time you will not stop. And you will enjoy being this besotted and uncouth village genius who once showed such promise; but it will not be worth it, you know.

MORGAN. There is a child, living and breathing on this earth, and living and breathing because of me. . . .

MISS MOFFAT. I don't care if there are fifty children on this earth because of you! . . . You mentioned the word "duty," did you? Yes, you have a duty, but it is not to this loose little lady, or to her offspring either.

MORGAN. You mean a duty to you?

MISS MOFFAT. No. A year ago I should have said a duty to me, yes; but that night you showed your teeth—you gave me a lot to think about, you know. You caught me unawares, and I gave you the worst possible answer back. I turned sorry for myself and taunted you with ingratitude. I was a dolt not to realise that a debt of gratitude is the most humiliating debt of all, and that a little show of affection would have wiped it out. I offer that affection to you, today.

MORGAN. Why are you saying this to me now?

MISS MOFFAT. Because, as the moments are passing, and I am going to get my way, I know that I am never going to see you again.

[*A pause.*]

MORGAN. Never again? But why?

MISS MOFFAT. If you are not to marry her, it would be madness for you to come into contact with the child; so if I am adopting the child, you can never come to see me; it is common sense. You have been given the push over the wall that you asked for.

MORGAN. But you—will be staying here . . . How can I never come back—after everything you have done for me?

MISS MOFFAT. D'you remember, the last six months, I've gone for a long walk over Moel Hiraeth, every morning at eight, like clock-work, for my health?

MORGAN. Yes?

MISS MOFFAT. There's one bit of the road, round a boulder—and there's an oak tree, and under it the valley suddenly drops sheer. Every morning regularly, as I was turning that corner, by some trick of the mind, I found myself thinking of you working for this scholarship, and winning it. And I experienced something which must after all be comparatively rare: A feeling—of complete happiness. I shall experience it again. No, Morgan Evans, you have no duty to me. Your only duty —is to the world.

MORGAN. To the world?

MISS MOFFAT. Now you are going, there is no harm in telling you something. I don't think you realise quite what your future can become if you give it the chance. I have always been very definite about the things I wanted, and I have always had everything worked out to a T. P'r'aps that's the trouble with me, I dunno . . . I've got *you* worked out, and it's up to you whether it will come right or not. . . .

MORGAN [*eagerly*]. Go on.

MISS MOFFAT. I rather made out to the Squire that I wanted you to be a writer—the truth might have sounded ridiculous; but stranger things have happened. You have a great deal now and Oxford will give you the rest.

MORGAN. For what?

MISS MOFFAT. Enough to become a great man of our country. "If a light come in the mine" you said, remember?

MORGAN. Yes.

MISS MOFFAT. Make that light come in the mine and some day free these children. And you could be more, much, much more; you could be a man for a future nation to be proud of . . . Perhaps I'm mad, I dunno. We'll see. It's up to you.

MORGAN [*rises before speaking*]. Yes.

[MR. JONES *appears timidly from the kitchen.*]

MR. JONES. Is it all right to ring the bell to say holiday tomorrow?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes. [MR. JONES's *face lights up; he hurries to the study door, unlocks it, and disappears*] I think that's all.

MORGAN. But—I—I do not know what to say.

MISS MOFFAT. Then don't say it.

MORGAN. I have been—so much time in this room.

MISS MOFFAT. And the lessons are over.

MORGAN [*impulsively*]. I shall—always remember.

MISS MOFFAT. Will you? Well, I'm glad you think you will. [*She presses the bag and cap into his unwilling hands.* IDWAL *runs in from the study, very excited,* ROBBART *appears behind him.*]

IDWAL. Please, Miss Moffat, the band is out, and they say Morgan got to come down to Penlan Town Hall for Wales to see a real toff![22]

MORGAN. Na, ddim diolch . . .

ROBBART. Tyd, man, tyd, they never forgive you! [*An afterthought*] And, please, Miss Moffat, Mr. Jones say is he to say school day after tomorrow, nine o'clock same as usual?

MISS MOFFAT. Nine o'clock. The same as usual. . . .

ROBBART. Yes, Miss Moffat. [*He runs back into the study, followed by* IDWAL.]

MISS MOFFAT [*she offers her hand,* MORGAN

[22] a swell.

takes it]. Good-bye. And I had my heart set on coming up to London and having tea on the Terrace.

[*Voices mixed with singing off stage.*]

IDWAL [*putting his head round the barn door, and disappearing again*]. Brysia, Morgan Evans, brysia!

[MORGAN *tries to say something, fails, and hurries into the study. The kitchen door opens, and* MRS. WATTY *appears cautiously.*]

MRS. WATTY [*whispering*]. Has he gone?

MISS MOFFAT. Yes. It's all over.

MRS. WATTY. Bessie's sent a gentleman over to see you from the public-house . . . [*Hands her birth certificate.*]

MISS MOFFAT. Tell him I can't see anybody . . . [*Taking certificate*] What's this?

MRS. WATTY. His birth certificate, ma'am.

MISS MOFFAT. I had forgotten—all about that. [MRS. WATTY *starts to kitchen.*]

MRS. WATTY. Come on, ma'am, you got to start sometime!

MISS MOFFAT. Just coming.

[MRS. WATTY *goes into the kitchen. The sound of the village people singing and cheering down the road. A pause.*]

MISS MOFFAT [*looks down at the birth certificate. The singing and cheering die down and stop. A pause*]. Moffat, my girl, you mustn't be clumsy this time. You mustn't be clumsy . . . [*The school bell begins to ring, clear and confident. She looks up, as she did once before, listening, smiling faintly. A vociferous burst of cheering and singing in the village. She turns and walks towards the kitchen.*]

CURTAIN

(1938)

The Backgrounds of English Literature

The selections in this appendix are arranged to correspond with the chronological order of the works in English literature to which they are most closely related. Cross-references to those works are included in the headnotes.

From THE BOOK OF A THOUSAND NIGHTS AND A NIGHT

In the metrical romances and in Chaucer's *Squier's Tale* may be heard echoes of stories which medieval merchants and travelers brought into Europe from the East. With the fall of Constantinople (1453) an Eastern people, the Turks, was brought nearer to European consciousness, with the result that some Renaissance tales and plays exhibit a certain superficial interest in the Orient (e.g. *Tamburlaine*). Renewed activity of travelers and historians in the seventeenth century increased this interest: in France, pseudo-Oriental tales became popular, and their general characteristics were reproduced in England in the heroic tragedies of the Restoration. But the beginnings of Orientalism in England have been traced to a translation of Marana's satire, *The Turkish Spy*, in 1687. And Oriental influences may be said to appear in our literature after the first English version of *The Arabian Nights*.

The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night (or, as it is popularly called, *The Arabian Nights*) is a compilation, originally Persian, which contains stories that date from the eighth century A.D. to the sixteenth. The French scholar, Antoine Galland, was the first European to unearth this mine by his translation, issued in 1704, which was immediately retranslated into English. An accomplished linguist, Galland was appointed secretary to the French ambassador to Constantinople, where he mastered new dialects; later he made a second and a third journey to the East. In the closing years of the seventeenth century he translated the *Koran* and won much acclaim. His first part of *The Arabian Nights*, published as *Mille et Une Nuits* (1704), abridged though it was, captured enough of the marvel and luxuriance of the original to cause enormous excitement. Galland performed an inestimable service to European letters by his work, despite its fragmentary character. His pleasant style, good taste, and sympathy with his material are responsible for rendering Shahrazad, Dunyazad, Haroun Alraschid, the Calendars, Sindbad, and countless other characters of the *Nights*, familiar persons to generations of delighted children and adults.

The date of the first English translation of Galland is not known. But by 1713 the fourth edition was being printed, and by 1778 there was a fourteenth. (In *Spectator* 535 of Nov. 13, 1712, Addison introduces a story which he says he hopes "may serve as a moral to an Arabian tale which I find translated into French by Monsieur Galland.") Thereafter the influence of *The Arabian Nights* never waned. Miss Conant has said of it: "With the exception of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Orient has given us no book that has become so intimate a part of our imaginative inheritance."

The great Orientalist, Sir Richard F. Burton, who spent a quarter of a century collating all the various texts of the original *Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night*, by his ten-volume edition (1885-88) superseded all the endeavors of his predecessors. His copious notes and supplementary essays alone form an important body of material for the anthropologist and the Orientalist. The translation itself is a great achievement, expurgating nothing, and reproducing with bewildering variety all the tones and stylistic traits of the original. It is not likely that a new translation of the *Nights* will be attempted for a long time.

Burton thus sums up what the reader learns from a reading of the complete *Nights*: "He has seen the medieval Arab at his best and, perhaps, at his worst. In glancing over the myriad pictures of this panorama, those who can discern the soul of goodness in things evil will note the true nobility of the Moslem's mind in the *Moyen Age*, and the cleanliness of his life from cradle to grave. As a child he is devoted to his parents, fond of his comrades and respectful to his 'pastors and masters,' even school masters. As a lad he prepares for manhood with a will and this training occupies him throughout youthtide: he is a gentleman in manners without awkwardness, vulgar astonishment or *mauvaise-honte*. As a man he is high-spirited and energetic, . . . courteous and affable, rarely failing in temperance of mind and self-respect, self-control and self-command; hospitable to the stranger, attached to his fellow-citizens, submissive to superiors and kindly to inferiors. . . . As a friend he proves a model to the Damons and Pythiases: as a lover an exemplar to Don Quijote without the noble old Caballero's touch of eccentricity. As a knight he is the mirror of chivalry, doing battle for the weak and debelling the strong, while ever 'defending the honor of women.' As a husband his patriarchal position causes him to be loved. . . . Lastly, his death is simple, pathetic, and edifying as the life which led to it."

Had Burton made this analysis for a neoclassical rather than a Victorian reader, we should not have been surprised. It must have been these very qualities which appealed powerfully to the didactic eighteenth century. Certainly, the Oriental influence, when it appears in the eighteenth century, is almost inevitably linked to some moral purpose of the author. In France, the Oriental disguise became a favored one of the great pre-Revolutionary writers; by pretending to be dealing with Eastern customs, they were able to castigate the European without coming under the ban of the Church or the censor. Among the important satiric works of this kind are: Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, Crébillon's *The Skimmer* and *The Sofa*, and Voltaire's *Zadig*.

In England, the Oriental has a full history in the eighteenth century. In *The Spectator* numbers 50, 94, 159, 195, 289, 293, 343, 349, 511, 512, 535, 557, 584,

and *585*; in Johnson's *Rambler* numbers *38, 65, 120, 190, 204,* in three papers of his *Idler*, and in his *Rasselas*; in the very conception of Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*; in Walpole's *Letter from Xo-Ho, a Chinese Philosopher*; in Beckford's *Vathek*; and in the novels of Sterne and Smollett—the Oriental will be found employed for didactic ends.

There are, of course, other sides to the Arab in the *Nights*, ignored by the neoclassicists. Burton says of him: "Our Arab at his worst is a mere barbarian who has not forgotten the savage. He is a model mixture of childishness and astuteness, of simplicity and cunning. . . . His stolid instinctive conservatism grovels before the tyrant rule of routine, despite that turbulent and licentious independence which ever suggests revolt against the ruler. . . . His crass and self-satisfied ignorance makes him glorify the most ignoble superstitions, while acts of revolting savagery are the natural results of a malignant fanaticism and a furious hatred of every creed beyond the pale of Al-Islam." This darker aspect of the *Nights*, and even more, their riot of color and luxury, their fullness of language, their romance and dealings with the marvelous and the exotic, were to make an appeal to later poets, in the nineteenth century. Wordsworth tells us in *The Prelude* (V, 460) of how he had fed his imagination upon them. In Coleridge, Southey, Moore, and particularly in Byron, we find the East admired not for didactic ends, but for the wonder and glamor it held. Thus the Oriental influence, whose introduction in the neoclassical period may be considered as the planting of a germ for a new romanticism, came to be intimately associated in the nineteenth century with the ideals of the Romantic Revolt.

It should be unnecessary to do more than remind the reader of the general plan of *The Arabian Nights*: King Shahriyar, disillusioned in women, had been exterminating them at the rate of one beauty a night, when the brilliant daughter of his Wazir, the lovely Shahrazad, undertook to save her sex by entertaining the King with a series of stories which she told, without interruption, during a thousand and one nights. Her tales are often stories within stories, and stopping, as she did, always with the dawn, she kept the King's curiosity so much on edge that he refrained from killing her each night so that he could hear the sequel. At the end, he was so won over by her wit and the three children she had, in the meantime, borne him, that he abandoned his hatred of women and made her his most honored wife.

THE MOCK CALIPH

(*Translated by Richard F. Burton*)

It is related that the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, was one night restless with extreme restlessness, so he summoned his Wazir Ja'afar the Barmecide, and said to him, "My breast is straitened and I have a desire to divert myself to-night by walking about the streets of Bagdad and looking into folks' affairs; but with this precaution that we disguise ourselves in merchants' gear, so none shall know us." He answered, "Hearkening and obedience." They rose at once and doffing the rich raiment they wore, donned merchants' habits and sallied forth three in number, the Caliph, Ja'afar and Masrur the sworder. Then they walked from place to place, till they came to the Tigris and saw an old man sitting in a boat; so they went up to him and saluting him, said, "O Shaykh, we desire thee of thy kindness and favor to carry us a-pleasuring down the river, in this thy boat, and take this dinar to thy hire."—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say.

NOW WHEN IT WAS THE TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIXTH NIGHT,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that when they said to the old man, "We desire thee to carry us a-pleasuring in this thy boat and take this dinar;" he answered, "Who may go a-pleasuring on the Tigris? The Caliph Harun al-Rashid every night cometh down Tigris-stream in his state-barge and with him one crying aloud:—Ho, ye people all, great and small, gentle and simple, men and boys, whoso is found in a boat on the Tigris by night, I will strike off his head or hang him to the mast of his craft! And ye had well nigh met him; for here cometh his carrack." But the Caliph and Ja'afar said, "O Shaykh, take these two dinars, and run us under one of yonder arches, that we may hide there till the Caliph's barge have passed." The old man replied, "Hand over your gold and rely we on Allah, the Almighty!" So he took the two dinars and embarked them in the boat; and he put off and rowed about with them awhile, when behold, the barge came down the river in mid-stream with lighted flambeaux and cressets flaming therin. Quoth the old man, "Did not I tell you that the Caliph passed along the river every night?"; and ceased not muttering, "O Protector, remove not the veils of Thy protection!" Then he ran the boat under an arch and threw a piece of black cloth over the Caliph and his companions, who looked out from under the covering and saw, in the bows of the barge, a man holding in hand a cresset of red gold which he fed with Sumatran lign-aloes and the figure was clad in a robe of red satin, with a narrow turband of Mosul shape round on his head; and over one of his shoulders hung a

sleeved cloak of cramoisy satin, and on the other was a green silk bag full of the aloes-wood, with which he fed the cresset by way of firewood. And they sighted in the stern another man, clad like the first and bearing a like cresset, and in the barge were two hundred white slaves, standing ranged to the right and left; and in the middle a throne of red gold, whereon sat a handsome young man, like the moon, clad in a dress of black, embroidered with yellow gold. Before him they beheld a man, as he were the Wazir Ja'afar, and at his head stood an eunuch, as he were Masrur, with a drawn sword in his hand; besides a score of cup-companions. Now when the Caliph saw this, he turned and said, "O Ja'afar," and the Minister replied, "At thy service, O Prince of True Believers." Then quoth the Caliph, "Belike this is one of my sons, Al-Amin or Al-Maamun." Then he examined the young man who sat on the throne and finding him perfect in beauty and loveliness and stature and symmetric grace, said to Ja'afar, "Verily, this young man abateth nor jot nor tittle of the state of the Caliphate! See, there standeth before him one as he were thyself, O Ja'afar; yonder eunuch who standeth at his head is as he were Masrur and those courtiers as they were my own. By Allah, O Ja'afar, my reason is confounded and I am filled with amazement at this matter!"—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

Now When It Was the Two Hundred and Eighty-Seventh Night,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that when the Caliph saw this spectacle his reason was confounded and he cried, "By Allah, I am filled with amazement at this matter!" and Ja'afar replied, "And I also, by Allah, O Commander of the Faithful." Then the barge passed on and disappeared from sight; whereupon the boatman pushed out again into the stream, saying, "Praised be Allah for safety, since none hath fallen in with us!" Quoth the Caliph, "O, old man, doth the Caliph come down the Tigris-river every night?" The boatman answered, "Yes, O my lord; and on such wise hath he done every night this year past." "O Shaykh," rejoined Al-Rashid, "we wish thee of thy favor to await us here to-morrow night and we will give thee five golden dinars, for we are stranger folk, lodging in the quarter Al-Khandak, and we have a mind to divert ourselves." Said the oldster, "With joy and good will!" Then the Caliph and Ja'afar and Masrur left the boatman and returned to the palace, where they doffed their merchants' habits and, donning their apparel of state, sat down each in his several stead; and came the Emirs and Wazirs and Chamberlains and Officers; and the Divan assembled and was crowded as of custom. But when day ended and all the folk had dispersed and wended each his own way, the Caliph said to his Wazir, "Rise, O Ja'afar, let us go and amuse ourselves by looking on the second Caliph." At this, Ja'afar and Masrur laughed, and the three, donning merchants' habits, went forth by a secret postern and made their way through the city, in great glee, till they came to the Tigris, where they found the greybeard sitting and awaiting them. They embarked with him in the boat and hardly had they sat down before up came the mock Caliph's barge; and, when they looked at it attentively, they saw therein two hundred Mamelukes other than those of the previous night, while the link-bearers cried aloud as of wont. Quoth the Caliph, "O Wazir, had I heard tell of this, I had not believed it; but I have seen it with my own sight." Then said he to the boatman, "Take, O Shaykh, these ten dinars and row us along abreast of them, for they are in the light and we in the shade, and we can see them and amuse ourselves by looking on them, but they cannot see us." So the man took the money and pushing off ran abreast of them in the shadow of the barge—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say.

Now When It Was the Two Hundred and Eighty-Eighth Night,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that the Caliph Harun al-Rashid said to the old man, "Take these ten dinars and row us abreast of them;" to which he replied, "I hear and I obey." And he fared with them and ceased not going in the blackness of the barge, till they came amongst the gardens that lay alongside of them and sighted a large walled enclosure; and presently, the barge cast anchor before a postern door, where they saw servants standing with a she-mule saddled and bridled. Here the mock Caliph landed and, mounting the mule, rode away with his courtiers and his cup-companions preceded by the cresset-bearers crying aloud, and followed by his household which busied itself in his service. Then Harun al-Rashid, Ja'afar and Masrur landed also and, making their way through the press of servants, walked on before them. Presently, the cresset-bearers espied them and seeing three persons in merchants' habits, and strangers to the country, took offence at them; so they pointed them out

and brought them before the other Caliph, who looked at them and asked, "How came ye to this place and who brought you at this tide?" They answered, "O our lord, we are foreign merchants and far from our homes, who arrived here this day and were out a-walking to-night, and behold, ye came up and these men laid hands on us and brought us to thy presence; and this is all our story." Quoth the mock Caliph, "Since ye be stranger folk no harm shall befal you; but had ye been of Bagdad, I had struck off your heads." Then he turned to his Wazir and said to him, "Take these men with thee; for they are our guests to-night." "To hear is to obey, O our lord," answered he; and they companied him till they came to a lofty and splendid palace set upon the firmest base; no Sultan possesseth such a place; rising from the dusty mold and upon the marges of the clouds laying hold. Its door was of Indian teak-wood inlaid with gold that glowed; and through it one passed into a royal-hall in whose midst was a jetting fount girt by a raised estrade. It was provided with carpets and cushions of brocade and small pillows and long settees and hanging curtains; it was furnished with a splendor that dazed the mind and dumbed the tongue, and upon the door were written these two couplets:—

A Palace whereon be blessings and praise! Which with all their beauty have robed the Days:
Where marvels and miracle-sights abound, And to write its honors the pen affrays.

The false Caliph entered with his company, and sat down on a throne of gold set with jewels and covered with a prayer-carpet of yellow silk; whilst the boon-companions took their seats and the sword-bearer of high works stood before him. Then the tables were laid and they ate; after which the dishes were removed and they washed their hands and the wine-service was set on with flagons and bowls in due order. The cup went round till it came to the Caliph, Harun al-Rashid, who refused the draught and the mock Caliph said to Ja'afar, "What mattereth thy friend that he drinketh not?" He replied, "O my lord, indeed 'tis a long while he hath drunk naught of this." Quoth the sham Caliph, "I have drink other than this, a kind of apple-wine, that will suit thy companion." So he bade them bring the cider which they did forthright when the false Caliph, coming up to Harun al-Rashid, said to him, "As often as it cometh to thy turn drink thou of this." Then they continued to drink and make merry and pass the cup till the wine rose to their brains and mastered their wits;—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

NOW WHEN IT WAS THE TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-NINTH NIGHT,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that the false Caliph and his co-sitters sat at their cups and gave not over drinking till the wine rose to their brains and mastered their wits; and Harun al-Rashid said to the Minister, "O Ja'afar, by Allah, we have no such vessels as these. Would to Heaven I knew what manner of man this youth is!" But while they were talking privily the young man cast a glance upon them and seeing the Wazir whisper the Caliph said, "'Tis rude to whisper." He replied, "No rudeness was meant: this my friend did but say to me:—Verily I have travelled in most countries and have caroused with the greatest of Kings and I have companied with noble captains; yet never saw I a goodlier ordering than this entertainment nor passed a more delightful night; save that the people of Bagdad are wont to say, Wine without music often leaves you sick." When the second Caliph heard this, he smiled pleasantly and struck with a rod he had in his hand a round gong; and behold, a door opened and out came a eunuch, bearing a chair of ivory, inlaid with gold glittering fiery red and followed by a damsel of passing beauty and loveliness, symmetry and grace. He set down the chair and the damsel seated herself on it, as she were the sun shining sheen in a sky serene. In her hand she had a lute of Hindu make, which she laid in her lap and bent down over it as a mother bendeth over her little one, and sang to it, after a prelude in four-and-twenty modes, amazing all wits. Then she returned to the first mode and to a lively measure chanted these couplets:—

Love's tongue within my heart speaks plain to thee, Telling thee clearly I am fain of thee;
Witness the fevers of a tortured heart, And ulcered eyelid tear-flood rains for thee;
God's fate o'ertaketh all created things! I knew not love till learnt Love's pain of thee.

Now when the mock Caliph heard these lines sung by the damsel, he cried with a great cry and rent his raiment to the very skirt, whereupon they let down a curtain over him and brought him a fresh robe, handsomer than the first. He put it on and sat as before, till the cup came round to him,

when he struck the gong a second time and lo! a door opened and out of it came a eunuch with a chair of gold, followed by a damsel fairer than the first, bearing a lute, such as would strike the envious mute. She sat down on the chair and sang to her instrument these two couplets:—

How patient bide, with love in sprite of me, And tears in tempest blinding sight of me?
By Allah, life has no delight of me! How gladden heart whose core is blight of me?

No sooner had the youth heard this poetry than he cried out with a loud cry and rent his raiment to the skirt: whereupon they let down the curtain over him and brought him another suit of clothes. He put it on and, sitting up as before, fell again to cheerful talk, till the cup came round to him, when he smote once more upon the gong and out came a eunuch with a chair, followed by a damsel fairer than she who forewent her. So she sat down on the chair, with a lute in her hand, and sang thereto these couplets:—

Cease ye this farness; 'bate this pride of you, To whom my heart clings, by life-tide of you!
Have ruth on hapless, mourning, lover-wretch, Desire-full, pining, passion-tried of you:
Sickness hath wasted him, whose ecstasy Prays Heaven it may be satisfied of you:
Oh fullest moons[1] that dwell in deepest heart! How can I think of aught by side of you?

Now when the young man heard these couplets, he cried out with a great cry and rent his raiment, whereupon they let fall the curtain over him and brought him other robes. Then he returned to his former case with his boon-companions and the bowl went round as before, till the cup came to him, when he struck the gong a fourth time and the door opening, out came a page-boy bearing a chair followed by a damsel. He set the chair for her and she sat down thereon and taking the lute, tuned it and sang to it these couplets:—

When shall disunion and estrangement end? When shall my bygone joys again be kenned?
Yesterday we were joined in same abode; Conversing heedless of each envious friend:
Trickt us that traitor Time, disjoined our lot: And our waste home to desert fate condemned:
Wouldst have me, Grumbler! from my dearling fly? I find my vitals blame will not perpend:
Cease thou to censure; leave me to repine; My mind e'er findeth thoughts that pleasure lend.
O Lords of me who brake our troth and plight, Deem not to lose your hold of heart and sprite!

When the false Caliph heard the girl's song, he cried out with a loud outcry and rent his raiment— And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say.

Now When It Was the Two Hundred and Ninetieth Night,

She said, When the false Caliph heard the girl's song, he cried with a loud outcry and rent his raiment and fell to the ground fainting; whereupon they would have let down the curtain over him, as of custom; but its cords stuck fast and Harun al-Rashid, after considering him carefully, saw on his body the marks of beating with palm-rods and said to Ja'afar, "By Allah, he is a handsome youth, but a foul thief!" "Whence knowest thou that, O Commander of the Faithful?" asked Ja'afar, and the Caliph answered, "Sawest thou not the whip-scars on his ribs?" Then they let fall the curtain over him and brought him a fresh dress, which he put on and sat up as before with his courtiers and cup-companions. Presently he saw the Caliph and Ja'afar whispering together and said to them, "What is the matter, fair sirs?" Quoth Ja'afar, "O my lord, all is well, save that this my comrade, who (as is not unknown to thee) is of the merchant-company and hath visited all the great cities and countries of the world and hath consorted with kings and men of highest consideration, saith to me:—Verily, that which our lord the Caliph hath done this night is beyond measure extravagant, never saw I any do the like doings in any country; for he hath rent such and such dresses, each worth a thousand dinars and this is surely excessive unthriftiness." Replied the second Caliph, "Ho thou, the money is my money and the stuff my stuff, and this is by way of largesse to my suite and servants; for each suit that is rent belongeth to one of my cup-companions here present, and I assign to them with each suit of clothes the sum of five hundred dinars." The Wazir Ja'afar replied, "Well is whatso thou doest, O our lord," and recited these two couplets:—

Virtue in hand of thee hath built a house, And to mankind thou dost thy wealth expose:

[1] Eastern languages often use the plural to act as a superlative for the singular, as here.

If an the virtues ever close their doors, That hand would be a key the lock to unclose.

Now when the young man heard these verses recited by the Minister Ja'afar, he ordered him to be gifted with a thousand dinars and a dress of honor. Then the cup went round among them and the wine was sweet to them; but, after a while quoth the Caliph to Ja'afar, "Ask him of the marks on his sides, that we may see what he will say by way of reply." Answered Ja'afar, "Softly, O my lord, be not hasty and soothe thy mind, for patience is more becoming." Rejoined the Caliph, "By the life of my head and by the revered tomb of Al-Abbas, except thou ask him, I will assuredly stop thy breath!" With this the young man turned towards the Minister and said to him, "What aileth thee and thy friend to be whispering together? Tell me what is the matter with you." "It is nothing save good," replied Ja'afar; but the mock Caliph rejoined, "I conjure thee, by Allah, tell me what aileth you and hide from me nothing of your case." Answered the Wazir, "O my lord, verily this one here saw on thy sides the marks of beating with whips and palm-fronds and marvelled thereat with exceeding marvel, saying:—How came the Caliph to be beaten?; and he would fain know the cause of this." Now when the youth heard this, he smiled and said, "Know ye that my story is wondrous and my case marvellous; were it graven with needles on the eye-corners, it would serve as a warner to whoso would be warned." And he sighed and repeated these couplets:—

Strange is my story, passing prodigy; By love I swear, my ways wax strait on me!
An ye desire to hear me, listen, and Let all in this assembly silent be.
Heed ye my words which are of meaning deep, Nor lies my speech; 'tis truest verity.
I'm slain by longing and by ardent love; My slayer's the pearl of fair virginity.
She hath a jet black eye like Hindi blade, And bowed eyebrows shoot her archery;
My heart assures me our Iman is here, This age's Caliph, old nobility:
Your second, Ja'afar hight, is his Wazir; A Sahib, Sahib-son of high degree:
The third is called Masrur who wields the sword: Now, if in words of mine some truth you see,
I have won every wish by this event Which fills my heart with joy and gladdest gree.

When they heard these words Ja'afar swore to him an ambiguous oath that they were not those he named, whereupon he laughed and said:—Know, O my lords, that I am not the Commander of the Faithful and that I do but style myself thus, to win my will of the sons of the city. My true name is Mohammed Ali, son of Ali the Jeweller, and my father was one of the notables of Bagdad, who left me great store of gold and silver and pearls and coral and rubies and chrysolites and other jewels, besides messuages[2] and lands, Hammam-baths and brickeries, orchards and flower-gardens. Now as I sat in my shop one day surrounded by my eunuchs and dependents, behold, there came up a young lady, mounted on a she-mule and attended by three damsels like moons. Riding up to my shop she alighted and seated herself by my side and said, "Art thou Mohammed the Jeweller?" Replied I, "Even so! I am he, thy Mameluke, thy chattel." She asked, "Hast thou a necklace of jewels fit for me?" and I answered, "O my lady, I will show thee what I have; and lay all before thee and, if any please thee, it will be of thy slave's good luck; if they please thee not, of his ill fortune." Now I had by me an hundred necklaces and showed them all to her; but none of them pleased her and she said, "I want a better than those I have seen." I had a small necklace which my father had bought at an hundred thousand dinars and whose like was not to be found with any of the great kings; so I said to her, "O my lady, I have yet one necklace of fine stones fit for bezels, the like of which none possesseth, great or small." Said she, "Show it to me," so I showed it to her, and she said, "This is what I wanted and what I have wished for all my life;" adding, "What is its price?" Quoth I, "It cost my father an hundred thousand dinars;" and she said, "I will give thee five thousand dinars to thy profit." I answered, "O my lady, the necklace and its owner are at thy service and I cannot gainsay thee." But she rejoined, "Needs must thou have the profit, and I am still most grateful to thee." Then she rose without stay or delay; and, mounting the mule in haste, said to me, "O my lord, in Allah's name, favor us with thy company to receive the money; for this thy day with us is white as milk." So I shut the shop and accompanied her, in all security, till we came to a house, on which were manifest the signs of wealth and rank; for its door was wrought with gold and silver and ultramarine, and thereon were written these two couplets:—

Hola, thou mansion! woe ne'er enter thee; Nor be thine owner e'er misused of Fate;

[2] farms.

Excellent mansion to all guests art thou, When other mansions to the guest are strait.

The young lady dismounted and entered the house, bidding me sit down on the bench at the gate, till the money-changer should arrive. So I sat awhile, when behold, a damsel came out to me and said, "O my lord, enter the vestibule; for it is a dishonor that thou shouldst sit at the gate." Thereupon I arose and entered the vestibule and sat down on the settle there; and, as I sat, lo! another damsel came out and said to me, "O my lord, my mistress biddeth thee enter and sit down at the door of the saloon, to receive thy money." I entered and sat down, nor had I sat a moment when behold, a curtain of silk which concealed a throne of gold was drawn aside, and I saw seated thereon the lady who had made the purchase; and round her neck she wore the necklace which looked pale and wan by the side of a face as it were the rounded moon. At her sight, my wit was troubled and my mind confounded, by reason of her exceeding beauty and loveliness; but when she saw me she rose from her throne and coming close up to me, said, "O light of mine eyes, is every handsome one like thee pitiless to his mistress?" I answered, "O my lady, beauty, all of it, is in thee and is but one of thy hidden charms." And she rejoined, "O Jeweller, know that I love thee and can hardly credit that I have brought thee hither." Then she bent towards me and I kissed her and she kissed me and, as she caressed me, drew me towards her and to her breast she pressed me.—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

NOW WHEN IT WAS THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIRST NIGHT,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that the Jeweller continued:—Then she bent towards me and kissed and caressed me; and, as she caressed me, drew me towards her and to her breast she pressed me. Now she knew by my condition that I had a mind to enjoy her; so she said to me, "O my lord, wouldst thou foregather with me unlawfully? By Allah, may he not live who would do the like of this sin and who takes pleasure in talk unclean! I am a maid, a virgin whom no man hath approached, nor am I unknown in the city. Knowest thou who I am?" Quoth I, "No, by Allah, O my lady!"; and quoth she, "I am the Lady Dunya, daughter of Yahya bin Khalid the Barmecide and sister of Ja'afar, Wazir to the Caliph." Now as I heard this, I drew back from her, saying, "O my lady, it is no fault of mine if I have been over-bold with thee; it was thou didst encourage me to aspire to thy love, by giving me access to thee." She answered, "No harm shall befall thee, and needs must thou attain thy desire in the only way pleasing to Allah. I am my own mistress and the Kazi shall act as my guardian in consenting to the marriage contract; for it is my will that I be to thee wife and thou be to me man. Then she sent for the Kazi and the witnesses and busied herself with making ready; and, when they came, she said to them, "Mohammed Ali, bin Ali the Jeweller, seeketh me in wedlock and hath given me the necklace to my marriage-settlement; and I accept and consent." So they wrote out the contract of marriage between us; and ere I went in to her the servants brought the wine-furniture and the cups passed round after the fairest fashion and the goodliest ordering; and, when the wine mounted to our heads, she ordered a damsel, a lute player, to sing. So she took the lute and sang to a pleasing and stirring motive these couplets:—

He comes; and fawn and branch and moon delight these eyne Fie on his heart who sleeps o' nights without repine;
Fair youth, for whom Heaven willed to quench in cheek one light, And left another light on other cheek bright li'en:
I fain finesse my chiders when they mention him, As though the hearing of his name I would decline;
And willing ear I lend when they of other speak; Yet would my soul within outflow in floods of brine:
Beauty's own prophet, he is all a miracle Of heavenly grace, and greatest shows his face for sign:
To prayer Bilál-like cries that Mole[3] upon his cheek To ward from pearly brow all eyes of ill design:
The censors of their ignorance would my love dispel But after Faith I can't at once turn infidel.

We were ravished by the sweet music she made striking the strings, and the beauty of the verses she sang; and the other damsels went on to sing and to recite one after another, till ten had so done; when the Lady Dunya took the lute and playing a lively measure, chanted these couplets:—

[3] The mole, black as Bilál the Abyssinian, calls to prayers for his preservation.

I swear by swayings of that form so fair, Aye from thy parting fiery pangs I bear:
Pity a heart which burneth in thy love, O bright as fullest moon in blackest air!
Vouchsafe thy boons to him who ne'er will cease In light of winecup all thy charms declare,
Amid the roses which with varied hues Are to the myrtle-bush[4] a mere despair.

When she had finished her verse, I took the lute from her hands and, playing a quaint and no vulgar prelude sang the following verses:—

Laud to my Lord who gave thee all of loveliness; Myself amid thy thralls I willingly confess:
O thou, whose eyes and glances captivate mankind, Pray that I 'scape those arrows shot with all thy stress!
Two hostile rivals, water and enflaming fire Thy cheek hath married, which for marvel I profess:
Thou art Sa'ir in heart of me and eke Na'im[5]; Thou agro-dolce,[6] eke heart's sweetest bitterness.

When she heard this my song she rejoiced with exceeding joy; then, dismissing her slave-women, she brought me to a most goodly place, where they had spread us a bed of various colors. So I rejoiced in her and never in my born days spent I a more delicious night.—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say.

Now When It Was the Two Hundred and Ninety-Second Night,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that Mohammed bin Ali the Jeweller continued:—So I went in unto the Lady Dunya, daughter of Yahya bin Khalid the Barmecide, So I rejoiced in her and repeated these couplets:—

O Night here stay! I want no morning light; My lover's face to me is lamp and light:
As ring of ring-dove round his neck's my arm; And made my palm his mouth-veil; and, twas right.
This be the crown of bliss, and ne'er we'll cease To clip, nor care to be in other plight.

And I abode with her a whole month, forsaking shop and family and home, till one day she said to me, "O light of my eyes, O my lord Mohammed, I have determined to go to the Hammam to-day; so sit thou on this couch and rise not from thy place, till I return to thee." "I hear and I obey," answered I, and she made me swear to this; after which she took her women and went off to the bath. But by Allah, O my brothers, she had not reached the head of the street ere the door opened and in came an old woman, who said to me, "O my lord Mohammed, the Lady Zubaydah biddeth thee to her, for she hath heard of thy fine manners and accomplishments and skill in singing." I answered, "By Allah, I will not rise from my place, till the Lady Dunya come back." Rejoined the old woman, "O my lord, do not anger the Lady Zubaydah with thee and vex her so as to make her thy foe: nay, rise up and speak with her and return to thy place." So I rose at once and followed her into the presence of the Lady Zubaydah and, when I entered her presence she said to me, "O light of the eye, art thou the Lady Dunya's beloved?" "I am thy Mamluke, thy chattel," replied I. Quoth she, "Sooth spake he who reported thee possessed of beauty and grace and good breeding and every fine quality; indeed, thou surpassest all praise and all report. But now sing to me, that I may hear thee." Quoth I, "Hearkening and obedience;" so she brought me a lute, and I sang to it these couplets:—

The hapless lover's heart is of his wooing weary grown; And hand of sickness wasted him till naught but skin and bone:
Who should be amid the riders which the haltered camels urge, But that same lover whose beloved doth in the litters wone:
To Allah's charge I leave that moon-like Beauty in your tents Whom my heart loves, albe my glance on her may ne'er be thrown.
Now she is fain; then she is fierce: how sweet her coyness shows; Yea, sweet whatever doth or saith to lover loved one!

When I had finished my song she said to me, "Allah assain[7] thy body and thy voice! Verily, thou art perfect in beauty and good breeding and singing. But now rise and return to thy place, ere the Lady Dunya come back, lest she find thee not and be wroth with thee." Then I kissed the ground before her and the old woman forewent me till I reached

[4] The young beard (myrtle) can never hope to excel the beauties of his cheeks (roses).
[5] i.e. Hell and Heaven.
[6] bitter-sweet.
[7] bless, give good health to.

the door whence I came. So I entered and, going up to the couch, found that my wife had come back from the bath and was lying asleep there. Seeing this I sat down at her feet and rubbed them: whereupon she opened her eyes and seeing me, drew up both her feet and gave me a kick that threw me off the couch, saying, "O traitor, thou hast been false to thine oath and hast perjured thyself. Thou swarest to me that thou wouldst not rise from thy place; yet didst thou break thy promise and go to the Lady Zubaydah. By Allah, but that I fear public scandal, I would pull down her palace over her head!" Then said she to her black slave, "O Sawab, arise and strike off this lying traitor's head, for we have no further need of him." So the slave came up to me and, tearing a strip from his skirt, bandaged with it my eyes and would have struck off my head;—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

NOW WHEN IT WAS THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-THIRD NIGHT,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that Mohammed the Jeweller continued:—So the slave came up to me and, tearing a strip from his skirt, bandaged with it my eyes and would have struck off my head; but all her women, great and small, rose and came up to her and said to her, "O our lady, this is not the first who hath erred: indeed, he knew not thy humor and hath done thee no offence deserving death." Replied she, "By Allah, I must needs set my mark on him." And she bade them bash me; so they beat me on my ribs and the marks ye saw are the scars of that fustigation. Then she ordered them to cast me out, and they carried me to a distance from the house and threw me down like a log. After a time I rose and dragged myself little by little to my own place, where I sent for a surgeon and showed him my hurts; and he comforted me and did his best to cure me. As soon as I was recovered I went to the Hammam and, as my pains and sickness had left me, I repaired to my shop and took and sold all that was therein. With the proceeds, I bought me four hundred white slaves, such as no King ever got together, and caused two hundred of them to ride out with me every day. Then I made me yonder barge whereon I spent five thousand gold pieces; and styled myself Caliph and appointed each of my servants to the charge of some one of the Caliph's officers and clad him in official habit. Moreover, I made proclamation, "Whoso goeth apleasuring on the Tigris by night, I will strike off his head, without ruth or delay;" and on such wise have I done this whole year past, during which time I have heard no news of the lady neither happened upon any trace of her. Then wept he copiously and repeated these couplets:—

By Allah! while the days endure ne'er shall forget her I, Nor drawn to any nigh save those who draw her to me nigh:
Like to the fullest moon her form and favor show to me; Laud to her Allcreating Lord, laud to the Lord on high!
She left me full of mourning, sleepless, sick with pine and pain And ceaseth not my heart to yearn her mystery to espy.

Now when Harun al-Rashid heard the young man's story and knew the passion and transport and love-lowe that afflicted him, he was moved to compassion and wonder and said, "Glory be to Allah, who hath appointed to every effect a cause!" Then they craved the young man's permission to depart; which being granted, they took leave of him, the Caliph purposing to do him justice meet, and him with the utmost munificence entreat; and they returned to the palace of the Caliphate, where they changed clothes for others befitting their state and sat down, whilst Masrur the Sworder of High Justice stood before them. After awhile, quoth the Caliph to Ja'afar, "O Wazir, bring me the young man"—And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say.

NOW WHEN IT WAS THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-FOURTH NIGHT,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that quoth the Caliph to his Minister, "Bring me the young man with whom we were last night." "I hear and obey," answered Ja'afar and, going to the youth, saluted him, saying, "Obey the summons of the Commander of the Faithful, the Caliph Harun al-Rashid." So he returned with him to the palace, in great anxiety by reason of the summons; and, going in to the King, kissed ground before him; and offered up a prayer for the endurance of his glory and prosperity, for the accomplishment of his desires, for the continuance of his beneficence and for the cessation of evil and punishment; ordering his speech as best he might and ending by saying, "Peace be on thee, O Prince of True Believers and Protector of the folk of the Faith!" Then he repeated these two couplets:—

Kiss thou his fingers which no fingers are; Keys of our daily bread those fingers ken:
And praise his actions which no actions are; But precious necklaces round necks of men.

So the Caliph smiled in his face and returned his salute, looking on him with the eye of favor; then he bade him draw near and sit down before him and said to him, "O Mohammed Ali, I wish thee to tell me what befell thee last night, for it was strange and passing strange." Quoth the youth, "Pardon, O Commander of the Faithful, give me the kerchief of immunity, that my dread may be appeased and my heart eased." Replied the Caliph, "I promise thee safety from fear and woes." So the young man told him his story from first to last, whereby the Caliph knew him to be a lover and severed from his beloved and said to him, "Desirest thou that I restore her to thee?" "This were of the bounty of the Commander of the Faithful," answered the youth and repeated these two couplets:—

Ne'er cease thy gate be Ka'abah to mankind; Long may its threshold dust man's brow beseem!
That o'er all countries it may be proclaimed, This is the Place and thou art Ibrahim.

Thereupon the Caliph turned to his Minister and said to him, "O Ja'afar, bring me thy sister, the Lady Dunya, daughter of the Wazir Yahya bin Khalid!" "I hear and I obey," answered he and fetched her without let or delay. Now when she stood before the Caliph he said to her, "Dost thou know who this is?"; and she replied, "O Commander of the Faithful, how should women have knowledge of men?" So the Caliph smiled and said, "O Dunya, this is thy beloved, Mohammed bin Ali the Jeweller. We are acquainted with his case, for we have heard the whole story from beginning to end, and have apprehended its inward and its outward; and it is no more hidden from me, for all it was kept in secrecy." Replied she, "O Commander of the Faithful, this was written in the Book of Destiny; I crave the forgiveness of Almighty Allah for the wrong I have wrought, and pray thee to pardon me of thy favor." At this the Caliph laughed and, summoning the Kazi and witnesses, renewed the marriage-contract between the Lady Dunya and her husband, Mohammed Ali son of the Jeweller whereby there betided them, both her and him the utmost felicity, and to their enviers mortification and misery. Moreover, he made Mohammed Ali one of his boon-companions, and they abode in joy and cheer and gladness, till there came to them the Destroyer of delights and the Sunderer of societies.

PINDAR (522?-443? B.C.)

Not much more is known of the poet Pindar than that he was born near Thebes, was educated at Athens, spent some time at the court of Hiero at Syracuse (for whom he wrote the first of his Olympic odes), and died at Argos. The forty-four extant odes of Pindar were occasioned by the Olympic games, each winner of which was entitled to the crown of victory and an ode in his honor. Pindar made a practice of extending poetic glory to the myths surrounding the ancestors or birthplace of the particular hero celebrated.

The form of his odes, widely admired by the poets of the world, was adapted by Pindar from the choric passages of ancient drama, the unit being the three stanzas known respectively as *strophe*, *antistrophe*, and *epode*. The strophe and antistrophe are identical in structure; the epode has its own metrical pattern. The Greek odes were accompanied by music, and the singers (who danced as they sang) would move to one side for the *strophe* (i.e. the *turn*), retrace their steps for the *antistrophe* (i.e. the *counter-turn*), and remain stationary for the *epode*. The ear and the eye were thus supplied, in true Greek fashion, with classic symmetry and balance.

In English the word *ode* has a very general meaning and has been used to signify "a lyric poem expressive of exalted or enthusiastic emotion." Ben Jonson was the first to introduce the pure Pindaric form into English, and he was for a long time the only man to employ it. Congreve pointed out that many so-called Pindaric odes were not in the least like those of Pindar. It remained for Gray in his *Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* to create the most notable examples of the true Pindaric ode in English. (See pp. 31-33.)

The odes of Cowley (see I, p. 558)—which he miscalled "Pindaric" and which are now known as "irregular" or "Cowleyan" odes—formed for almost a century the chief resort of poets who attempted an escape from the heroic couplet. This kind of ode is completely free, and has only its exalted tone to bear resemblance with Pindar. Wordsworth in his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* (see p. 175) employed the Cowleyan ode. Such, too, are Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day* and *Alexander's Feast* (see I, pp. 698-99).

Certain poems written in imitation of the neat stanzas of Horace have also been called odes because of the custom of calling his *carmina* (which really means "songs") loosely "odes."

OLYMPIAN ODE I

TO HIERO[1] THE SYRACUSAN

Victor in the Horse-race

(Translated by Abraham Moore)

STROPHE I

Water the first of elements we hold;
  And, as the flaming fire at night
  Glows with its own conspicuous light,
Above proud treasure shines transcendent gold:
  But if, my soul, 'tis thy desire
  For the Great Games[2] to strike thy lyre,
  Look not within the range of day
    A star more genial to descry
  Than yon warm sun, whose glittering ray
    Dims all the spheres that gild the sky;
    Nor loftier theme to raise thy strain
    Than famed Olympia's crowded plain:
From whence, by gifted minstrels richly wove,
  Th' illustrious hymn, at glory's call,
  Goes forth to Hiero's affluent hall,
To hail his prosperous throne and sing Saturnian Jove.

ANTISTROPHE I

Hiero the just, that rules the fertile field,
  Where fair Sicilia's pastures feed
  Unnumber'd flocks, and for his meed
Culls the sweet flowers that all the virtues yield;
  Nor less renown'd his hand essays
  To wake the Muse's choicest lays,
Such as the social feast around
  Full oft our tuneful band inspire—
But wherefore sleeps the thrilling sound?

[1] Hiero was ruler of Syracuse from 478 to 466 B.C. The horse-race celebrated in this ode is usually assigned to the year 476 B.C.

[2] The Olympic games were celebrated every four years at Olympia in Elis, a part of the Peloponnesus. All of the Greek states participated.

Pluck from the peg thy Dorian[3] lyre,
If Pisa's[4] palms have charms for thee,
If Pherenicus'[5] victory
Hath roused thee to the rapturous cares of song;
Tell us how swift the ungoaded steed
By Alpheus[6] urged his furious speed,
And bore the distant prize from all the panting throng.

EPODE I

Proud of his stud, the Syracusan king
Partook the courser's triumph. Through the plain
By Lydian Pelops won[7] his praises ring—
Pelops of Neptune loved (whose watery reign
Bounds the wide earth, that trembles at his might),
Pelops, whose form the plastic Fate replaced,
And from the caldron bright
Drew forth with ivory shoulder graced.[8]
Life teems with wonders: yet, in Reason's spite,
O'er the fond fascinating fiction, warm
From Fancy's pencil, hangs a charm
That more than Nature's self her painted dreams delight.

STROPHE II

For Taste, whose softening hand hath power to give
Sweetness and grace to rudest things,
And trifles to distinction brings,
Makes us full oft the enchanting tale receive
In Truth's disguise as Truth. The day
Yet comes, Time's test, that tears away
The veil each flattering falsehood wears.
Beseems us then (for less the blame)
Of those that heed us from the spheres
Becoming marvels to proclaim.
Great son of Tantalus, thy fate
Not as the fablers I relate.

Thee with the Gods thy Sire's Sipylian[9] guest,
When they in turn beneath his bower
Purest repast partook, the Power
That wields the Trident,[10] seized, and ravished from the feast.

ANTISTROPHE II

Desire his breast had conquered. Up he drove
His trembling prize of mortal mold
In radiant car with steeds of gold
To th' highest mansion of all-honored Jove;
With whom the Boy,[11] from wondering Ide
Rapt long before, like place supplied.
Her Pelops lost, her vanished son
Soon roused the frantic mother's care;
No tidings came; the search begun
In mystery ended in despair.
Forthwith some envious foe was found
Whispering th' unseemly slander round,
How all into the bubbling caldron cast
Thy mangled limbs were seethed, and shred
In fragments on the table spread,
While circling Gods looked on and shared th' abhorred repast.

EPODE II

Far be from me and mine the thought profane,
That in foul feast celestials could delight!
Blasphemous tale! Detraction finds its bane
E'en in the wrong it works—If mortal wight
Heaven e'er hath honored, 'twas this Tantalus;
But soon from ill-digested greatness sprung
Presumption and abuse:
Thence from his towering fortunes flung
(Frightful reverse!) he fell.[12] A ponderous rock
High o'er his head hung threatening (angry Jove
So judged him for his crimes above):
Where day and night he waits, dreading th' expected shock.

STROPHE III

Thus doomed is he life's hopeless load to bear,
Torment unceasing! Three[13] beside,

[3] a lyre tuned in the Dorian scale, similar to our A-minor scale.
[4] a town already at that time in ruins, somewhat east of Olympia.
[5] Hiero's successful horse.
[6] the principal river of the Peloponnesus.
[7] the Peloponnesus is named from its supposed conqueror, Pelops.
[8] This refers to the story of Tantalus, who served a banquet to the gods consisting of the severed members of his son Pelops. But only Demeter took a portion, whereas the others, observing that the flesh was human, restored the boy to life. Instead of the shoulder which she had eaten, Demeter inserted a piece of ivory, a physical characteristic which was inherited by his descendants.
[9] Sipylos was the home of Tantalus.
[10] Neptune, or Poseidon.
[11] Ganymede, whom Jove had stolen from Mount Ida.
[12] Tantalus received his punishment for revealing the secrets of the gods.
[13] The other sufferers were Tituos, Ixion, and Sisyphus.

Delinquents there, like pains abide.
He from th' Immortals their ambrosial fare,
The nectarous flood that crowned their bowl,
To feast his earth-born comrades, stole;
Food, that, by their celestial grace,
Eternal youth to him had given.
Vain hope, that guilt by time or place
Can 'scape the searching glance of heaven!
For this the blameless Son[14] once more
Back to man's short-lived race they bore;
There, when fresh youth its blooming flower had blown,
And round his chin th' umbrageous beard
Mature its manlier growth had reared,
From Pisa's Prince he sought, his nuptial couch to crown

ANTISTROPHE III

The famed Hippodamè;[15] whose charms to gain,
The fond and furious father's pride,
At night's dark hour alone he hied
To the rough shore of the loud-bellowing main,
And called the Trident-sceptered God,
Whose form forthwith beside him stood:
"Oh! if th' endearing gifts," said he,
"The Cyprian sea-born Queen[16] bestows,
Have still, great Neptune, grace with thee,
Propitiate now thy suppliant's vows.
Arrest Œnomaus' brazen spear,
To Elis guide my prompt career,
And bear me on thy swiftest chariot's wheel
Victorious to the goal; for he,
Slayer of suitors ten and three,
Still from his daughter's hope withholds the bridal seal.

EPODE III

"Majestic Danger calls but for the brave,
Trusts not the dastard's arm: then why should man,
By life's hard lot predestined to the grave,
Waste in the dark th' unprofitable span,
And crouch in Age's corner unrenowned,
Heav'n's noblest gifts untasted? Power divine!
Grant thou th' event be crowned,
This peril shall at least be mine."
Thus he, with zeal not unregarded, speeds
His ardent prayer. The God his prayer embraced,
Gave him his car with gold enchased,
And roused th' unwearied plumes that winged the immortal steeds.

STROPHE IV

Œnomaus' power th' exulting youth o'erthrows:
The virgin spouse his arms entwine;
From whose soft intercourse, a line
By all the virtues nursed, six warriors rose.
Now in rich pomp and solemn state
His dust heroic honors wait.
Where Alpheus laves the hallowed glade,
His tomb its ample range displays,
And gifts by many a stranger laid
High on his crowded altar blaze;
But most from proud Olympia's drome,[17]
On distant realms, on times to come,
Shines Pelops' fame. There Speed demands his crown,
Toil-mastering Strength the muscle strains,
And conquerors pass life's proud remains
On Virtue's tranquil couch, the slumber of renown.

ANTISTROPHE IV

Such is the Champion's meed: the constant good,
That lives beyond the transient hour,
Of all that Heaven on man can shower,
Most fires his hope, most wakes his gratitude:
But now 'tis mine, the strain to raise,
And swell th' Equestrian Hero's praise,
To crown with loud Æolian song
A Prince, whose peer the spacious earth
Holds not its noblest chiefs among,
Boasts not in wisdom, power and worth,
A host more gifted, to display,
Through all the mazes of the lay.
Hiero, some guardian god thy fame sustains
And makes thee his peculiar care;
If long thy deeds his smiles shall share,
A loftier flight I'll soar, and warble sweeter strains.

EPODE IV

Then high on Cronium's[18] peak my post shall be;
There, as a poet's glance informs my soul,
First in the burning race thy steeds to see,
Thy bounding chariot whirl thee to the goal.

[14] Pelops.
[15] Pelops contested for the hand of Hippodamè in a horse-race with her father, Œnomaus. He won the race by trickery.
[16] Aphrodite.
[17] race-course.
[18] Mount Olympus.

Then shall the Muse her strongest javelin fling;
'Bove all the ranks of greatness at the top
Shines the consummate king—
Beyond that height lift not thy hope.
Be thine in that bright station long to bear
Thy upright course; mine, with the conquering band,
To take my honorable stand,
And 'mong the bards of Greece the palm of genius wear.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-1778)

It has been said that no man of the Christian era ever exerted a wider influence on the social and cultural history of Europe than Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Yet one hesitates to call him a thinker. Though most of what he wrote had philosophic intent, he presented no "system," and he was often inconsistent and illogical. Second to none in preparing the way for the French Revolution, he differed radically from revolutionary *philosophes* like Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, and the Encyclopedists.

They believed that, though man is selfish, he can be led by the logic of self-interest to reform social institutions and government for the amelioration of all, through the exercise of rational criticism. Rousseau, on the contrary, thought that man, by nature benevolent, had been corrupted by society and its institutions; reason and what men call civilization, he believed, had warped mankind's true nature. The paradox of Rousseauistic thinking is that, despite its completely revolutionary tendency, it is in essence reactionary. The golden age to which the "perfectibilians" looked forward blithely (see p. 100) had, according to Rousseau, already passed; to recapture it, he felt, one would have to turn back the clock to the patriarchal days of Abraham and Isaac.

The paradox and inconsistency which make all discussions of Rousseau difficult are to be explained chiefly by his distrust of reason and his worship of emotion. "Cold reason has never accomplished anything of significance," he says. The personification of the Man of Feeling, Rousseau boldly asserted that while reason often leads to error, only the emotions conduct us to truth. This point of departure accounts for his tremendous hold over a century of writers. Completely reacting against the Age of Reason in which he found himself, he gave what seemed to be a philosophic basis for those impatient of restraint or starving for emotional emancipation.

He was able so profoundly to impress French literature because he came to it a stranger. Born in Geneva, the cradle of Calvinism (he always referred to himself as "citizen of Geneva"), Rousseau possessed those qualities which had been notably absent from the writings of Frenchmen. Whereas their approach to life had been strictly social, he was an undisciplined individualist. As a man he was thoroughly unbalanced—a sufferer from megalomania and delusions of persecution. Sensitive, egotistical, happy most when intoxicated with emotion, he was constantly moving from the heights of ecstasy to the depths of depression. Though he was incapable of constancy or self-abnegation, he never felt himself done justice and conjured up enemies all about him. Like all sentimentalists of the age, he was much enamored of virtue and goodness in the abstract, though he seems to have lavished little considerateness on others. Thus, great champion of wronged childhood that he was, and author of the first humanitarian tract on education, he consigned his own five children, illegitimately born to him by the devoted Thérèse Levasseur, to a foundling hospital. His restless and romantic nature made him ever dissatisfied with his present circumstances and surroundings, and he was forever escaping from the realities around him in quest of better things which he found nowhere. Determined to be like no one else, he refused, after his first success in Paris, to dress or act the part of a literary lion. It was in the seclusion of his "Hermitage" in the forest of Montmorency, near Paris, that he wrote his most important books. But his suspicions of his friends and protectors engendered quarrels which set him wandering again. For periods he lived in exile in Switzerland and England, and then returned to Paris. Everywhere he had felt himself wronged and persecuted, had wearied the most patient of his friends, and had found consolation only in his own pride and in nature. His *Confessions* (1781-88), one of the most passionate and candid pieces of self-revelation, is an amazing document and one of the earliest unadulterated pieces of Romanticism in European literature. Its preoccupation with self sounds one of the most insistent notes of nineteenth-century literature.

On the intellectual side, Rousseau owed little to the French classics, whose symmetry and elegance alienated him because, as he put it, "the passions of the human heart never speak [in them] but . . . in the third person." It was to England that he turned for affinities of taste. The rationalists, Voltaire and Montesquieu, had equally admired the English accomplishments in liberty and governmental reform. But Rousseau far exceeded the Anglomania of most of his

contemporaries in France. "The only nation of *men*" is his description of Englishmen. Locke, Addison, *Robinson Crusoe,* the *Essay on Man,* and Richardson he worshiped. The beauty of nature, of which he was the great discoverer in his century, had been known to Shakespeare and Milton, and was being refound by Thomson, Gray, and Collins. The flourishing of the graveyard school of poets points to a strain in eighteenth-century England congenial to his own recurrent morbidity. His writings, in consequence, were saturated with concepts which were destined to alter the whole course of French letters.

Rousseau's influence on the Romantic Movement in Europe operated in three directions: individualism, sentimentalism, and the love of nature. His power to impress generations of authors, and to be thus more intimately connected with the romantic revival than any man of his time, is due to his wonderful gift of rhetoric, his genius for asserting his ideas in a startling and vivid manner. "The first man, who, after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society." The force of such a statement is greater than a whole treatise on economics. "Education begins at birth; before he can speak, before he can understand, man is learning." Such a declaration will do more to arrest attention than volumes on the existence or nonexistence of *a priori* ideas.

The first work to bring him notice was his *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, which won the prize of the Dijon Academy in 1750. It took the completely unclassical view of civilization which he continued to promulgate, a view best summed up in his famous sentences: "Man was born free; yet everywhere he is in chains. Nature has made him good and happy; society has made him evil and miserable." Opposing the artificial life required by society, he is the great pleader for the simple life. His *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (*see below*), published in 1755, is based upon the same fundamental conviction. This book has had an enormous effect, not only toward the French Revolution, but on much political speculation since, particularly that of a socialistic nature. It undertakes to trace the gradual degradation of humanity from the freedom and equality with which it was originally equipped. In a "state of nature" man was happy in his isolation, and cooperative with his neighbors, Rousseau believed. As society developed, man had to give up piece by piece his happiness. Private property is the root of the evil, for to protect it, Rousseau declares, mankind was shackled with every kind of restraint; thus the rich have been protected and the poor oppressed even to the point of slavery. There is much poor history and prophecy in all this, it is true; Rousseau, in his glorification of the "natural man" was certain, for instance, that the American Indians could never be overcome. But what was important in this book was its profound sympathy for the downtrodden masses, and its humanitarian insistence on the "natural rights" of all men. Tom Paine (see p. 94), Godwin (see p. 100), Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and many of their contemporaries were committed to the same point of view. And while we cannot definitely establish that they were *directly* inspired by Rousseau, they were all plainly inheritors of Rousseauistic teaching. Moreover, most of the French *philosophes* had no thought of social revolution, while Rousseau sees no hope for society but by a general uprising. It was for this reason that "Jean-Jacques" was the hero of the French Revolution he did not live to see.

His political opinions were further expressed in *The Social Contract* (1762). Here, somewhat modifying his extreme and antisocial individualism, he bespeaks a society organized according to democratic principles. The idea of a hypothetical social contract was, of course, not new; but in Rousseau's hands it gained a currency it had never had before. He advanced the idea of popular sovereignty, which deeply affected the signers of the Declaration of Independence in America, and insisted that every individual in a state was at once a subject and a ruler in the body politic, and that the "general will" of citizens must be the "infallible" guide to law. *The Social Contract* exhibits Rousseau as a pioneering democrat and the direct predecessor of Tom Paine.

In 1762 appeared his revolutionary tract on education, *Émile* (see p. 1141), cast in the form of a novel. The originality of Rousseau's thinking can be appreciated by those who are familiar with the cruel and inhuman discipline to which children were exposed in the eighteenth century. Convinced that nature is the best teacher, Rousseau removes his hero in infancy to the country, where he is to be taught nothing, and is to learn only from experience. He is to be made strong in body by physical exercise and encouraged to observe the operations of nature about him. As he evinces interest and desire to learn various subjects, they are to be taught him, but not before. When he learns to read, he is to be given such books as will develop his sentiments. The weaknesses of such a system are only too apparent, though many "modern" parents have followed it in its extremes. A child left to his own inclinations may very well learn nothing, nor is he always equal to knowing what he really desires and needs. But the great contribution of *Émile* has been its emphasis on cultivating the gifts of a child rather than on forcing upon him a development possibly unsuited to his talents. Modern education rests solidly on the fundamental concepts of this book, which is, however, curiously one-sided in its failure to recognize the claims of girls to equal opportunities. Wordsworth's cardinal interest in the importance to the adult man of the child's experiences ("The child

is father of the man") originates, of course, in *Émile*. Indeed, the work has left its mark on writers and simple citizens everywhere. The fourth book of *Émile* contains in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" Rousseau's religion, after he had vacillated between Calvinism and Catholicism; it is a kind of sentimental Deism, pantheistic in tendency, in which, like Wordsworth later, Rousseau sees the divine spirit moving through all things.

His long sentimental novel, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloise* (1761) was excessively popular (see p. 1143), and its hero, St. Preux, has been synonymous with the unhappy, sensitive lover of nature, dear to the Romantic Movement. In writing it, Rousseau was greatly influenced by Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* (see I, p. 787), but even exceeded his original in the extravagance of its sentimentality. The story is mixed with a strange variety of rhapsody, morbidity, social criticism, individualism, and moralizing. What is important to note in it, however, are the dislike of the leisured class, a warm sympathy with simple peasant folk, a glowing enthusiasm for the wonders of mountains and the country, and a worship of emotion for its own sake. (The scene of the swooning [*see below*] can only strike modern readers as silly, but it must have struck eighteenth-century readers as sublime.) Again Rousseau had written about matters which were to occupy the attention of poets and authors for generations.

From A DISCOURSE ON INEQUALITY

The first man, who, after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, "This is mine," and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, how many wars, how many murders, how many misfortunes and horrors, would that man have saved the human species, who pulling up the stakes or filling up the ditches should have cried to his fellows: Be sure not to listen to this impostor; you are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong equally to us all, and the earth itself to nobody! But it is highly probable that things were now come to such a pass, that they could not continue much longer in the same way; for as this idea of property depends on several prior ideas which could only spring up gradually one after another, it was not formed all at once in the human mind: men must have made great progress; they must have acquired a great stock of industry and knowledge, and transmitted and increased it from age to age before they could arrive at this last term of the state of nature. Let us therefore take up things a little higher, and collect into one point of view, and in their most natural order, this slow succession of events and mental improvements.

The first sentiment of man was that of his existence, his first care that of preserving it. The production of the earth yielded him all the assistance he required; instinct prompted him to make use of them. Among the various appetites, which made him at different times experience different modes of existence, there was one that excited him to perpetuate his species; and this blind propensity, quite void of anything like pure love or affection, produced nothing but an act that was merely animal. The present heat once allayed, the sexes took no further notice of each other, and even the child ceased to have any tie in his mother, the moment he ceased to want her assistance.

Such was the condition of infant man; such was the life of an animal confined at first to pure sensations, and so far from harboring any thought of forcing her gifts from nature, that he scarcely availed himself of those which she offered to him of her own accord. But difficulties soon arose, and there was a necessity for learning how to surmount them: the height of some trees, which prevented his reaching their fruits; the competition of other animals equally fond of the same fruits; the fierceness of many that even aimed at his life; these were so many circumstances, which obliged him to apply to bodily exercise. There was a necessity for becoming active, swift-footed, and sturdy in battle. The natural arms, which are stones and the branches of trees, soon offered themselves to his assistance. He learned to surmount the obstacles of nature, to contend in case of necessity with other animals, to dispute his subsistence even with other men, or indemnify himself for the loss of whatever he found himself obliged to part with to the strongest.

In proportion as the human species grew more numerous, and extended itself, its pain likewise multiplied and increased. The difference of soils, climates and seasons, might have forced men to observe some differences in their way of living. Bad harvests, long and severe winters, and scorching summers, which parched up all the fruits of the earth required extraordinary exertions of industry. On the sea shore, and the banks of rivers they invented the line and the hook, and became fishermen and ichthyophagous.[1] In the forests they made themselves bows and arrows, and became huntsmen and warriors. In the cold countries they covered themselves with the skins of the beasts they had killed; thunder, a volcano, or some happy accident made them acquainted with fire, a new resource against the rigors of winter: they discovered the method of preserving this element, then that of reproducing it, and lastly the way of preparing with

[1] eaters of fish.

it the flesh of animals, which heretofore they devoured raw from the carcass.

This reiterated application of various beings to himself, and to one another, must have naturally engendered in the mind of man the idea of certain relations. These relations, which we express by the words, great, little, strong, weak, swift, slow, fearful, bold, and the like, compared occasionally, and almost without thinking of it, produced in him some kind of reflection, or rather a mechanical prudence, which pointed out to him the precautions most essential to his preservation and safety.

The new lights resulting from this development increased his superiority over other animals, by making him sensible of it. He laid himself out to ensnare them; he played them a thousand tricks; and though several surpassed him in strength or in swiftness, he in time became the master of those that could be of any service to him, and a sore enemy to those that could do him any mischief. 'Tis thus, that the first look he gave into himself produced the first emotion of pride in him; 'tis thus that, at a time he scarce knew how to distinguish between the different ranks of existence, by attributing to his species the first rank among animals in general, he prepared himself at a distance to pretend to it as an individual among those of his own species in particular.

Though other men were not to him what they are to us, and he had scarce more intercourse with them than with other animals, they were not overlooked in his observations. The conformities, which in time he might discover between them, and between himself and his female, made him judge of those he did not perceive; and seeing that they all behaved as himself would have done in similar circumstances, he concluded that their manner of thinking and willing was quite conformable to his own; and this important truth, when once engraved deeply on his mind, made him follow, by a presentiment as sure as any logic, and withal much quicker, the best rules of conduct, which for the sake of his own safety and advantage it was proper he should observe towards them.

Instructed by experience that the love of happiness is the sole principle of all human actions, he found himself in a condition to distinguish the few cases, in which common interest might authorize him to build upon the assistance of his fellow, and those still fewer, in which a competition of interests might justly render it suspected. In the first case he united with them in the same flock, or at most by some kind of free association which obliged none of its members, and lasted no longer than the transitory necessity that had given birth to it. In the second case everyone aimed at his own private advantage, either by open force if he found himself strong enough, or by cunning and address if he thought himself too weak to use violence.

Such was the manner in which men might have insensibly acquired some gross idea of their mutual engagements and the advantage of fulfilling them, but this only as far as their present and sensible interest required; for as to foresight they were utter strangers to it, and far from troubling their heads about a distant futurity, they scarce thought of the day following. Was a deer to be taken? Everyone saw that to succeed he must faithfully stand to his post; but suppose a hare to have slipped by within reach of any one of them, it is not to be doubted but he pursued it without scruple, and when he had seized his prey never reproached himself with having made his companions miss theirs.

We may easily conceive that such an intercourse scarce required a more refined language than that of crows and monkeys, which flock together almost in the same manner. Inarticulate exclamations, a great many gestures, and some imitative sounds, must have been for a long time the universal language of mankind, and by joining to these in every country some articulate and conventional sounds, of which, as I have already hinted, it is not very easy to explain the institution, there arose particular languages, but rude, imperfect, and such nearly as are to be found at this day among several savage nations. My pen straightened by the rapidity of time, the abundance of things I have to say, and the almost insensible progress of the first improvements, flies like an arrow over numberless ages, for the slower the succession of events, the quicker I may allow myself to be in relating them.

At length, these first improvements enabled man to improve at a greater rate. Industry grew perfect in proportion as the mind became more enlightened. Men soon ceasing to fall asleep under the first tree, or take shelter in the first cavern, lit upon some hard and sharp kinds of stone resembling spades or hatchets, and employed them to dig the ground, cut down trees, and with the branches build huts, which they afterwards bethought themselves of plastering over with clay or dirt. This was the epoch of a first revolution, which produced the establishment and distinction of families, and which introduced a species of property, and along with it perhaps a thousand quarrels and battles. As the strongest, however, were probably the first to make themselves cabins, which they knew they were able to defend, we may conclude that the weak found it much shorter and safer to imitate than to attempt to dislodge them: and as to those who were

already provided with cabins, no one could have any great temptation to seize upon that of his neighbor, not so much because it did not belong to him, as because it could be of no service to him; and as besides to make himself master of it, he must expose himself to a very sharp conflict with the present occupiers.

The first developments of the heart were the effects of a new situation, which united husbands and wives, parents and children, under one roof; the habit of living together gave birth to the sweetest sentiments the human species is acquainted with, conjugal and paternal love. Every family became a little society, so much the more firmly united, as a mutual attachment and liberty were the only bonds of it; and it was now that the sexes, whose way of life had been hitherto the same, began to adopt different manners and customs. The women became more sedentary, and accustomed themselves to stay at home and look after the children, while the men rambled abroad in quest of subsistence for the whole family. The two sexes likewise by living a little more at their ease began to lose somewhat of their usual ferocity and sturdiness; but if on the one hand individuals became less able to engage separately with wild beasts, they on the other were more easily got together to make a common resistance against them.

In this new state of things, the simplicity and solitariness of man's life, the limitedness of his wants, and the instruments which he had invented to satisfy them, leaving him a great deal of leisure, he employed it to supply himself with several conveniences unknown to his ancestors; and this was the first yoke he inadvertently imposed upon himself, and the first source of mischief which he prepared for his children; for besides continuing in this manner to soften both body and mind, these conveniences having through use lost almost all their aptness to please, and even degenerated into real wants, the privation of them became far more intolerable than the possession of them had been agreeable; to lose them was a misfortune, to possess them no happiness.

Here we may a little better discover how the use of speech insensibly commences or improves in the bosom of every family, and may likewise form conjectures concerning the manner in which divers particular causes might have propagated language, and accelerated its progress by rendering it every day more and more necessary. Great inundations or earthquakes surrounded inhabited districts with water or precipices, portions of the continent were by revolutions of the globe torn off and split into islands. It is obvious that among men thus collected, and forced to live together, a common idiom must have started up much sooner, than among those who freely wandered through the forests of the main land. Thus it is very possible that the inhabitants of the islands formed in this manner, after their first essays in navigation, brought among us the use of speech; and it is very probable at least that society and languages commenced in islands and even acquired perfection there, before the inhabitants of the continent knew anything of either.

Everything now begins to wear a new aspect. Those who heretofore wandered through the woods, by taking to a more settled way of life, gradually flock together, coalesce into several separate bodies, and at length form in every country distinct nations, united in character and manners, not by any laws or regulations, but by an uniform manner of life, a sameness of provisions, and the common influence of the climate. A permanent neighborhood must at last infallibly create some connection between different families. The transitory commerce required by nature soon produced, among the youth of both sexes living in contiguous cabins, another kind of commerce, which besides being equally agreeable is rendered more durable by mutual intercourse. Men begin to consider different objects, and to make comparisons; they insensibly acquire ideas of merit and beauty, and these soon produce sentiments of preference. By seeing each other often they contract a habit, which makes it painful not to see each other always. Tender and agreeable sentiments steal into the soul, and are by the smallest opposition wound up into the most impetuous fury: jealousy kindles with love; discord triumphs; and the gentlest of passions requires sacrifices of human blood to appease it.

In proportion as ideas and sentiments succeed each other, and the head and the heart exercise themselves, men continue to shake off their original wildness, and their connections become more intimate and extensive. They now begin to assemble round a great tree: singing and dancing, the genuine offspring of love and leisure, become the amusement or rather the occupation of the men and women, free from care, thus gathered together. Everyone begins to survey the rest, and wishes to be surveyed himself; and public esteem acquires a value. He who sings or dances best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most dexterous, the most eloquent, comes to be the most respected: this was the first step towards inequality, and at the same time towards vice. From these first preferences there proceeded on one side vanity and contempt, on the other envy and shame; and the fermentation raised by these new leavens at length produced combinations fatal to happiness and innocence.

Men no sooner began to set a value upon each

other, and know what esteem was, than each laid claim to it, and it was no longer safe for any man to refuse it to another. Hence the first duties of civility and politeness, even among savages; and hence every voluntary injury became an affront, as besides the mischief, which resulted from it as an injury, the party offended was sure to find in it a contempt for his person more intolerable than the mischief itself. It was thus that every man, punishing the contempt expressed for him by others in proportion to the value he set upon himself, the effects of revenge became terrible, and men learned to be sanguinary and cruel. Such precisely was the degree attained by most of the savage nations with whom we are acquainted. And it is for want of sufficiently distinguishing ideas, and observing at how great a distance these people were from the first state of nature, that so many authors have hastily concluded that man is naturally cruel, and requires a regular system of police to be reclaimed; whereas nothing can be more gentle than he in his primitive state, when placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes, and the pernicious good sense of civilized man; and equally confined by instinct and reason to the care of providing against the mischief which threatens him, he is withheld by natural compassion from doing any injury to others, so far from being ever so little prone even to return that which he has received. For according to the axiom of the wise Locke,[2] Where there is no property, there can be no injury.

But we must take notice, that the society now formed and the relations now established among men required in them qualities different from those, which they derived from their primitive constitution; that as a sense of morality began to insinuate itself into human actions, and every man, before the enacting of laws, was the only judge and avenger of the injuries he had received, that goodness of heart suitable to the pure state of nature by no means suited infant society; that it was necessary punishments should become severer in the same proportion that the opportunities of offending became more frequent, and the dread of vengeance add strength to the too weak curb of the law. Thus, though men were become less patient, and natural compassion had already suffered some alteration, this period of the development of the human faculties, holding a just mean between the indolence of the primitive state, and the petulant activity of self-love, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch. The more we reflect on this state, the more convinced we shall be, that it was the least subject of any to revolutions, the best for man, and that nothing could have drawn him out of it but some fatal accident, which, for the public good, should never have happened. The example of the savages, most of whom have been found in this condition, seems to confirm that mankind was formed ever to remain in it, that this condition is the real youth of the world, and that all ulterior improvements have been so many steps, in appearance towards the perfection of individuals, but in fact towards the decrepitness of the species.

As long as men remained satisfied with their rustic cabins; as long as they confined themselves to the use of clothes made of the skins of other animals, and the use of thorns and fish-bones, in putting these skins together; as long as they continued to consider feathers and shells as sufficient ornaments, and to paint their bodies of different colors, to improve or ornament their bows and arrows, to form and scoop out with sharp-edged stones some little fishing boats, or clumsy instruments of music; in a word, as long as they undertook such works only as a single person could finish, and stuck to such arts as did not require the joint endeavors of several hands, they lived free, healthy, honest and happy, as much as their nature would admit, and continued to enjoy with each other all the pleasures of an independent intercourse; but from the moment one man began to stand in need of another's assistance; from the moment it appeared an advantage for one man to possess the quantity of provisions requisite for two, all equality vanished; property started up; labor became necessary; and boundless forests became smiling fields, which it was found necessary to water with human sweat, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to sprout out and grow with the fruits of the earth.

From EMILE, OR ON EDUCATION

(*Translated by Bernard D. N. Grebanier*)

Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Supreme Author; everything decays in the hands of Man. He forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruits of another; he mixes and confounds climate, the elements, the seasons; he mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave; he turns everything upside down, he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters; he desires nothing the way nature made it, not even Man; Man must be put through the paces for him, like a saddle-horse; Man must be twisted to his taste like a tree in his garden.

Without all this, everything would be even worse, and our species cannot be managed by halves. In the

[2] John Locke (1632-1704), English philosopher.

state things are today, a man left to himself from birth among the rest of mankind, would be the most monstrous of all. Prejudice, authority, necessity, example, all the social institutions in which we find ourselves submerged, would stifle nature within him and put nothing in its place. She would be like a young tree which chance has made grow in the middle of a road, and which passers-by soon will kill, crushing and bending it everywhere. . . .

We are born to weakness, we have need of strength; we are born unprovided with anything, we need help; we are born stupid, we need judgment. All that we have not at birth and need when older is given us by education.

This education comes to us from nature, from men, or from things. The inner development of our faculties and organs is the education of nature; the use we are taught to make of this development is the education of men; what we acquire from our own experience of the objects we encounter is the education of things.

Each of us, then, is a pupil of these three teachers. The student in whom their different teachings contradict one another, is badly educated, and will never be at peace with himself; the pupil in whom these teachings agree and tend toward the same goal, achieves easily his ends, and lives well. He alone is well educated. . . .

In the natural order, all men are equal; their common calling is being a man; and whoever is well educated for that calling cannot inadequately satisfy those requirements connected with it. That my pupil is destined for the army, the church, the law matters little to me. Before the calling his parents select for him, he has been selected by nature to the calling of life. Living is the trade I would teach him. When he leaves my hands, he will not be, I grant, magistrate, soldier or priest; he will be first of all a man: all that a man ought to be, he will know how to be when he has the need, as quickly as anyone else; and fate in vain will change his position in life, he will always have a place. *Occupavi te, fortuna, atque cepi; omnesque aditus tuos interclusi, ut ad me aspirare non posses.*[1]

Our real study is man's environment. Those of us who know best how to bear the good and the ill of life are, in my opinion, the best educated; whence it follows that true education consists less in precept than in practice. We begin to learn when we begin to live. . . .

[1] I have conquered you and seized you, fortune; I have barred off all your approaches so that you may not hope to overcome me.

Study nature, and follow the path she traces for you. She is ever at work on children; she hardens their temperament by trials of every kind; she teaches them early what pain and grief are. Cutting teeth gives them a fever; sharp colics give them convulsions; fits of coughing choke them; worms torment them; plethora corrupts their blood; various germs ferment in it, and cause dangerous eruptions. Almost all the earliest age is a succession of illness and danger: one half of children born die before their eighth year. These trials done, the child has earned strength; and as soon as he can use his life, he is more assured of it.

That is nature's law. Why will you go against it? Don't you see that in trying to correct it you destroy her work, you are preventing the results of her care? To do from without what she does within is, according to you, to double the danger; and on the contrary it's a way to avert it. Experience teaches that more children delicately brought up die than the others. Provided that we do not go beyond their strength, we risk less in using it than in sparing it. Accustom them, then, to the strains they will have to endure every day. Harden their bodies to the intemperance of season, climate, the elements, hunger, thirst, fatigue; dip them in the waters of Styx. Before habits of the body are fixed, give them what habits you deem wise, without danger; for when once habits are part of their constitution, any change is attempted only with peril. A child will stand changes a man could not bear: the muscles of the one are tender and flexible, taking without effort the direction given; those of a man, more hardened, change only with violence the direction they have had. Thus, we can make a child robust without jeopardising his health and life; and even if there be some risk, it should not enter into consideration. Since risks are inseparable from living, can we do better than deal with them at a time when they are least harmful? . . .

I repeat, education begins at birth; before he can speak, before he can understand, man is learning. Experience precedes lessons; the moment he recognizes his nurse, he has already learned much. We should be surprised at the knowledge of the most ignorant of men if we followed his progress from the moment of birth to the present. If all human knowledge were divided in two,—one part common to all, the other limited to the savants—, the latter would be very small in comparison with the former. . . .

Canaries escaped from their cages do not know how to fly, because they have never flown. Everything is learning for living, feeling creatures. If plants were capable of progressive motion, they would need senses

and they would have to acquire knowledge; otherwise their species would soon perish.

The first sensations of children are purely affective; they know only pleasure or pain. Unable either to walk or grasp, they need plenty of time to form, little by little, the typical sensations which objects outside themselves give; but while waiting for these objects to approach and recede, so to speak, and to take their size and shape, the children are being subjected to the domination of habit, through the return of affective sensations. . . . The only habit which one should allow the child to form is the habit of not forming any; let him not be carried more on one arm than the other; let him not get accustomed to offer one hand rather than the other, or to use it more often; let him not desire to eat, sleep or play at the same hours, not be unable to be left alone either at night or day. . . .

Emile shall have no head-pads, no go-carts, no wagons, no strings; or at least, as soon as he begins to know how to place one foot before the other, he will be held up only on pavements, and on them he will be taken quickly. Instead of letting him stifle in the bad air of a room, he will daily be taken to the middle of a field. There, let him run, let him fight, let him fall a hundred times a day. So much the better: he will learn all the sooner to pick himself up. The happiness of liberty will atone for many wounds. My pupil will often have bruises; on the other hand, he will always be merry; if your pupils get hurt less, they are always thwarted, always in chains, always sad. I doubt that the advantage is theirs. . . .

What should one say to such brutal education as sacrifices the present to an uncertain future, that loads a child with every kind of chain, and which begins by making him miserable in order to prepare him for I-know-not-what pretended happiness of the future—a happiness he may never enjoy? Even if I granted such an education reasonable in its aim, how am I to see without indignation poor unfortunates subjected to intolerable slavery, and doomed to continual taxing like galley-slaves, without any surety that all these cares will ever prove useful? The years of gaiety are passed in the midst of tears, punishment, threats, and slavery. They are tormented for their own good; nobody sees Death calling them to free them from such sad surroundings. Who knows how many children die victims to the extravagant wisdom of a father or teacher? Happy to escape from cruelty, they gain only one advantage from the evil they must bear—to die without regretting life, which has offered them only torment.

Men, be humane: that is your first duty: kind to all stations and ages, to all that is not foreign to man. What wisdom is there for you outside of humanity? Love childhood; encourage its games, its pleasures, its pleasant instincts. Who has not sometimes regretted the years when laughter is always on the lips, when the soul is always at peace? Why should you begrudge these little innocents the joys of a period that is so short and fleeting, of a precious good they will never abuse?

From THE NEW ELOISA

(*Translated 1784*)

I have employed scarce eight days in surveying a country that would require some years. But, besides that I was driven off by the snow, I chose to be before the post who brings me, I hope, a letter from Eloisa. In the mean time I begin this, and shall afterwards, if it be necessary, write another in answer to that which I shall receive.

I do not intend to give you an account of my journey in this letter, you shall see my remarks when we meet; they would take up too much of our precious correspondence. For the present, it will be sufficient to acquaint you with the situation of my heart. It is but just to render you an account of that which is entirely yours.

I set out dejected with my own sufferings, but consoled with your joy; which held me suspended in a state of languor that is not disagreeable to true sensibility. Under the conduct of a very honest guide, I crawled up the towering hills, through many a rugged, unfrequented path. Often would I muse, and then, at once, some unexpected object caught my attention. One moment I beheld stupendous rocks hanging ruinous over my head, the next I was enveloped in a drizzling cold, which arose from a vast cascade that dashing thundered against the rocks below my feet; on one side, a perpetual torrent opened to my view a yawning abyss, which my eyes could hardly fathom with safety; sometimes I was lost in the obscurity of a hanging wood, and then was agreeably astonished with the sudden opening of a flowery plain. A surprising mixture of wild and cultivated nature points out the hand of man, where one would imagine man had never penetrated. Here you behold a horrid cavern, and there a human habitation; vineyards where one would expect nothing but brambles; delicious fruit among barren rocks, and corn fields in the midst of cliffs and precipices.

But it is not labor only that renders this strange country so wonderfully contrasted; for here nature seems to have a singular pleasure in acting contra-

dictory to herself, so different does she appear in the same place in different aspects. Towards the east the flowers of spring—to the south the fruits of autumn—and northwards the ice of winter. She unites all the seasons in the same instant, every climate in the same place, different soils on the same land, and, with a harmony elsewhere unknown, joins the produce of the plains to those of the highest Alps. Add to these, the illusions of vision, the tops of the mountains variously illumined, the harmonious mixture of light and shade, and their different effects in the morning and the evening as I travelled; you may then form some idea of the scenes which engaged my attention, and which seemed to change as I passed, as on an enchanted theatre; for the prospect of mountains being almost perpendicular to the horizon, strikes the eye at the same instant, and more powerfully than that of a plain, where the objects are seen obliquely and half concealed behind each other.

To this pleasing variety of scenes I attributed the serenity of my mind during my first day's journey. I wondered to find that inanimate beings should overrule our most violent passions, and despised the impotence of philosophy for having less power over the soul than a succession of lifeless objects. But, finding that my tranquillity continued during the night, and even increased with the following day, I began to believe it flowed from some other source, which I had not yet discovered. That day I reached the lower mountains, and, passing over their rugged tops, at last ascended the highest summit I could possibly attain. Having walked a while in the clouds, I came to a place of greater serenity, whence one may peacefully observe the thunder and the storm gathering below—Ah! too flattering picture of human wisdom, of which the original never existed, except in those sublime regions whence the emblem is taken.

Here it was that I plainly discovered, in the purity of the air, the true cause of that returning tranquillity of soul, to which I had been so long a stranger. This impression is general, though not universally observed. Upon the tops of mountains, the air being subtle and pure, we respire with greater freedom, our bodies are more active, our minds more serene, our pleasures less ardent, and our passions much more moderate. Our meditations acquire a degree of sublimity from the grandeur of the objects around us. It seems as if, being lifted above all human society, we had left every low, terrestrial sentiment behind; and that as we approach the ethereal regions the soul imbibes something of their eternal purity. One is grave without being melancholy, peaceful but not indolent, pensive yet contented; our desires lose their painful violence, and leave only a gentle emotion in our hearts. Thus the passions which in the lower world are man's greatest torment, in happier climates contribute to his felicity. I doubt much whether any violent agitation, or vapors of the mind, could hold out against such a situation; and I am surprised that a bath of the reviving and wholesome air of the mountains is not frequently prescribed both by physic and morality.

Quí non palazzi, non teatro o loggia,
Ma'n lor vece un' abete, un faggio, un pino
Trà l'erba verde e'l bel monte vicino
Levan di terra al Ciel nostr' intelletto.

Nor palace, theatre, nor proud exchange,
Here lift their heads; but fir trees, beech, and pine,
O'er verdant valleys, and on pleasant hills,
Lift up the thoughtful mind from earth to heaven.

Image to yourself all these united impressions; the amazing variety, magnitude, and beauty of a thousand stupendous objects; the pleasure of gazing at an entire new scene, strange birds, unknown plants, another nature, and a new world. To these even the subtilty of the air is advantageous; it enlivens the natural colors of objects, renders them more distinct, and brings them as it were nearer to the eye. In short, there is a kind of supernatural beauty in these mountainous prospects which charms the senses of the mind both into a forgetfulness of one's self and of everything in the world.

I could have spent the whole time in contemplating these magnificent landscapes, if I had not found still greater pleasure in the conversation of the inhabitants. In my observations you will find a slight sketch of their manners, their simplicity, their equality of soul, and of that peacefulness of mind which renders them happy by an exemption from pain, rather than by the enjoyment of pleasure. But what I was unable to describe, and which is almost impossible to be conceived, is their disinterested humanity and hospitable zeal to oblige every stranger whom chance or curiosity brings to visit them. This I myself continually experienced—I who was entirely unknown, and who was conducted from place to place only by a common guide. When, in the evening, I arrived in any hamlet at the foot of a mountain, each of the inhabitants was so eager to have me lodge at his house that I was always embarrassed which to accept; and he who obtained the preference seemed so well pleased that, at first, I supposed his joy to arise from a lucrative prospect; but I was amazed, after having used the house like an inn, to find my host not only refuse to accept the least gratuity, but offended that it was offered. I

found it universally the same. So that it was true hospitality, which, from its unusual ardor, I had mistaken for avarice. So perfectly disinterested are these people, that during eight days it was not in my power to leave one dollar among them. In short, how is it possible to spend money in a country where the landlord will not be paid for his provisions, nor the servant for his trouble, and where there are no beggars to be found? Nevertheless, money is by no means abundant in the Upper Valais, and for that very reason the inhabitants are not in want; for the necessaries of life are plentiful, yet nothing is sent out of the country; they are not luxurious at home, nor is the peasant less laborious. If ever they have more money they will grow poor, and of this they are so sensible that they tread upon mines of gold, which they are determined never to open.

I was at first greatly surprised at the difference between the customs and manners of these people and those of the Lower Valais; for in the road through that part of the country to Italy travellers pay dearly enough for their passage. An inhabitant of the place explained the mystery. "The strangers (says he) who pass through the Lower Valais are chiefly merchants, or people who travel in pursuit of gain; it is but just that they should leave us a part of their profit, and that we should treat them as they treat others; but here travellers meet with a different reception, because we are assured their journey must have a disinterested motive: they visit us out of friendship, and therefore we receive them as our friends. But, indeed, our hospitality is not very expensive; we have but few visitors."—"No wonder (I replied) that mankind should avoid a people, who live only to enjoy life, and not to acquire wealth, and excite envy. Happy, deservedly happy, mortals! I am pleased to think that one must certainly resemble you in some degree, in order to approve your manners and taste your simplicity."

What I found particularly agreeable whilst I continued among them was the natural ease and freedom of their behavior. They went about their business in the house as if I had not been there; and it was in my power to act as if I were the sole inhabitant. They are entirely unacquainted with the impertinent vanity of doing the honors of the house, as if to remind the stranger of his dependence. When I said nothing, they concluded I was satisfied to live in their manner; but the least hint was sufficient to make them comply with mine, without any repugnance or astonishment. The only compliment which they made me, when they heard that I was a Swiss, was, that they looked upon me as a brother, and I ought therefore to think myself at home. After this, they took but little notice of me, not supposing that I could doubt the sincerity of their offers, or refuse to accept them whenever they could be useful. The same simplicity subsists among themselves: when the children are once arrived at maturity, all distinction between them and their parents seems to have ceased; their domestics are seated at the same table with their master; the same liberty reigns in the cottage as in the republic, and each family is an epitome of the state. . . .

Till you are pleased to recall me from exile, I will try to deceive the tedious hours in exploring the mountains of Valais, whilst they are yet practicable. I am of opinion that this unfrequented country deserves the attention of speculative curiosity, and that it wants nothing to excite admiration but a skilful spectator. Perhaps, my excursion may give rise to a few observations that may not be entirely undeserving your perusal. To amuse a fine lady one should describe a witty and polite nation; but I know my Eloisa will have more pleasure in a picture where simplicity of manners and rural happiness are the principal objects. . . .

I enter with a secret horror on this vast desert, the world; whose confused prospect appears to me only as a frightful scene of solitude and silence. In vain my soul endeavors to shake off the universal restraint it lies under. It was the saying of a celebrated ancient, that he was never less alone than when by himself: for my part, I am never alone but when I mix with the crowd, and am neither with you nor with anybody else. My heart would speak, but it feels there is none to hear: it is ready to answer, but no one says anything that regards it. I understand not the language of the country, and nobody here understands mine. Yet, I own that I am greatly caressed, and that all the obliging offices of friendship and civility are readily offered to me: this is the very thing of which I complain. The officious zeal of thousands is ever on the wing to oblige me, but I know not how to entertain immediately a friendship for men I have never seen before. The honest feelings of humanity, the plain and affecting openness of a frank heart, are expressed in a different manner from those false appearances of politeness, and that external flattery, which the customs of the world require. I am not a little afraid that he, who treats me at first sight as if I was a friend of twenty years, should, if I should want his assistance, treat me as a stranger; and when I see men lost in dissipation pretend to take so tender a part in the concerns of every one, I readily presume they are interested for nobody but themselves.

There is, however, some truth in all this procession: the French are naturally good-natured, open, hospi-

table, and generous. But they have a thousand modes of expression which are not to be too strictly understood; a thousand apparent offers of kindness which they make only to be refused. They are no more than the snares of politeness laid for rustic simplicity. I never before heard such profusion of promises: you may depend on my serving you, command my credit, my purse, my house, my equipage.—But if all this were sincere, and literally taken, there would not be a people upon earth less attached to property. The community of possessions would be in a manner already established; the rich always making offers and the poor accepting them, both would naturally soon come upon a level, and not the citizens of Sparta itself could ever have been more upon equality than would be the people of Paris. On the contrary, there is not a place, perhaps, in the world, where the fortunes of men are so unequal, where are displayed at once the most sumptuous opulence, and the most deplorable poverty. This is surely sufficient to prove the insignificance of that apparent commiseration, which every one here affects to have for the wants and sufferings of others, and that tenderness of heart, which in a moment contracts eternal friendship.

But if, instead of attending to professions so justly to be suspected, and assurances so liable to deceive, I desire information, and would seek knowledge, here is its most agreeable source. One is immediately charmed with the good sense which is to be met with in company of the French, not only among the learned, but with men of all ranks, and even among the women: the turn of conversation is always easy and natural; it is neither dull nor frivolous, but learned without pedantry, gay without noise, polite without affectation, gallant without being fulsome, and jocose without being immodest. Their discourse is neither made up of dissertations nor epigrams; they reason without argumentation, and are witty without punning; they artfully unite reason and vivacity, maxims and rhapsodies; and mix the most pointed satire and refined flattery with strictness of morals. They talk about every thing, because every one has something to say; they examine nothing to the bottom, for fear of being tedious, but propose matters in a cursory manner, and pass them over with rapidity: every one gives his opinion, and supports it in few words; no one attacks with virulence that of another, nor obstinately defends his own; they discuss the point only for the sake of improvement, and stop before it comes to a dispute: every one improves, every one amuses himself, and they part all satisfied with each other; even the philosopher himself carrying away something worthy his private meditation.

But, after all, what kind of knowledge do you think is to be gained from such agreeable conversation? To form a right judgment of life and manners; to make a right use of society; to know, at least, the people with whom we converse; there is nothing, Eloisa, of all this: all that is here to be learnt, is to plead artfully the cause of falsehood; to confound, by philosophy, all the principles of virtue; to throw a false color, by the help of sophistry, on the passions and prejudices of mankind; and to give a certain turn to error, agreeable to the fashionable mode of thinking. It is not necessary to know the characters of men, but their interests, to guess their sentiments on any occasion. When a man talks on any subject, he rather expresses the opinions of his garb or his fraternity, than his own, and will change them as often as he changes his situation and circumstances.

Dress him up, for instance, by turns, in the robe of a judge, a peer, and a divine, and you shall hear him successively stand up with the same zeal for the rights of the people, the despotism of the prince, and the authority of the Inquisition. There is one kind of reason for the lawyer, another for the officer of the revenue, and a third for the soldier. Each of them can demonstrate the other two to be knaves, a conclusion not very difficult to be drawn by all three. Thus men do not speak their own sentiments, but those they would instill into others, and the zeal which they affect is only the mask of interest. You may imagine, however, that such persons as are unconnected and independent have at least a personal character, and an opinion of their own. Not at all: they are only different machines, which never think for themselves, but are set going by springs.

You need only inform yourself of their company, their clubs, their friends, the women they visit, the authors they are acquainted with, and you may immediately tell what will be their opinion of the next book that is published, the next play that is acted, the works of this or that writer they know nothing of, or this or that system of which they have not one idea. As ordinary clocks, also, are wound up to go but four-and-twenty hours, so are these people under the necessity of going every evening into company, to know what they are to think the next day.

Hence it is that there is but a small number of both sexes who think for all the rest, and for whom all the rest talk and act. As every one considers his own particular interest, and none of them that of the public, and as the interests of individuals are always opposed, there is amongst them a perpetual clashing of parties and cabals, a continual ebb and flow of prepossessions and contrary opinions; amidst

which the most violent temper, agitated only by the rest, seldom understands a word of the matter in dispute. Every club has its rules, its opinions, its principles, which are nowhere else admitted. An honest man at one house is a knave at the next door. The good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, truth, and even virtue itself, have all only a limited and local existence. Whoever chooses a general acquaintance, therefore, and goes into different societies, should be more pliable than Alcibiades;[1] he should change his principles with his company, new-model his sentiments in a manner at every step, and lay down his maxims by the rod. He ought at every visit to leave his conscience, if he has one, at the door, and take up with that belonging to the house; as a new servant, on his entrance, puts on his livery, which he leaves behind him when turned out, and if he chooses it, again takes up his own, which serves him till he gets a new suit with a new place. But what is still more extraordinary is, that every one here is perpetually contradicting himself, without being concerned at all about it. They have one set of principles for conversation, and another for their actions; nor is anybody scandalized at their inconsistency, it being generally agreed they should be very different. It is not required of an author, particularly of a moral writer, that he should maintain in conversation what he advances in his works; nor that he should put in practice what he inculcates. His writings, conversation, and conduct, are three things essentially different, which he is not at all obliged to reconcile to each other. In a word, everything is absurd, and yet nothing offends, because absurdity is the fashion. Nay, there is attached to this incongruity of principles and manners a fashionable air, of which they are proud, and which is frequently affected. In fact, although everyone zealously preaches up the maxims of his profession, he piques himself on the carriage and manners of another. The attorney, for instance, assumes the martial air of a soldier, and a petty clerk of the customs the supercilious deportment of a lord; the bishop affects the gallantry of a fine gentleman; the courtier the precision of a philosopher; and the statesman the repartee and raillery of a wit. Even the plain mechanic, who knows not how to put on the airs of any other profession, dresses himself up in a suit of black on Sundays, in order to pass for a practitioner in the law. The military gentlemen alone, despising every other profession, preserve, without affectation, the manners of their own, which, to say the truth, are insufferable. Not that M. de Moralt was in the wrong, when he gave the preference to the conversation of a soldier; but what might be true in his time is no longer so. The progress of literature has since improved conversation in general; and, as the gentlemen of the army despise such improvement in theirs, that which used to be the best, is at length become the worst. Hence it is, that the persons we talk to are not those with whom we converse; their sentiments do not come from the heart; their knowledge is not the acquisition of their own genius; their conversation does not discover their thoughts; and one perceives nothing of them but their figure. Thus a man in company here is nearly in the same situation as if he were spectator of a moving picture, where he himself is the only figure capable of self-motion.

Such are the notions I have formed of great societies, by that which I have seen at Paris. They may, nevertheless, be rather adapted to my own particular situation than to the true state of things and will doubtless improve as I become more acquainted with the manners of the world. Besides this, I have hitherto kept no other company than that into which I have been introduced by the friends of Lord B——, and am sensible it is necessary to descend to persons of different ranks, to know the peculiar manners of a country, those of the opulent being almost everywhere the same. I shall endeavor to inform myself better hereafter: in the mean time, I leave you to judge whether I have not sufficient reason to call this crowded scene a desert, and to be terrified by a solitude, where I find only an empty appearance of sentiments and of sincerity, that falsifies itself in the instant of expression; and where I perceive only the mere apparitions of men, phantoms that strike the eye for a moment, but are insensible to the touch. Hitherto I have seen a great number of masks: when shall I behold the faces of mankind? . . .

I began to wander over the orchard thus metamorphosed with a kind of ecstasy; and if I found no exotic plants, nor any of the products of the Indies, I found all those which were natural to the soil, disposed and blended in such a manner as to produce the most cheerful and lively effect. The verdant turf, thick but short and close, was intermixed with wild thyme, balm, sweet marjoram, and other fragrant herbs. You might perceive a thousand wild flowers dazzle your eyes, among which you would be surprised to discover some garden flowers, which seemed to grow natural with the rest. I now and then met with shady tufts, as impervious to the rays of the sun as if they had been in a thick forest. These tufts were composed of trees of a very flexible nature, the branches of which they bend, till they hang on the ground, and take root, as I have seen some trees naturally do in America.

[1] Athenian politician and general (450?-404 B.C.).

In the more open spots, I saw here and there bushes of roses, raspberries, and gooseberries: little plantations of lilac, hazle-trees, alders, seringa, broom, and tretoil, dispersed without any order or symmetry, and which embellished the ground, at the same time that it gave it the appearance of being overgrown with weeds. I followed the track through irregular and serpentine walks, bordered by these flowery thickets, and covered with a thousand garlands composed of vines, hops, rose-weed, snake-weed, and other plants of that kind, with which honeysuckles and jessamine deigned to intertwine. These garlands seemed as if they were scattered carelessly from one tree to another, and formed a kind of drapery over our heads, which sheltered us from the sun; while under foot we had smooth, agreeable, and dry walking upon a fine moss, without sand, or grass, or any rugged shoots. Then it was I first discovered, not without astonishment, that this verdant and bushy umbrage, which had deceived me so much at a distance, was composed of these luxuriant and creeping plants, which running all along the trees, formed a thick foliage overhead, and afforded shade and freshness under foot. I observed likewise, that by means of common industry, they had made several of these plants take root in the trunks of the trees, so that they spread more, being nearer the top. You will readily conceive that the fruit is not the better for these additions; but this is the only spot where they have sacrificed the useful to the agreeable, and in the rest of their grounds they have taken such care of the tree that without the orchard the return of fruit is greater than it was formerly. If you do but consider how delightful it is to meet with wild fruit in the midst of a wood, and to refresh one's self with it, you will easily conceive what a pleasure it must be to meet with excellent and ripe fruit in this artificial desert, though it grows but here and there, and has not the best appearance; which gives one the pleasure of searching, and selecting the best. . . .

You see nothing here in an exact row, nothing level; the line never entered this place; nature plants nothing by the line; the affected irregularity of the winding walks is managed with art, in order to prolong the walk, to hide the boundaries of the island, and to enlarge its extent in appearance, without making inconvenient and too frequent turnings. . . .

I was struck with an idea which made them laugh. "I am supposing to myself (said I) some rich man to be master of this house, and to bring an architect who is paid an extravagant price for spoiling nature. With what disdain would he enter this plain and simple spot! With what contempt would he order these ragged plants to be torn up! What fine lines he would draw! What fine walks he would cut! What fine geese-feet, what fine trees in the shape of umbrellas and fans he would make! What fine arbor-work—nicely cut out! What beautiful grass-plots of fine English turf, round, square, sloping, oval! What fine yew-trees cut in the shape of dragons, pagods, marmoset, and all sorts of monsters! With what fine vases of brass, with what fine fruit in stone he would decorate his garden!" "When he had done all this (said Mr. Wolmar) he would have made a very fine place, which would scarce ever be frequented, and from whence one should always go with eagerness to enjoy the country; a dismal place, where nobody would walk, but only use it as a thoroughfare when they were setting out; whereas, in my rural rambles, I often make haste to return, that I may walk here. . . ."

But probably you do not yet know that Mrs. Orbe, having settled her affairs, arrived here on Thursday last, and resides entirely at the house of her friend. As I knew beforehand the day of her arrival, I set out to meet her, unknown to Mrs. Wolmar, whom she had a mind to surprise: we met on this side Lutri, and returned together. . . .

As she was unwilling Eloisa should hear the rattling of her coach, she got out in the avenue before we came to the gate; and, scudding across the court-yard like a sylph, ran up stairs with so much precipitation that she was obliged to stop and take breath on the first landing place, before she could get up the next flight. Mr. Wolmar came out to meet her, but she was in too much hurry to speak to him. On opening the door of Eloisa's apartment, I saw her sitting near the window, with the little Harriet on her knee. Clara had prepared for her a fine compliment, in her way; a compound of affection and pleasantry; but, on setting her foot over the threshold, compliment and pleasantry were all forgotten; she flew forward to embrace her friend with a transport impossible to be described, crying out, Ah! my dear, dear cousin! Harriet, seeing her mother, fled to meet her, and crying out, "Mama, Mama," ran with so much force against her, that the poor child fell backward on the floor. The effect of the sudden appearance of Clara, the fall of Harriet, the joy, the apprehensions, that seized upon Eloisa at that instant, made her give a violent shriek, and faint away. Clara was going to lift the child, when she saw her friend turn pale, which made her hesitate whom to assist; till, seeing me take up Harriet, she flew to the relief of Eloisa; but, in endeavoring to recover her sunk down likewise in a swoon by the side of her friend.

The child, seeing them both without motion, made

such loud lamentations, as soon brought the little French woman into the room; the one clung about her mother, the other ran to her mistress. For my part, I was so struck, that I stalked about the room, without knowing what I did, venting broken exclamations, and making involuntary motions to no purpose. Wolmar himself, the unsusceptible Wolmar, seemed affected. But where is the heart of iron whom such a scene of sensibility would not affect? Where is the unfortunate mortal from whom such a scene of tenderness would not have extorted tears? Instead of running to Eloisa, this fortunate husband threw himself on a settee, to enjoy the delightful scene. "Be not afraid (says he, seeing our uneasiness). In these accidents nature only is exhausted for a moment, to recover itself with new vigor; they are never dangerous. Let me prevail on you not to interrupt the pleasure I take in this transporting sight, but partake it with me. How ravishingly delightful must it be to you? I never tasted anything like it, and am yet the most unhappy of all here."

You may judge, my lord, by the first moment of their meeting, the consequences of the reunion of these charming friends. It has excited throughout the whole house a sound of gladness, a tumultuous joy, that has not yet subsided.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE (1749-1832)

Into a Germany composed of many disunited and tyrannical petty states its greatest writer was born, the son of an imperial counselor of Frankfort-on-Main. He was equipped with a well-rounded education. A voracious reader, he could hardly have found adequate nourishment in a German literature that was just awaking to greatness after centuries of slumber. He therefore turned to the deeper sources of other literatures, and mastered English and Italian as well as Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. He applied himself to law and the fine arts, too, and was a devoted lover of music. But, like his contemporaries, he found much of his inspiration in the English poets and in the writings of Rousseau.

The renascence in German literature of the eighteenth century was bound up with the struggle of high-spirited men to throw off the shackles of political oppression. Goethe's first important play, in consequence, *Götz von Berlichingen,* appearing in its earliest form in 1773 (and later translated by Sir Walter Scott), was a kind of hymn to freedom. Like many works of the period, it shows the strong impress of Shakespeare.

His love-affair with Charlotte Buff provided him with the materials for his first international success, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*see below*), published in 1774, and written in emulation of Rousseau's *The New Eloisa* (see p. 1143). Few books have made in their time a greater sensation than this silly romance of the blighted love of its hero for the married heroine. Later in life Goethe experienced much chagrin when he remembered this work, its vogue, and the damage it had done.

Soon after, the poet was writing a series of exquisite lyrics which established him as one of Germany's finest lyric poets. When he was twenty-six he was summoned to Weimar by the young duke, Karl August. In 1776 he was made the duke's privy-councilor, an office that was followed by many others during the next thirty years. In 1782 he was granted a patent of nobility. His prolific pen was ever busy, and he turned out innumerable poems, dramas, and the great novel *Wilhelm Meister* (later translated by Carlyle).

His visit to Italy in 1786 served to modify his exuberant and weighty romanticism through his contact with the great contributions of classical art. Among the results was his completion of two of his best plays, *Torquato Tasso* and *Iphigenia in Tauris.* But his major literary work is *Faust,* to the composition of which he devoted sixty years of his life. In his twentieth he had already begun to plan it. Part of it was published in 1790, but he continued to work on it, as his mind deepened and widened, until the year before his death. *Faust* resolves the problem to the solution of which a lifetime of experience and study were devoted: Where can knowledge and contentment be found? Goethe's answer is all-important: in furthering the good of humanity. *Faust* takes its place with the few highest achievements in world literature.

To deal justly with a man of Goethe's universal scope would require far more space than our study will permit. We shall do better therefore to admit that here we have said nothing, and can say nothing, fitting concerning his vast importance to European thought. We must be content to remark that even if we were to give an exhaustive account of him as a literary figure, we should leave unindicated the many-sidedness of this great modern man. He was a critic of literature and the fine arts. His interest in science grew with the years: he made investigations in anatomy and botany, and actually foreshadowed the Darwinian theory in his works on the metamorphosis of plants and animal morphology. When Goethe was an old man, his sympathy with scientific invention and its donations

toward democratic society was equally far in advance of his contemporaries. The world had changed mightily since his youth but he was always at home in it. No wonder Napoleon could exclaim of him: "There indeed is a man!" The modern world has afforded no other example of such universal genius, and it has been well said of him that his greatest work was his life.

But the fact that is important for us is that Goethe's most imposing works were slow to find their way to the English reading public. *Werther* was known a few years after its composition, and immediately adored. It was translated many times, adapted, and dramatized (1785). Unfortunately its very success seems to have interfered with an acquaintance with any of its author's major writings for many years. So far as the English romanticists were concerned, Goethe was the author of *Werther*. Its hero's waistcoat and gloves became the fashion, and the more pathetic incidents of the story were portrayed in pottery.

The vogue of *Werther* was far from beneficial. A wave of suicides followed its popularity. It became something of a poetic consummation of one's misunderstood life to be found dead with a bullet through one's brain, a Werther waistcoast on one's corpse, and a volume of *Werther* in one's hand. Its literary effects were hardly less striking, for *Werther* came to be the personification *par excellence* of a certain tendency in the Romantic Movement. The disappointment of the hopes of radicals in the French Revolution resulted in a great wave of despair over the human lot among the poets of the generation of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The individual seemed thrown back upon himself, convinced that a cruel world had no place for the sensitive. Werther thus became the type of frustrated idealist, too weak and delicate to combat the overwhelmingly prosaic forces of life. The note of disillusionment and despair which he sounded is to be heard in echo in countless pages of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. There are other insistent romantic strains in the novel, too: Werther's love of simplicity —as in the meeting with Charlotte, his impotent resentment at the artificial distinctions of rank, his worship of the apparently wild, untamed pages of Ossian (see p. 53), and his many rhapsodic, grief-ridden apostrophes of a pseudo-philosophic nature.

If so absurd a work had such popularity, it was only because it fell upon times that were emotionally prepared for it. The traditions of sentimentalism made the public ripe, and as the Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic era seemed to have throttled all humanitarian ideals, the book only grew in favor. In consequence, *Werther* is an important index to popular literary taste in the days of the younger romantic poets.

Later in the century when Goethe's masterpieces were better known, *Werther's* true qualities were more justly evaluated. Thackeray's ridicule of the meeting with Charlotte, once thought the height of the beautiful, has been a refreshing antidote to all the extravagant admiration that sentimental episode once evoked:

THE SORROWS OF WERTHER

Werther had a love for Charlotte
Such as words could never utter;
Would you know how first he met her?
She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,
And a moral man was Werther,
And for all the wealth of Indies,
Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sigh'd and pined and ogled,
And his passion boil'd and bubbled,
Till he blew his silly brains out,
And no more by it was troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread and butter.

From THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER

I alighted; and a maid came to the door, and requested us to wait a moment for her mistress. I walked across the court to a well-built house, and ascending the flight of steps in front, opened the door, and saw before me the most charming spectacle I had ever witnessed. Six children, from eleven to two years old, were running around about the hall, and surrounding a lady of noble height, with a lovely figure, dressed in a robe of simple white, trimmed with pink ribbons. She was holding a rye loaf in her hand, and was cutting slices for the little ones all around, in proportion to their age and appetite. She performed her task in a graceful and affectionate manner; each claimant awaiting his turn with outstretched hands, and boisterously shouting his thanks. Some of them ran away at once to enjoy their evening meal; whilst others of a gentler disposition, retired to the courtyard to see the strangers, and to survey the carriage in which their Charlotte was to drive away. "Pray forgive me for giving you the trouble to come for me, and for keeping the ladies waiting: but dressing and arranging some household duties before I leave had made me forget my children's supper; and they do not like to take it from anyone but me." I uttered some indifferent compliment: but my whole soul was

absorbed by her air, her voice, her manner; and I had scarcely recovered my self when she ran into her room to fetch her gloves and fan. The young ones threw inquiring glances at me from a distance; whilst I approached the youngest, a most delicious little creature. He drew back; and Charlotte, entering at the very moment said, "Louis, shake hands with your cousin." The little fellow obeyed willingly; and I could not resist giving him a hearty kiss, notwithstanding his rather dirty face. "Cousin," said I to Charlotte, as I handed her down, "do you think I deserve the happiness of being related to you?" She replied, with a ready smile, "Oh! I have such a number of cousins, that I should be sorry if you were the most undeserving of them." In taking leave, she desired her next sister, Sophy, a girl about eleven years old, to take great care of the children, and to say good-by to papa for her when he came home from his ride. She enjoined to the little ones to obey their sister Sophy as they would herself, upon which some promised that they would; but a little fair-haired girl, about six years old, looked discontented, and said, "But Sophy is not you, Charlotte; and we like you best." The two eldest boys had clambered up the carriage; and at my request, she permitted them to accompany us a little way through the forest, upon their promising to sit very still, and hold fast.

We were hardly seated, and the ladies had scarcely exchanged compliments, making the usual remarks upon each other's dresses, and upon the company they expected to meet, when Charlotte stopped the carriage and made her brothers get down. They insisted upon kissing her hands once more; which the eldest did with all the tenderness of a youth of fifteen, but the other in a lighter and more careless manner. She desired them again to give her love to the children and we drove off.

The aunt inquired of Charlotte whether she had finished the book she had last sent her. "No," said Charlotte; "I did not like it: you can have it again. And the one before was not much better." I was surprised, upon asking the title, to hear that it was ————. I found penetration and character in everything she said: every expression seemed to brighten her features with new charms,—with new rays of genius,—which unfolded by degrees as she felt herself understood.

"When I was younger," she observed, "I loved nothing so much as romances. Nothing could equal my delight when, on some holiday, I could settle down quietly in a corner, and enter with my whole heart and soul into the joys or sorrows of some fictitious Leonora. I do not deny that they even possess some charms for me yet. But I read so seldom, that I prefer books suited exactly to my taste. And I like those authors best whose scenes describe my own situation in life,—and the friends who are about me, whose stories touch me with interest, from resembling my homely existence,—which, without being absolutely paradise, is, on the whole, a source of indescribable happiness."

I endeavored to conceal the emotion which these words occasioned, but it was of slight avail; for, when she had expressed so truly her opinion of "The Vicar of Wakefield," and of other works, the names of which I omit, I could no longer contain myself, but gave full utterance to what I thought of it: and if was not until Charlotte addressed herself to the two other ladies, that I remembered their presence, and observed them sitting mute with astonishment. The aunt looked at me several times with an air of raillery, which, however, I did not at all mind.

We talked of the pleasures of dancing. "If it is a fault to love it," said Charlotte, "I am ready to confess that I prize it above all other amusements. If anything disturbs me, I go to the piano, play an air to which I have danced, and all goes right again directly."

You, who know me, can fancy how steadfastly I gazed upon her rich dark eyes during these remarks, how my very soul gloated over her warm lips and fresh glowing cheeks, how I became quite lost in the delightful meaning of her words, so much so that I scarcely heard the actual expressions. In short, I alighted from the carriage like a person in a dream, and was so lost to the dim world around me, that I scarcely heard the music which resounded from the illuminated ballroom. . . .

How my heart beats when by accident I touch her finger, or my feet meet hers under the table! I draw back as from a furnace; but a secret force impels me forward again, and my senses become disordered. Her innocent, unconscious heart knows what agonies these little familiarities inflict upon me. Sometimes when we are talking she lays her hand upon mine, and in the eagerness of conversation comes closer to me, and her balmy breath reaches my lips,—when I feel as if lightning had struck me, and that I could sink into the earth. And yet, Wilhelm, with all this heavenly confidence,—if I know myself, and should ever dare—you understand me. No, no! my heart is not so corrupt,—it is weak, weak enough—but is not that a degree of corruption?

She is to me a sacred being. All passion is still in her presence: I cannot express my sensations when I am near her. I feel as if my soul beat in every nerve of

my body. There is a melody which she plays on the piano with angelic skill,—so simple is it, and yet so spiritual! It is her favorite air; and, when she plays the first note, all pain, care, and sorrow disappear from me in a moment.

I believe every word that is said of the magic of ancient music. How her simple song enchants me! Sometimes, when I am ready to commit suicide, she sings that air, and instantly the gloom and madness which hung over me are dispersed, and I breathe freely again. . . .

I have just had a sad adventure, which will drive me away from here. I lose all patience!—Death!—It is not to be remedied; and you alone are to blame, for you urged and impelled me to fill a post for which I was by no means suited. I have now reason to be satisfied, and so have you! But, that you may not again attribute this fatality to my impetuous temper, I send you, my dear sir, a plain and simple narration of the affair, as a mere chronicler of facts would describe it.

The Count of O—— likes and distinguishes me. It is well known, and I have mentioned this to you a hundred times. Yesterday I dined with him. It is the day on which the nobility are accustomed to assemble at his house in the evening. I never once thought of the assembly, nor that we subalterns did not belong to such society. Well, I dined with the count; and, after dinner, we adjourned to the large hall. We walked up and down together: and I conversed with him, and with Colonel B——, who joined us; and in this manner the hour for the assembly approached. God knows, I was thinking of nothing, when who should enter but the honorable Lady S——, accompanied by her noble husband and their silly, scheming daughter, with her small waist and flat neck; and, with disdainful looks and haughty air, they passed me by. As I heartily detest the whole race, I determined upon going away; and only waited till the count had disengaged himself from their impertinent prattle, to take leave, when the agreeable Miss B—— came in. As I never meet her without experiencing a heartfelt pleasure, I stayed and talked to her, leaning over the back of her chair, and did not perceive, till after some time, that she seemed a little confused, and ceased to answer me with her usual ease of manner. I was struck with it. "Heavens!" I said to myself, "can she, too, be like the rest?" I felt annoyed, and was about to withdraw; but I remained notwithstanding, forming excuses for her conduct, fancying she did not mean it, and still hoping to receive some friendly recognition. The rest of the company now arrived. There was the Baron F——, in an entire suit that dated from the coronation of Francis I.; the Chancellor N——, with his deaf wife; the shabbily-dressed I——, whose old-fashioned coat bore evidence of modern repairs: this crowned the whole. I conversed with some of my acquaintances but they answered me laconically. I was engaged in observing Miss B——, and did not notice that the women were whispering at the end of the room, that the murmur extended by degrees to the men, that Madame S—— addressed the count with much warmth (this was all related to me subsequently by Miss B——); till at length the count came up to me, and took me to the window. "You know our ridiculous customs," he said. "I perceive the company is rather displeased at your being here. I would not on any account—" "I beg your excellency's pardon!" I exclaimed. "I ought to have thought of this before, but I know you will forgive this little inattention. I was going," I added, "some time ago, but my evil genius detained me." And I smiled and bowed to take my leave. He shook me by the hand in a manner which expressed everything. I hastened at once from the illustrious assembly, sprang into a carriage and drove to M——. I contemplated the setting sun from the top of the hill, and read the beautiful passage in Homer, where Ulysses is entertained by the hospitable herdsmen. This was indeed delightful.

I returned home to supper in the evening. But few persons were assembled in the room. They had turned up a corner of the table-cloth, and were playing at dice. The good-natured A—— came in. He laid down his hat when he saw me, approached me, and said in a low tone, "You have met with a disagreeable adventure." "I!" I exclaimed. "The count obliged you to withdraw from the assembly!" "Deuce take the assembly!" said I. "I was very glad to be gone." "I am delighted," he added, "that you take it so lightly. I am only sorry that it is already so much spoken of." The circumstances then began to pain me. I fancied that every one who sat down, and even looked at me, was thinking of this incident; and my heart became embittered.

And now I could plunge a dagger into my bosom, when I hear myself everywhere pitied, and observe the triumph of my enemies, who say that this is always the case with vain persons, whose heads are turned with conceit, who affect to despise forms and such petty, idle nonsense.

Say what you will of fortitude, but show me the man who can patiently endure the laughter of fools, when they have obtained an advantage over him. 'Tis only when their nonsense is without foundation that one can suffer it without complaint. . . .

Ossian[1] has superseded Homer in my heart. To what a world does the illustrious bard carry me! To wander over pathless wilds, surrounded by impetuous whirlwinds, where, by the feeble light of the moon, we see the spirits of our ancestors; to hear from the mountain-tops, mid the roar of torrents, their plaintive sounds issuing from deep caverns, and the sorrowful lamentations of a maiden who sighs and expires on the mossy tomb of the warrior by whom she was adored. I meet this bard with silver hair; he wanders in the valley; he seeks the footsteps of his fathers, and, alas! he finds only their tombs. Then, contemplating the pale moon, as she sinks beneath, the waves of the rolling sea, the memory of bygone days strikes the mind of the hero,—days when approaching danger invigorated the brave, and the moon shone upon his bark laden with spoils, and returning in triumph. When I read in his countenance deep sorrow, when I see his dying glory sink exhausted into the grave, as he inhales new and heart-thrilling delight from his approaching union with his beloved, and he casts a look on the cold earth and the tall grass which is so soon to cover him, and then exclaims, "The traveller will come—he will come who has seen my beauty, and he will ask, 'Where is the bard,—where is the illustrious son of Fingal?' He will walk over my tomb, and will seek me in vain!" Then, O my friend, I could instantly, like a true and noble knight, draw my sword, and deliver my prince from the long and painful languor of a living death, and dismiss my own soul to follow the demigod whom my hand had set free! . . .

JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER (1759-1805)

Schiller was born at Marbach, the son of an army surgeon who frequently changed his place of residence during the boy's childhood. In 1773 young Schiller was required to attend the military school of the Duke of Würtemburg, where he studied medicine. The severe military discipline of the institution made it a prison for the lad, and he found relief only by secretly nurturing himself on Shakespeare and Rousseau. Surreptitiously, before he was twenty, he composed his first drama, *The Robbers* (*see below*), which he privately read to admiring friends. In 1780 he left the school, and was appointed by the duke to the post of surgeon to a regiment stationed at Stuttgart. His discontent unabated, he poured forth his misery in a series of passionate lyrics. In 1781 he published his play at his own expense. Despite its exaggerated tone and slavish imitation of Shakespeare, the drama possessed noble qualities and became well known. After its performance at Mannheim in 1782, Schiller was arrested for two weeks by the duke, and forbidden to write on any other subject than medicine thereafter. Impatient with this tyranny, he fled to Bauerbach in Thuringia. In 1783 he was given the appointment of "theatre-poet" in Mannheim. Later he moved to Leipzig, and thence to Weimar, where he met Goethe, with whom he became very intimate. In 1789 he was made professor of history at Jena. His final years, however, were spent at Weimar.

Schiller is one of Germany's greatest poets, and is famous both for his lyrics and his dramas. In addition to his shorter poems, critical essays, and *History of the Thirty Years' War*, his most important works are his plays: *Wallenstein*, *The Maid of Orleans*, *Mary Stuart*, and *William Tell*. His was the great voice of his contemporaries' struggle for liberty during a time of insufferable repression in Germany. His optimism, his faith in freedom, and his clarity of vision have made him a source of endless consolation to the German people.

Like Goethe, Schiller was for many years known to the English reader only as the author of his early, immature work. It was Henry Mackenzie, the author of *The Man of Feeling* (see I, p. 792), who first introduced him into England. *The Robbers* was translated in 1792, and hailed as a masterpiece. In the glory accorded that work, his other creations remained long unknown to most Englishmen. Byron and Shelley were acquainted chiefly with that drama, and it would seem that Coleridge alone among the early romantics of the century came to know Schiller's mature work.

The popularity in England of *The Robbers* was a result of its being, as was *Werther*, an exemplification of an important aspect of the Romantic Movement. In fact, *Werther* and *The Robbers* are like two sides of the same medal. The hero of *Werther* personified for the romantics the sensitive soul who was crushed by society and its forces; the hero of *The Robbers* personified the sensitive soul who, disillusioned by society and its forces, turned to wage unyielding war against it. Both characters came to be identified with the despair consequent upon the collapse of ideals with the failure of the French Revolution; the difference between them is the difference between the man who is frustrated and the man who refuses to surrender. The anti-social hero, glorified in *The Robbers*, who, because of wrongs

[1] See p. 55.

done him, becomes the personal avenger of the world's ills, is to be met often in English romantic literature, notably in all of Byron's heroes. Schiller's Charles von Moor, betrayed by a perfidious brother, outlaws himself from respectability, and sets himself up as a kind of Robin Hood, who robs the rich to help the poor. At the end, he finds his battle to have been fruitless, and gives himself up to the law so that a laborer with eleven children may collect the reward set on his head.

The Robbers is here excerpted not to demonstrate Schiller's great genius, which it does very inadequately, but to indicate a leading pattern of romantic hero. The inflated style and highly emotional speeches are in the oratorical manner much affected by the romantics, particularly Byron among the great poets. To us today the play seems like a rigmarole of several of Shakespeare's plots (e.g. *King Lear*), and reads like a series of misquotations from that poet.

From THE ROBBERS

ACT I; SCENE 2

Enter CHARLES VON MOOR *in violent agitation, stalking backwards and forwards, and speaking to himself.*

CHARLES VON M. Man—man! false, perfidious crocodile-brood! Your eyes are all tears, but your hearts steel! Kisses on your lips, but daggers couched in your bosoms! Even lions and tigers nourish their young. Ravens feast their brood on carrion, and he—he!—Malice I have learned to bear; and I can smile when my fellest enemy drinks to me in my own heart's blood—but when kindred turn traitors, when a father's love becomes a fury's hate;—oh, then, let manly resignation give place to raging fire!—the gentle lamb become a tiger!—and every nerve strain itself to vengeance and destruction!

ROLLER. Hark ye, Moor! What think you of it? A robber's life is pleasanter, after all, than to lie rotting on bread and water in the lowest dungeon of the castle?

CHARLES VON M. Why was not this spirit implanted in a tiger, which gluts its raging jaws with human flesh? Is this a father's tenderness? Is this love for love? Would I were a bear, to rouse all the bears of the north against this murderous race!—Repentance, and no pardon! Oh, that I could poison the ocean, that men might drink death from every spring! Contrition, implicit reliance, and no pardon!

ROLLER. But listen, Moor,—listen, to what I am telling you!

VON M. 'Tis incredible! 'tis a dream—a delusion! Such earnest entreaty, such a vivid picture of misery and tearful penitence—a savage beast would have been melted to compassion! stones would have wept, and yet he—it would be thought a malicious libel upon human nature, were I to proclaim it—and yet, yet—oh, that I could sound the trumpet of rebellion through all creation, and lead air, and earth, and sea, into battle array against this generation of hyenas!

GRIMM. Hear me, only hear me! You are deaf with raving.

CHARLES VON M. Avaunt, avaunt! Is not thy name man? Art thou not born of woman? Out of my sight, thou thing of human visage! I loved him so unutterably!—never son so loved a father; I would have sacrificed a thousand lives for him—[*foaming and stamping the ground*]. Ha! where is he that will put a sword into my hand, that I may strike this generation of vipers to the quick! Who will teach me how to reach their heart's core, to crush, to annihilate the whole race?—Such a man shall be my friend. my angel, my god—him will I worship!

ROLLER. Such friends behold in us; be but advised!

SCHW. Come with us into the Bohemian forest! We will form a band of robbers there, and you—[MOOR *stares at him*].

SCHWEIT. You shall be our captain! you must be our captain!

SPIEGEL. [*throws himself into a chair in a rage*]. Slaves and cowards!

CHARLES VON M. Who inspired thee with that thought? Hark, fellow! [*grasping* ROLLER *tightly*] that human soul of thine did not produce it; who suggested it to thee? Yes, by the thousand arms of death! that's what we will, and what we must do! the thought's divine. He who conceived it deserves to be canonized. Robbers and murderers! As my soul lives, I am your captain!

ALL [*with tumultuous shouts*]. Hurrah! long live our captain!

SPIEGEL. [*starting up, aside*]. Till I give him his *coup de grace*![1]

CHARLES VON M. See, it falls like a film from my eyes! What a fool was I to think of returning to be caged! My soul's athirst for deeds, my spirit pants for freedom. Murderers, robbers! with these words I trample the law under foot—mankind threw off humanity, when I appealed to it—Away, then, with human sympathies and mercy! I no longer have a father, no longer affections; blood and death shall teach me to forget that anything was ever dear to me! Come! come! Oh, I will recreate myself with some most fearful vengeance;—'tis resolved, I am your captain! and success to him who shall spread fire and

[1] death blow.

slaughter the widest and most savagely—I pledge myself he shall be right royally rewarded. Stand around me, all of you, and swear to me fealty and obedience unto death! Swear by this trusty right hand.

ALL [*place their hands in his*]. We swear to thee fealty and obedience unto death!

CHARLES VON M. And, by this same trusty right hand, I here swear to you to remain your captain, true and faithful unto death! This arm shall make an instant corpse of him who doubts, or fears, or retreats. And may the same befall me from your hands, if I betray my oath! Are you content?

[*Spiegelberg runs up and down in a furious rage.*]

ALL [*throwing up their hats*]. We are content!

CHARLES VON M. Well, then, let us be gone! Fear neither death nor danger, for an unalterable destiny rules over us. Every man has his doom, be it to die on the soft pillow of down, or in the field of blood, or on the scaffold, or the wheel! One or the other of these must be our lot! [*Exeunt.*

SPIEGEL. [*looking after them, after a pause*]. Your catalogue has a hole in it. You have omitted poison. [*Exit.*

ACT II; SCENE 3

Enter CHARLES VON MOOR (*on horseback*), SCHWEITZER, ROLLER, GRIMM, SCHUFTERLE, *and a troop of* ROBBERS (*covered with dust and mud*).

CHARLES [*leaping from his horse*]. Liberty! Liberty!—Thou art on terra firma, Roller!—Take my horse, Schweitzer, and wash him with wine. [*Throws himself on the ground.*] That was hot work!

RAZ. [*to* ROLLER]. Well, by the fires of Pluto! Art thou risen from the wheel?

SCHWARZ. Art thou his ghost? or am I a fool? or art thou really the man?

ROLLER. [*still breathless*]. The identical—alive—whole.—Where do you think I come from?

SCHWARZ. It would puzzle a witch to tell! The staff was already broken over you.

ROLLER. Ay, that it was, and more than that! I come straightway from the gallows. Only let me get my breath. Schweitzer will tell you all. Give me a glass of brandy!—You there too, Spiegelberg? I thought we should have met again in another place.—But give me a glass of brandy! my bones are tumbling to pieces.—Oh, my captain! Where is my captain?

SCHWARZ. Have patience, man, have patience. Just tell me—say—come, let's hear—how did you escape? In the name of wonder how came we to get you back again? My brain is bewildered.—From the gallows, you say?

ROLLER [*swallows a flask of brandy*]. Ah, that is capital! that warms the inside!—Straight from the gallows, I tell you. You stand there and stare as if that was impossible.—I can assure you, I was not more than three paces from that blessed ladder, on which I was to mount to Abraham's bosom—so near, so very near, that I was sold, skin and all, to the dissecting room!—The fee-simple of my life was not worth a pinch of snuff.—To the captain I am indebted for breath, and liberty, and life.

SCHWEITZER. It was a trick worth the telling. We had heard the day before, through our spies, that Roller was in the devil's own pickle; and unless the vault of heaven fell in suddenly, he would, on the morrow—that is, today—go the way of all flesh.—Up! says the captain, and follow me—what is not a friend worth? Whether we save him or not, we will at least light him up a funeral pile such as never yet honoured royalty; one which shall burn them black and blue.—The whole troop was summoned. We sent Roller a trusty messenger, who conveyed the notice to him in a little billet, which he slipped into his porridge—

ROLLER. I had but small hope of success.

SCHWEITZER. We waited till the thoroughfares were clear.—The whole town was out after the sight; equestrians, pedestrians, carriages, all pell-mell; the noise and the gibbet-psalm sounded far and wide. Now, says the captain, light up, light up!—We all flew like darts; they set fire to the city in three-and-thirty places at once; threw burning firebrands on the powder magazines, and into the churches and granaries.—*Morbleu!* in less than a quarter of an hour a north-easter, which, like us, must have owed a grudge to the city, came seasonably to our aid, and helped to lift the flames up to the highest gables. Meanwhile we ran up and down the streets like furies, crying, fire! ho! fire! ho! in every direction.—There was such howling—screaming—tumult—fire-bells tolling.—And presently the powder-magazine blew up into the air with a crash as if the earth were rent in twain, heaven burst to shivers, and hell sunk ten thousand fathoms deeper.

ROLLER. Now my guards looked behind them—there lay the city, like Sodom and Gomorrah—the whole horizon was one mass of fire, brimstone, and smoke; and forty hills echoed and reflected the infernal prank far and wide—A panic seized them all—I take advantage of the moment, and, quick as lightning—my fetters had been taken off, so nearly was my time come—while my guards were looking away petrified, like Lot's wife—I shot off—tore through the crowd—and away!—After running some

sixty paces I throw off my clothes, plunge into the river, and swim along under water till I think they have lost sight of me.—My captain stood ready, with horses and clothes—and here I am.—Moor! Moor! I only wish that you may soon get into just such another scrape, that I may requite you in like manner.

RAZ. A brutal wish, for which you deserve to be hanged.—It was a glorious prank though.

ROLLER. It was help in need; you cannot judge of it.—You should have marched, like me, with a rope around your neck, travelling to your grave in the living body, and seen their horrid sacramental forms and hangman's ceremonies—and then, at every reluctant step, as the struggling feet were thrust forward, to see the infernal machine, on which I was to be elevated, glaring more and more hideously in the blaze of the noon-day sun—and the hangman's rascallions watching for their prey—and the horrible psalm singing—the cursed twang still rings in my ears—and the screeching hungry ravens, a whole flight of them, who were hovering over the half-rotten carcase of my predecessor.—To see all this—ay, more, to have a foretaste of the blessedness which was in store for me!—Brother, brother!—And then, all of a sudden, the signal of deliverance.—It was an explosion as if the vault of heaven were rent in twain.—Hark ye, fellows! I tell you, if a man were to leap out of a fiery furnace into a freezing lake, he could not feel the contrast half so strongly as I did when I gained the opposite shore.

SPIEGEL [*laughs*]. Poor wretch! Well, you have got over it. [*Pledges him.*] Here's to a happy regeneration!

ROLLER [*flings away his glass*]. No, by all the treasures of Mammon, I should not like to go through it a second time. Death is something more than a harlequin's leap, and its terrors are even worse than death itself.

SPIEGEL. And the powder magazine leaping into the air!—Don't you see it now, Razman?—That was the reason the air stunk so, for miles round, of brimstone, as if the whole wardrobe of Moloch, was being aired under the open firmament.—It was a master-stroke, captain! I envy you for it.

SCHWEITZER. If the town makes it a holiday treat to see our comrade killed like a baited hog, why the devil should we scruple to sacrifice the city for the rescue of our comrade? And, by the way, our fellows had the extra treat of being able to plunder worse than the old emperor.—Tell me, what have you sacked?

ONE OF THE TROOP. I crept into St. Stephen's church during the hubbub and tore the gold lace from the altar cloth. The patron saint, thought I to myself, can make gold lace out of packthread.

SCHWEITZER. 'Twas well done.—What is the use of such rubbish in a church? They offer it to the Creator, who despises such trumpery, while they leave his creatures to die of hunger.—And you, Sprazeler—where did you throw your net?

A SECOND. I and Brizal broke into a merchant's store, and have brought stuffs enough with us to serve fifty men.

A THIRD. I have filched two gold watches and a dozen silver spoons.

SCHWEITZER. Well done, well done! And we have lighted them a bonfire that will take a fortnight to put out again. And, to get rid of the fire, they must ruin the city with water.—Do you know, Schufterle, how many lives have been lost?

SCHUF. Eighty-three, they say. The powder-magazine alone blew three-score to atoms.

CHARLES [*very seriously*]. Roller, thou art dearly bought.

SCHUF. Bah! bah! What of that?—If they had but been men, it would have been another matter—but they were babes in swaddling clothes, and shriveled old nurses that kept the flies from them, and dried-up stove-squatters who could not crawl to the door—patients whining for the doctor, who, with his stately gravity, was marching to the sport.—All that had the use of their legs had gone forth to the sight, and nothing remained at home but the dregs of the city.

CHARLES. Alas, for the poor creatures! Sick people, sayest thou? old men and infants?

SCHUF. Ay, the devil go with them! And lying-in women into the bargain; and women far gone with child, who were afraid of miscarrying under the gibbet; and young mothers, who thought the sight might do them a mischief, and mark the gallows upon the foreheads of their unborn babes—poor poets, without a shoe, because their only pair had been sent to the cobbler to mend—and other such vermin, not worth the trouble of mentioning.—As I chanced to pass by a cottage, I heard a great squalling inside. I looked in; and, when I came to examine, what do you think it was? Why, an infant—a plump and ruddy urchin—lying on the floor under a table which was just beginning to burn.—Poor little wretch! said I, you will be cold there, and with that I threw it into the flames—

CHARLES. Indeed, Schufterle?—Then may those flames burn in thy bosom to all eternity!—Avaunt, monster! Never let me see thee again in my troop! What! Do you murmur?—Do you hesitate?—Who

dares hesitate when I command?—Away with him, I say!—And there are others among you ripe for my vengeance.—I know thee, Spiegelberg.—But I will step in among you ere long, and hold a fearful muster-roll. [*Exeunt, trembling.*

CHARLES [*alone, walking up and down in great agitation*]. Hear them not, thou avenger in heaven!—How can I avert it? Art thou to blame, great God, if thy engines, pestilence, and famine, and floods, overwhelm the just with the unjust? Who can stay the flame, which is kindled to destroy the hornet's nest, from extending to the blessed harvest?—Oh! fie on the slaughter of women, and children, and the sick!—How this deed weighs me down! It has poisoned my fairest achievements!—There he stands, poor fool, abashed and disgraced in the sight of heaven; the boy that presumed to wield Jove's thunder, and overthrew pigmies when he should have crushed Titans.—Go, go! 'tis not for thee, puny son of clay, to wield the avenging sword of sovereign justice! Thou didst fail at thy first essay.—Here, then, I renounce the audacious scheme.—I go to hide myself in some deep cleft of the earth, where no daylight will be witness of my shame.

ACT III; SCENE 2

Country near the Danube.

THE ROBBERS (*encamped on a rising ground, under trees; their horses are grazing below*).

CHARLES. Here must I lie [*throwing himself on the ground*]. I feel as if my limbs were all shattered. My tongue is as dry as a potsherd. [SCHWEITZER *disappears unperceived.*] I would ask one of you to bring me a handful of water from that stream, but you are all tired to death.

SCHWARZ. Our wine-flasks too are all empty.

CHARLES. See how beautiful the harvest looks!—The trees are breaking with the weight of their fruit.—The vines are full of promise.

GRIMM. It is a fruitful year.

CHARLES. Do you think so?—Then, at least, *one* toil in the world will be repaid. One?—Yet in the night a hail-storm may come and destroy it all.

SCHWARZ. That is very possible. It may all be destroyed an hour before the reaping.

CHARLES. Just what I say.—All will be destroyed. Why should man prosper in that which he has in common with the ant, while he fails in that which places him on a level with the gods?—Or is this the aim and limit of his destiny?

SCHWARZ. I know not.

CHARLES. Thou hast said well; and wilt have done better, if thou never seekest to know!—Brother, I have looked on men, their insect cares and their giant projects,—their god-like plans and mouse-like occupations, their intensely eager race after happiness—one trusting to the fleetness of his horse,—another to the nose of his ass,—a third to his own legs; this chequered lottery of life, in which so many stake their innocence and their Heaven to snatch a prize, and—blanks are all they draw—for they find, too late, that there was no prize in the wheel. It is a drama, brother, enough to bring tears into your eyes, while it shakes your sides with laughter.

SCHWARZ. How gloriously the sun is setting yonder!

CHARLES. [*absorbed in the scene*]. So dies a hero!—Worthy of adoration.

SCHWARZ. You seem deeply moved.

CHARLES. When I was but a boy—it was my darling thought to live like him, like him to die—[*with suppressed grief*].—It was a boyish thought!

GRIMM. It was indeed.

CHARLES. There was a time—[*pressing his hat down upon his face*]—I would be alone, comrades.

SCHWARZ. Moor! Moor! Why what the deuce! How his colour changes.

GRIMM. By all the devils! What ails him? Is he ill?

CHARLES. There was a time when I could not have slept, had I forgotten my evening prayers—

GRIMM. Are you beside yourself? Would you let the remembrance of your boyish years school you now?

CHARLES [*lays his head upon the breast of Grimm*]. Brother! Brother!

GRIMM. Come! Don't play the child—I pray you—

CHARLES. Oh that I were—that I were again a child!

GRIMM. Fie! fie!

SCHWARZ. Cheer up! Behold this smiling landscape—this delicious evening!

CHARLES. Yes, friends, this world is very lovely—

SCHWARZ. Come, now, that was well said.

CHARLES. This earth so glorious!—

GRIMM. Right—right—I love to hear you talk thus.

CHARLES [*sinking back*]. And I so hideous in this lovely world—a monster on this glorious earth!

GRIMM. Oh dear! oh dear!

CHARLES. My innocence! give me back my innocence! Behold, every living thing is gone forth to bask in the cheering rays of the vernal sun—why must I alone inhale the torments of hell out of the joys of heaven?—All are so happy, all so united in brotherly love, by the Spirit of peace!—The whole

world *one* family, and one Father above—but He not *my* father!—I alone the outcast, I alone rejected from the ranks of the blessed—the sweet name of child is not for me—never for me the soul-thrilling glance of her I love—never, never the bosom friend's embrace—[*starting back wildly*]—surrounded by murderers—hemmed in by hissing vipers—riveted to vice with iron fetters—whirling headlong on the frail reed of sin to the gulf of perdition—amid the blooming flowers of a glad world, a howling Abaddon![2]

SCHWARZ [*to the others*]. How strange! I never saw him thus before.

CHARLES [*with melancholy*]. Oh, that I might return again to my mother's womb! That I might be born a beggar!—I should desire no more,—no more, oh heaven!—but that I might be like as one of those poor labourers!—Oh, I would toil till the blood streamed down my temples,—to buy myself the luxury of one guiltless slumber—the blessedness of a single tear.

GRIMM [*to the others*]. A little patience—the paroxysm is nearly over.

CHARLES. There was a time when my tears flowed so freely—Oh, those days of peace!—Dear home of my fathers—ye verdant halcyon vales!—O all ye Elysian scenes of my childhood!—Will you never return?—will your delicious breezes never cool my burning bosom?—Mourn with me, Nature, mourn!—They will never return! never will their delicious breezes cool my burning bosom!—They are gone! gone! irrevocably gone!—

ACT V; LAST SCENE

CHARLES. Oh! fool that I was, to fancy that I could amend the world by misdeeds, and maintain law by lawlessness!—I called it vengeance and equity.—I presumed, O Providence! upon whetting out the notches of thy sword, and repairing thy partialities.—But—O vain trifling!—here I stand on the brink of a fearful life, and learn, with wailing and gnashing of teeth, that *two men like myself could ruin the whole edifice of the moral world.* Pardon—pardon the boy who thought to forestall Thee— To *Thee Alone* belongeth vengeance— Thou needest not the hand of man!—But it is not in my power to recall the past—That which is ruined remains ruined—What I have thrown down will never more rise up again.—Yet one thing is left me, whereby I may atone to the offended majesty of the law, and restore the order which I have violated. A victim is required—a victim to declare before all mankind how inviolable that majesty is—that victim shall be myself.—I will be the death offering!

ROBBERS. Take his sword from him—he will kill himself.

CHARLES. Fools that ye are! doomed to eternal blindness! Think ye that one mortal sin will expiate other mortal sins? Do you suppose that the harmony of the world would be promoted by such an impious discord? [*Throwing his arms at their feet.*] He shall have me alive.—I go, to deliver myself into the hands of justice.

ROBBERS. Put him in chains! he has lost his senses!

CHARLES. Not that I have any doubt but that justice would find me speedily enough, if the powers above so ordained it. But she might surprise me in sleep, or overtake me in flight, or seize me with violence and the sword, and then I should have lost the only merit left me, that of making my death a freewill atonement. Why should I, like a thief, any longer conceal a life, which in the counsels of the heavenly ministry has long been forfeited?

ROBBERS. Let him go. He is infected with the great-man-mania; he means to offer up his life for empty admiration.

CHARLES. I might, 'tis true, be admired for it. [*After a moment's reflection.*] I remember, on my way hither, talking to a poor creature, a day-labourer, with eleven living children.—A reward has been offered of a thousand Louis-d'ors to any one who shall deliver up the great robber alive.—That man shall be served. [*Exit.*

END

CONSTANTIN FRANÇOIS CHASSE-BOEUF, COUNT VOLNEY (1757-1820)

Volney was born February 3, 1757, at Craon, France, and spent four years early in life in Egypt and Syria. He published an account of his travels in 1787. Later he was a member both of the States-General and of the Constituent Assembly. His most important book, *The Ruins of Empires,* appeared in 1791; an essay on the philosophy of history, it predicted the unification of all religious faiths through an understanding that they all contain common truth. In 1792 he bought an estate in Corsica, and attempted to put his political theories into practice. He was imprisoned during the Terror,

[2] the bottomless pit; see *Revelation,* 9:11.

but escaped execution. In 1795 he came to the United States, where he remained until 1798. Though he was not of Napoleon's party, the Emperor rewarded his studies by making him a count and giving him a place in the Senate. He died in Paris on April 25, 1820.

Luxuriating in the melancholy popularized by Rousseau and the English graveyard poets, Volney finds himself, in *The Ruins of Empires*, among the remains of the city of Palmyra, where he is moved to meditate on the rise and decay of great nations, and concludes that tyranny and oppression were responsible for their downfall. He envisions a society in the future in which men will wisely possess peace and kindliness.

The book, although no longer read by his compatriots, was very popular with the younger romantics, and Shelley in particular owed much to it. Echoes of it will be found in *Ozymandias* (see p. 270) and *Queen Mab*.

From THE RUINS OF EMPIRES

THE REVERIE

Here, said I, once flourished an opulent city; here was the seat of a powerful empire. Yes! these places now so wild and desolate, were once animated by a living multitude; a busy crowd thronged in these streets, now so solitary. Within these walls, where now reigns the silence of death, the noise of the arts, and the shouts of joy and festivity incessantly resounded; these piles of marble were regular palaces; these fallen columns adorned the majesty of temples; these ruined galleries surrounded public places. Here assembled a numerous people for the sacred duties of their religion, and the anxious cares of their subsistence; here industry, parent of enjoyments, collected the riches of all climes, and the purple of Tyre[1] was exchanged for the precious thread of Serica[2]; the soft tissues of Cassimere[3] for the sumptuous tapestry of Lydia[4]; the amber of the Baltic for the pearls and perfumes of Arabia; the gold of Ophir[5] for the tin of Thule.[6]

And now behold what remains of this powerful city: a miserable skeleton! What of its vast domination: a doubtful and obscure remembrance! To the noisy concourse which thronged under these porticoes, succeeds the solitude of death. The silence of the grave is substituted for the busy hum of public places; the affluence of a commercial city is changed into wretched poverty; the palaces of kings have become a den of wild beasts; flocks repose in the area of temples, and savage reptiles inhabit the sanctuary of the gods. Ah! how has so much glory been eclipsed? how have so many labors been annihilated? Do thus perish then the works of men—thus vanish empires and nations?

And the history of former times revived in my mind; I remembered those ancient ages when many illustrious nations inhabited these countries; I figured to myself the Assyrian on the banks of the Tigris, the Chaldean on the banks of the Euphrates, the Persian reigning from the Indus to the Mediterranean. I enumerated the kingdoms of Damascus and Idumea,[7] of Jerusalem and Samaria, the war-like states of the Philistines, and the commercial republics of Phœnicia. This Syria, said I, now so depopulated, then contained a hundred flourishing cities, and abounded with towns, villages, and hamlets. In all parts were seen cultivated fields, frequented roads, and crowded habitations. Ah! whither have flown those ages of life and abundance? —whither vanished those brilliant creations of human industry? Where are those ramparts of Nineveh, those walls of Babylon, those palaces of Persepolis,[8] those temples of Balbec[9] and of Jerusalem? Where are those fleets of Tyre, those dock-yards of Arad,[10] those work-shops of Sidon,[11] and that multitude of sailors, of pilots, of merchants, and of soldiers? Where those husbandmen, harvests, flocks, and all the creation of living beings in which the face of the earth rejoiced? Alas! I have passed over this desolate land! I have visited the palaces, once the scene of so much splendor, and I beheld nothing but solitude and desolation. I sought the ancient inhabitants and their works, and found nothing but a trace, like the foot-prints of a traveler over the sand. The temples are fallen, the palaces overthrown, the ports filled up, the cities destroyed; and the earth, stripped of inhabitants, has become a place of sepulchres. Great God! whence proceed such fatal revolutions? What causes have so

[1] famous city of ancient Phoenicia, celebrated for its purple dyes.

[2] probably identical with northern China.

[3] a country lying between India, Turkestan, and Tibet, usually spelled Cashmere.

[4] an ancient kingdom on the western coast of Asia Minor.

[5] a country mentioned in the Old Testament as famous for its gold and other treasures. It has been variously identified.

[6] a name given by ancient geographers to certain countries of northern Europe, including Great Britain. The reference here is probably to the tin mines of Cornwall.

[7] the ancient kingdom of Edom, lying to the south of the Dead Sea.

[8] the ancient capital of Persia.

[9] a city to the northwest of Damascus, formerly the center of worship of the sun-god Baal.

[10] Canaanitish city. See *Joshua*, 12:14.

[11] an ancient Phoenician city at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

changed the fortunes of these countries? Wherefore are so many cities destroyed? Why has not this ancient population been reproduced and perpetuated?

Thus absorbed in meditation, a crowd of new reflections continually poured in upon my mind. Every thing, continued I, bewilders my judgment, and fills my heart with trouble and uncertainty. When these countries enjoyed what constitutes the glory and happiness of man, they were inhabited by infidel nations: It was the Phœnician, offering human sacrifices to Moloch,[12] who gathered into his stores the riches of all climates; it was the Chaldean, prostrate before his serpent-god, who subjugated opulent cities, laid waste the palaces of kings, and despoiled the temples of the gods; it was the Persian, worshiper of fire, who received the tribute of a hundred nations; they were the inhabitants of this very city, adorers of the sun and stars, who erected so many monuments of prosperity and luxury. Numerous herds, fertile fields, abundant harvests—what-soever should be the reward of piety—was in the hands of these idolaters. And now, when a people of saints and believers occupy these fields, all is become sterility and solitude. The earth, under these holy hands, produces only thorns and briers. Man soweth in anguish, and reapeth tears and cares. War, famine, pestilence, assail him by turns. And yet, are not these the children of the prophets? The Mussulman, Christian, Jew, are they not the elect children of God, loaded with favors and miracles? Why, then, do these privileged races no longer enjoy the same advantages? Why are these fields, sanctified by the blood of martyrs, deprived of their ancient fertility? Why have those blessings been banished hence, and transferred for so many ages to other nations and different climes?

At these words, revolving in my mind the vicissitudes which have transmitted the sceptre of the world to people so different in religion and manners from those in ancient Asia to the most recent of Europe, this name of a natal land revived in me the sentiment of my country; and turning my eyes toward France, I began to reflect on the situation in which I had left her in 1782.

I recalled her fields so richly cultivated, her roads so admirably constructed, her cities inhabited by a countless people, her fleets spread over every sea, her ports filled with the produce of both the Indies: and then comparing the activity of her commerce, the extent of her navigation, the magnificence of her buildings, the arts and industry of her inhabitants, with what Egypt and Syria had once possessed, I was gratified to find in modern Europe the departed splendor of Asia; but the charm of my reverie was soon dissolved by a last term of comparison. Reflecting that such had once been the activity of the places I was then contemplating, who knows, said I, but such may one day be the abandonment of our countries? Who knows if on the banks of the Seine, the Thames, the Zuyder-Zee,[13] where now, in the tumult of so many enjoyments, the heart and the eye suffice not for the multitude of sensations,—who knows if some traveler, like myself, shall not one day sit on their silent ruins, and weep in solitude over the ashes of their inhabitants, and the memory of their former greatness?

At these words, my eyes filled with tears: and covering my head with the fold of my mantle, I sank into gloomy meditations on all human affairs. Ah! hapless man, said I in my grief, a blind fatality sports with thy destiny! A fatal necessity rules with the hand of chance the lot of mortals! But no: it is the justice of heaven fulfilling its decrees!—a God of mystery exercising his incomprehensible judgments! Doubtless he has pronounced a secret anathema against this land: blasting with maledictions the present, for the sins of past generations. Oh! who shall dare to fathom the depths of the Omnipotent?

And sunk in profound melancholy, I remained motionless.

SOURCES OF THE EVILS OF SOCIETY

In truth, scarcely were the faculties of men developed, when, inveigled by objects which gratify the senses, they gave themselves up to unbridled desires. The sweet sensations which nature had attached to their real wants, to endear to them their existence, no longer satisfied them. Not content with the abundance offered by the earth or produced by industry, they wished to accumulate enjoyments, and coveted those possessed by their fellow men. The strong man rose up against the feeble to take from him the fruit of his labor; the feeble invoked another feeble one to repel the violence. Two strong ones then said:—

"Why fatigue ourselves to produce enjoyments which we may find in the hands of the weak? Let us join and despoil them; they shall labor for us, and we will enjoy without labor."

And the strong associating for oppression, and the weak for resistance, men mutually afflicted each other; and a general and fatal discord spread over the earth, in which the passions, assuming a thousand new forms, have generated a continued chain of misfortunes.

Thus the same self-love which, moderate and pru-

[12] See I, p. 626.

[13] an arm of the sea on which Amsterdam is located.

dent, was a principle of happiness and perfection, becoming blind and disordered, was transformed into a corrupting poison; and cupidity, offspring and companion of ignorance, became the cause of all the evils that have desolated the earth.

Yes, ignorance and cupidity! These are the twin sources of all the torments of man! Biased by these into false ideas of happiness, he has mistaken or broken the laws of nature in his own relation with external objects; and injuring his own existence, has violated individual morality; shutting through these his heart to compassion, and his mind to justice, he has injured and afflicted his equal, and violated social morality. From ignorance and cupidity, man has armed against man, family against family, tribe against tribe; and the earth is become a theatre of blood, of discord, and of rapine. By ignorance and cupidity, a secret war, fermenting in the bosom of every state, has separated citizen from citizen; and the same society has divided itself into oppressors and oppressed, into masters and slaves; by these, the heads of a nation, sometimes insolent and audacious, have forged its chains within its own bowels; and mercenary avarice has founded political despotism. Sometimes, hypocritical and cunning, they have called from heaven a lying power, and a sacrilegious yoke; and credulous cupidity has founded religious despotism. By these have been perverted the ideas of good and evil, just and unjust, vice and virtue; and nations have wandered in a labyrinth of errors and calamities.

The cupidity of man and his ignorance,—these are the evil genii which have wasted the earth! These are the decrees of fate which have overthrown empires! These are the celestial anathemas which have smitten these walls once so glorious, and converted the splendor of a populous city into a solitude of mourning and of ruins! But as in the bosom of man has sprung all the evils which have afflicted his life, there he also is to seek and to find their remedies.

MOSCHUS (fl. 150 B.C.)

Among the disciples of the Greek Theocritus (see I, p. 1068), father of pastoral poetry, were the Sicilian poet Moschus, who was born at Syracuse, and Bion, of Smyrna. Little of their work has survived, and we know nearly nothing of their lives. Even their dates are uncertain. Formerly it was supposed that Bion was a contemporary of Theocritus and tutor to Moschus. On metrical grounds, however, scholars have established him as writing in the first half of the first century B.C. If this conclusion is correct it merely opens the question of whether he can possibly be the Bion celebrated in Moschus's most famous poem. Bion's authorship of *The Lament for Adonis*, on the other hand, has been a strong argument for assuming him to be the subject of Moschus's elegy.

What is possible to state, however, is that *A Lament for Bion* has been the model for the pastoral elegy, and in particular for the two greatest pastoral elegies in English—*Lycidas* (see I, p. 609) and *Adonais* (see p. 287).

A LAMENT FOR BION

(Translated by J. H. Hallard)

Wail me a sad lament, ye dells and Dorian water;
Weep, ye rivers, aloud for Bion the darling of all.
Trees and plants, make moan, ye groves, give voice to your mourning;
Clustering flowers, breathe forth grief from your garlands of woe.
Blush, ye roses, blush; ye wind-flowers, redden with anguish;
Hyacinth, loudlier speak that lamentation of thine,
Loudlier speak that word of woe enwrit on thy petals,
Cry more shrilly "alas!", for dead is the minstrel sweet.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Nightingales sadly warbling your lays in the leafy branches,
Hie you to Sicily now and tell Arethusa this:
"Gone is Bion the herdsman; with him all singing hath perished,
Music is now no more; mute is the Dorian strain;"
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Swans on the Strymon river, oh raise your sad lamentation,
Chant with your moaning mouths music of bitterest woe,
Yea, such a ditty as eld will one day grant you to carol;
Say to your native nymphs: "The Dorian Orpheus is dead."
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

He that was dear to the herds no longer singeth among them,
Sits no longer, alas! under the lonely oaks;
Nay, but in Pluto's realm[1] he hymns a forgetful ditty;
Dumb are the vales and hills, silent the mountains all.
Even the very kine that roam with the bulls in the meadow

[1] Hades.

Are wailing, and now no more care on the pasture to browse.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Apollo himself too wept for the fate untimely of Bion,
The satyrs and dark-clad sons of the garden-god all wept.
The Pans[2] bewail thee in song, and the nymphs of the streams in the woodland
Uttered a woeful cry, and the fountains turned to tears.
Echo,[3] her rocks among sore grieveth she now is voiceless;
Never again any more to return thee the lay from thy lips,
Fruit-trees cast their fruits, and the sweet flowers all of them wither;
No juice flows from the apples, no honey flows from the combs;
Shrunken it rots in the wax; for the honey of thy sweet singing
Flowing no more, what needs honey of bees to be culled?
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Not so mourned that Siren of old on the lone sea-beaches,
Not so pensively sang the Nightingale 'mong the leaves;
Ne'er on the heights of the hills so plaintively piped the Swallow,[4]
Never did Ceyx[5] grieve so for her Halcyon's fate;
Not so fluted the Ceryl[6] of yore on the green sea-billows,
Never so keened the birds down in the dells of the East,
Fluttering round the tomb of Memnon,[7] son of the Morning,
As when they all made moan at the passing of Bion away.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

The nightingales and the swallows to whom he taught their music,
They who had loved him well, wailed at the foot of the trees,
Wailed in a chorus of woe, and in song antiphonal chanted:
"Sorrowing birds, make moan, for ye are his mourners too."
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

O, thou thrice-beloved, who now shall play on thy pan-pipe,
Who that will dare lay mouth unto its reeds again?
For still it breathes of thy lips, still breathes with the breath of thy singing,
And Echo still on thy songs feeds in the tuneful pipes.
Lo, shall I bear it a gift unto Pan? Ah, haply the goat-god
Were afraid he should win, e'en he, only the second award!
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Now Galatea[8] regrets thy songs, whom of old thou rejoiced'st
There as she sat by thy side down by the sea-bank's edge.
Sweeter thy songs were to her than the songs of her swain Polyphemus;
Him did the fair nymph fly; dearer wert thou than the wave.
Now, all heedless of ocean, she sits on the lone sea-beaches,
Or, haply, among the hills tendeth the herd that was thine.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Perished along with thee now are all the gifts of the Muses,
Passionate kisses of girls, passionate kisses of boys.
Sorrowing round thy corse the Loves are weeping and wailing;
Cypris[9] regrets thee more than Adonis' dying kiss.
O Meles,[10] river of all most sad, this grief is another,
This is a second woe—Homer of old too died,
He that sweetest voice of Calliope[11]; him too, men say,

[2] wood-spirits.
[3] the nymph who pined away for love of Narcissus until nothing was left but her voice.
[4] Procne's husband Tereus violated Philomela, her sister, and then deprived her of her tongue so that she might not tell of the deed. The sisters were turned into birds—Procne, a swallow; Philomela a nightingale.
[5] Ceyx was drowned at sea and the body was found by his wife Alcyone (or Halcyon). The gods took pity on her grief and changed the pair into kingfishers (alcyones).
[6] a seabird of the halcyon-kind.
[7] The statue at Thebes in Egypt said to emit harplike sounds under the first rays of the sun.
[8] See I, p. 1071.
[9] Venus.
[10] a river at Smyrna.
[11] Muse of heroic poetry.

All thy waters bewailed, him, of thy children the best.
Yea, and the sea was filled with thy voice, and now for another
Son thou dost weep, yea, now wailest another woe.
Dear were thy both to the wells of song; for of fount Hippocrene,[12]
Homer drank, but Bion, fount Arethusa,[13] of thee.
Homer of Helen told, and Achilles and brave Menelaüs;
Bion sang no wars, nothing for tears or wail.
Pan and the keepers of kine were the gentle themes of our herdsman;
Pan-pipes too he made, and his sweet-breathed heifer milked.
Yea, and he taught us the love of boys, and roused in our bosoms
All Aphrodite's charm, all the delights of desire.
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Every famous city, and every town doth lament thee;
Ascra[14] for thee grieves more far than for Hesiod dead;
Not so much do the woods of Boeotia sorrow for Pindar,
Not so much for Alcaeus mourneth Lesbos the fair;
Not so sore for Anacreon waileth the Teian city;
More than for Archilochus Paros lamenteth for thee;
Thy songs more than Sappho's chanteth sad Mitylene,
And Syracuse now in thee another Theocritus hails.
I from the western land of Ausonia[15] bring thee a poem,
I that from thee did learn the pastoral strains I know;
For I did inherit thy Dorian Muse; thy wealth unto others
Didst thou leave, but to me the guerdon of country song.
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Woe is me! When the mallows and parsley green in the garden
Fade, and the curling dill that bloometh so fresh and fair,
They ever live again, and flourish anew in the spring-time,
When the revolving year bringeth their season back;
But we mighty and strong, we men so wise in our wisdom,
Whenso we perish, are laid heedless in hollow Earth,
Sleeping the long, long, endless sleep that knows not of waking,
Even as thou shalt lie swathèd in silence for aye.
And now the nymphs all deem they hear but the marsh-frog warbling,
And little I envy them that; for his is an ugly song!
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Poison came to thy lips, O Bion, poison assailed thee.
How could so bitter a thing on *thy* lips not turn sweet?
Who could of mortals be so cruel as mix thee a death-cup,
Or give it to thee at thy call? Nameless in song shall they be.
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

But Retribution was theirs! And to me is left lamentation.
Ah, if as Orpheus of old, or Odysseus, or Heracles, I,
I could have gone down too unto Hades, thither had *I* gone,
E'en unto Pluto's house to behold thee; and if that thou sing
There unto Hades' Lord, I had hearkened thee. Now to the Maiden
Raise a Sicilian song, thou, sing her a pastoral lay.
She a Sicilian is, that Queen,[16] and played on the sea-shore
Under the Etna crags, and she knows the Dorian strain.
Not unguerdoned shall be thy song, and, e'en as to Orpheus,
That sweet harper, she gave to lead his Eurydice back,
So unto thee will she give to return to the hills, O Bion—
Ah, and had *my* song power, I too to Pluto had sung.

[12] The spring of the Muses.
[13] a spring in Sicily mythically said to be the exit of a river which had run under the sea. The nymph Arethusa being pursued by the river-god Alpheus was changed by Artemis into this stream.
[14] Here follows a list of birthplaces of Greek poets.
[15] Italy.
[16] Proserpine.

EURIPIDES (480-406 B. C.)

Of the great Greek tragic dramatists, Euripides is the most modern in tone. More than his predecessors, Aeschylus and Sophocles, he was interested in presenting his stories and characters in a realistic manner. What makes him particularly close to us is his attention to the psychological values of the incidents in his various dramas. Eighteen of his ninety-two plays survive, the best of them being *Medea, Iphigenia in Aulis* (cf. *below*), *Hippolytus, The Suppliants, Electra,* and *The Trojan Women.* William Morris's (see p. 605) *Life and Death of Jason* is much indebted to *Medea.*

We make no pretense of representing Euripides by the two brief fragments which follow. We include them chiefly to make possible a comparison between them and Landor's *Iphigenia and Agamemnon* (see p. 327). But Euripides's humanity can be read even in this small compass.

The story of *Iphigenia in Aulis* tells of Agamemnon's pledge to Diana that he would sacrifice to her his dearest possession, his daughter Iphigenia, so that the goddess would grant a favorable wind to allow the ships of the expedition against Troy to sail from Aulis.

From IPHIGENIA IN AULIS

IPHIGENIA. Had I, my father, the persuasive voice
Of Orpheus, and his skill to charm the rocks
To follow me, and soothe whome'er I please
With winning words, I would make trial of it;
But I have nothing to present thee now
Save tears, my only eloquence; and those
I can present thee. On thy knees I hang,
A suppliant wreath, this body, which she bore
To thee. Ah! kill me not in youth's fresh prime.
Sweet is the light of heaven; compel me not
What is beneath to view. I was the first
To call thee father, me thou first didst call
Thy child; I was the first that on thy knees
Fondly caressed thee, and from thee received
The fond caress; this was thy speech to me:
"Shall I, my child, e'er see thee in some house
Of splendor, happy in thy husband, live?
And flourish, as becomes my dignity?"
My speech to thee was, leaning 'gainst thy cheek,
Which with my hand I now caress; "And what
Shall I then do for thee? Shall I receive
My father when grown old, and in my house
Cheer him with each fond office, to repay
The careful nurture which he gave my youth?"
These words are on my memory deep impressed;
Thou hast forgot them, and wilt kill thy child.
By Pelops[1] I entreat thee, by thy sire
Atreus, by this my mother, who before
Suffered for me the pangs of childbirth, now
These pangs again to suffer, do not kill me.
If Paris be enamored of his bride,
His Helen, what concerns it me? and how
Comes he to my destruction? Look upon me,
Give me a smile, give me a kiss, my father,
That, if my words persuade thee not, in death
I may have this memorial of thy love.

. . . . .

Hear then what to my mind
Deliberate thought presents. It is decreed
For me to die: this then I wish, to die
With glory, all reluctance banished far.
My mother, weigh this well, what I speak
Is honor's dictate. All the powers of Greece
Have now their eyes on me; on me depends
The sailing of the fleet, the fall of Troy,
And not to suffer, should anew attempt
Be dared, the rude Barbarians from blest Greece
To bear in future times her dames by force,
This ruin bursting on them for the loss
Of Helena, whom Paris bore away.
By dying all these things shall I achieve,
And blest, for that I have delivered Greece,
Shall be my fame. To be fond of life
Becomes not me; not for thyself alone,
But to all Greece a blessing, didst thou bear me.
Shall thousands, when their country's injured, lift
Their shields, shall thousands grasp the oar, and dare,
Advancing bravely 'gainst the foe, to die
For Greece? And shall my life, my single life,
Obstruct all this? Would this be just? What word
Can we reply? Nay more; it is not right
That he with all the Grecians should contend
In fight, should die, and for a woman. No;
More than a thousand women is one man
Worthy to see the light of life. If me
The chaste Diana wills t'accept, shall I,
A mortal, dare oppose her heavenly will?
Vain the attempt: for Greece I give my life.
Slay me, demolish Troy: for these shall be
Long time my monuments, my children these,
My nuptials, and my glory. It is meet
That Greece should o'er Barbarians bear the sway,
Not that Barbarians lord it over Greece:
Nature hath formed them slaves, the Grecians free.

[1] grandfather of Agamemnon.

GIORGIO VASARI (1511-1574)

Although he was an able architect and painter, Vasari's chief claim to immortality is his series of *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. Living in an age of wretched taste, after the decline of the great Renaissance in the Italian fine arts, he was a man of superior judgment able to appreciate the masterpieces of the older artists (like Cimabue and Giotto). His *Lives*, first published in 1550, and rewritten and expanded in 1568, are the chief sources for our knowledge of the history of the arts in Italy during the Renaissance. Some such service Ruskin attempted to perform in his studies of *Modern Painters* (see p. 707).

Vasari's style is engaging, and his biographies are rendered more sprightly by the interspersion of anecdote. Though recent research has revised portions of Vasari's history, his work remains authoritative, sound in its critical judgments, and a classic in its field. It was a favorite with Browning, to whom it suggested the materials for his *Fra Lippo Lippi* (see p. 511) and *Andrea del Sarto* (see p. 516).

Mrs. Foster's translation was published in 1850.

From LIVES OF THE MOST EMINENT PAINTERS, SCULPTORS, AND ARCHITECTS

The Florentine Painter, Fra Filippo Lippi

(Born 1412—Died 1469)

Translated by Mrs. Jonathan Foster

The Carmelite monk, Fra Filippo di Tommaso Lippi, was born at Florence in a bye street called Ardiglione, under the Canto alla Cuculia, and behind the convent of the Carmelites. By the death of his father he was left a friendless orphan at the age of two years, his mother having also died shortly after his birth. The child was for some time under the care of a certain Mona Lapaccia, his aunt, the sister of his father, who brought him up with very great difficulty till he had attained his eighth year, when, being no longer able to support the burden of his maintenance, she placed him in ~~the~~ above-named convent of the Carmelites. Here, in proportion as he showed himself dexterous and ingenious in all works performed by hand, did he manifest the utmost dulness and incapacity in letters, to which he would never apply himself, nor would he take any pleasure in learning of any kind. The boy continued to be called by his worldly name of Filippo, and being placed with others, who like himself were in the house of the novices, under the care of the master, to the end that the latter might see what could be done with him; in place of studying, he never did any thing but daub his own books, and those of the other boys, with caricatures, whereupon the prior determined to give him all means and every opportunity for learning to draw. The chapel of the Carmine had then been newly painted by Masaccio, and this being exceedingly beautiful, pleased Fra Filippo greatly, wherefore he frequented it daily for his recreation, and, continually practising there, in company with many other youths, who were constantly drawing in that place, he surpassed all the others by very much in dexterity and knowledge; insomuch that he was considered certain to accomplish some marvellous thing in the course of time. For not only in his youth, but when almost in his childhood, he performed so many praiseworthy labors, that it was only wonderful. While still very young he painted a picture in *terra verde*,[1] in the cloister, near Masaccio's painting of the Consecration; the subject of which was a Pope confirming the Rule of the Carmelites, with others in fresco on several of the walls in different parts of the church: among these was a figure of St. John the Baptist, with stories from the life of that saint. Proceeding thus, and improving from day to day, he had so closely followed the manner of Masaccio, and his works displayed so much similarity to those of the latter, that many affirmed the spirit of Masaccio to have entered the body of Fra Filippo. On one of the pillars of the church, near the organ, he depicted the figure of San Marziale, a work by which he acquired great fame, seeing that it was judged to bear a comparison with those executed by Masaccio. Whereupon, hearing himself so highly commended by all, he formed his resolution at the age of seventeen, and boldly threw off the clerical habit.

Some time after this event, and being in the march of Ancona,[2] Filippo was one day amusing himself with certain of his friends in a boat on the sea, when they were all taken by a Moorish galley which was cruising in that neighborhood, and led captives into Barbary, where he remained, suffering many tribulations, for eighteen months. But, having frequent opportunities of seeing his master, it came into his head one day to draw his portrait; and finding an opportunity, he took a piece of charcoal from the fire, and with that delineated his figure at full length on a white wall, robed in his Moorish vestments. This being related to the master by the other slaves, to all of whom it appeared a miracle, the arts of drawing and painting not being practised in that country, the cir-

[1] a kind of green pigment prepared from the mineral glauconite.

[2] a district in eastern Italy on the Adriatic Sea.

cumstance caused his liberation from the chains in which he had so long been held. And truly that was greatly to the glory of that noble art; for here was a man to whom belonged the right of condemning and punishing, but who, in place of inflicting pains and death, does the direct contrary, and is even led to show friendship, and restore the captive to liberty. Having afterwards executed certain works in painting for his master, he was then conducted safely to Naples, where he painted a picture on panel for king Alfonso, then Duke of Calabria, which was placed in the chapel of the castle, where the guard-room now is. But after no long time he conceived a wish to return to Florence, where he remained some months, during which time he painted an altar-piece for the nuns of Sant' Ambrogio, a most beautiful picture, by means of which he became known to Cosimo de' Medici,[3] who was thereby rendered his most assured friend. . . .

In Prato, near Florence, where Fra Filippo had some relations, he took up his abode for some months, and there executed various works for the whole surrounding district, in company with the Carmelite, Fra Diamante, who had been his companion in noviciate. Having then received a commission from the nuns of Santa Margherita, to paint a picture for the high altar of their church, he one day chanced to see the daughter of Francesco Buti, a citizen of Florence, who had been sent to the Convent either as a novice or boarder. Fra Filippo, having given a glance at Lucrezia, for such was the name of the girl, who was exceedingly beautiful and graceful, so persuaded the nuns, that he prevailed on them to permit him to make a likeness of her, for the figure of the Virgin in the work he was executing for them. The result of this was, that the painter fell violently in love with Lucrezia, and at length found means to influence her in such a manner, that he led her away from the nuns, and on a certain day, when she had gone forth to do honor to the Cintola of our Lady, a venerated relic preserved at Prato and exhibited on that occasion, he bore her from their keeping. By this event the nuns were deeply disgraced, and the father of Lucrezia was so grievously afflicted thereat, that he never more recovered his cheerfulness, and made every possible effort to regain his child. But Lucrezia, whether retained by fear or by some other cause, would not return, but remained with Filippo, to whom she bore a son, who was also called Filippo, and who eventually became a most excellent and very famous painter like his father.

In the church of San Domenico, in this same Prato, are two pictures by this master, and in the transept of the church of San Francesco is another, a figure of the Virgin namely. Desiring to remove this work from its original place, the superintendents, to save it from injury, had the wall on which it was depicted cut away, and having secured and bound it with woodwork, thus transported it to another wall of the church, where it is still to be seen. Over a well, in the court-yard of the Ceppo of Francesco di Marco, there is a small picture on panel by this master, representing the portrait of the above-named Francesco di Marco, the author and founder of that pious establishment. In the Capitular Church of Prato, on a small tablet which is over the side door as one ascends the steps, Fra Filippo depicted the death of San Bernardo, by the touch of whose bier many lame persons are restored to health. In this work are monks bewailing the loss of their master; and the exquisite grace of their heads, the truth and beauty with which their grief, and the plaintive expression of their weeping, are conveyed to the spectator, is a thing marvelous to behold. Some of the hoods and draperies of these monks have most beautiful folds, and the whole work merits the utmost praise for the excellence of its design, composition, and coloring, as well as for the grace and harmony of proportion displayed in it, completed as it is by the most delicate hand of Filippo. He was also appointed by the wardens of the same church, who desired to retain a memorial of him, to paint the chapel of the High Altar, and here we have likewise good evidence of his power, for besides the excellence of the picture as a whole, there are certain heads and draperies in it which are most admirable. In this work Fra Filippo made the figures larger than life, and hereby instructed later artists in the mode of giving true grandeur to large figures. There are likewise certain figures clothed in vestments but little used at that time, whereby the minds of others were awakened, and artists began to depart from that sameness which should rather be called obsolete monotony than antique simplicity. In the same work are stories from the life of Santo Stefano, to whom the church is dedicated; they cover the wall on the right side, and consist of the Disputation, the Stoning and the Death of the Protomartyr. In the first of these, where St. Stephen is disputing with the Jews, the countenance of the saint exhibits so much zeal and fervor, that it is difficult even to imagine; how much more than to give it expression: while, in the faces and attitudes of these Jews, their hatred and rage, with the anger they feel at finding themselves vanquished by the saint, are equally manifest. Still more forcibly has he depicted the brutal rage of those who slew the martyr with stones, which they grasp, some large, others smaller

[3] Florentine banker and statesman (1389-1464).

ones, with grinding teeth, horrible to behold, and with gestures of demoniac rage and cruelty. St. Stephen, calm and steadfast in the midst of their terrible violence, is seen with his face towards heaven, imploring the pardon of the Eternal Father for those who thus attack him, with the utmost piety and fervor. This variety of expression is certainly very fine, and is well calculated to teach students of art the value of imitative power, and the importance of being able to express clearly the affections and emotions of the characters represented. Fra Filippo devoted the most earnest attention to this point, as is seen in this work; he has given the disciples who are burying St. Stephen attitudes so full of dejection, and faces so deeply afflicted, so drowned in tears, that it is scarcely possible to look at them without feeling a sense of sorrow. On the other side of the chapel is the History of St. John the Baptist, his Birth, that is to say, his Preaching in the Wilderness, his Baptism, the Feast of Herod, and the Decapitation of the Saint. In the picture of the Preaching, the Divine Spirit inspiring the speaker is most clearly manifest in his face, while the different emotions of hope, anxiety, gladness, and sorrow, of the crowd, women as well as men, who are listening around him, charmed and mastered by the force of his words, are equally well expressed. In the Baptism are beauty and goodness exemplified, and in the Feast of Herod, the splendor of the banquet, the address of Herodias, the astonishment of the guests, and their inexpressible sorrow when the head is presented on the charger, are rendered with admirable truth and effect. Among those present at the banquet are numerous figures in fine attitudes, exhibiting beautiful draperies and exquisite expressions of countenance. A portrait of Fra Filippo himself, taken with his own hand by help of a mirror, is one of them, and among the persons who bewail the death of St. Stephen, is the portrait of his disciple Fra Diamante, in a figure robed in black, and bearing the vestments of a bishop. This work is indeed the best of all that he produced, as well for the many fine qualities displayed in it, as for the circumstance, that having made the figures somewhat larger than life, he encouraged those who came after him to enlarge their manner. Fra Filippo was indeed so highly estimated for his great gifts, that many circumstances in his life which were blamable received pardon, and were partly placed out of view, in consideration of his extraordinary abilities. In the work just described is the portrait of Messer Carlo, natural son of Cosimo de' Medici, who was rector of the church wherein it was executed, which had received large benefactions both from him and his house. . . .

The Most Excellent Florentine Painter, Andrea del Sarto

(Born 1488—Died 1530)

Translated by Mrs. Jonathan Foster

At length then we have come, after having written the lives of many artists who have been distinguished, some for coloring, some for design, and some for invention; we have come, I say, to that of the truly excellent Andrea del Sarto, in whom art and nature combined to show all that may be done in painting, when design, coloring, and invention unite in one and the same person. Had this master possessed a somewhat bolder and more elevated mind, had he been as much distinguished for higher qualifications as he was for genius and depth of judgment in the art he practised, he would beyond all doubt, have been without an equal. But there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardor and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character, should ever appear in him; nor did he at any time display one particle of that elevation which, could it but have been added to the advantages wherewith he was endowed, would have rendered him a truly divine painter: wherefore the works of Andrea are wanting in those ornaments of grandeur, richness, and force, which appear so conspicuously in those of many other masters. His figures are nevertheless well drawn, they are entirely free from errors, and perfect in all their proportions, and are for the most part simple and chaste: the expression of his heads is natural and graceful in women and children, while in youths and old men it is full of life and animation. The draperies of this master are beautiful to a marvel, and the nude figures are admirably executed, the drawing is simple, the coloring is most exquisite, nay, it is truly divine. . . .

These three (paintings) were given to public view accordingly, and in one of them Andrea was found to have depicted the circumstance of San Filippo clothing the naked, after he had taken the monastic habit. Another represented the same Saint when he was reproving certain gamesters; these men, blaspheming God and scorning the admonition of San Filippo, are making a mockery of his words, when suddenly there falls a lightning-flash from Heaven, which striking the tree under which they were seated, kills two of their number. All the rest are instantly seized with indescribable terror, some raising their hands to their heads, cast themselves in desperation to the earth,

others seek safety in flight, with looks full of horror. Among these is a woman wild with the terror caused by the sound of the thunder, and rushing along with so natural and life-like a movement, that she seems to be indeed alive. A horse, having torn himself loose in his flight, betrays the terror he feels at the outcries around him, by rearing aloft, and in all his movements gives evidence of the effect produced by the unexpected disturbance. The whole work, in short, proves the forethought with which Andrea considered all that the various circumstances of such an event as he was depicting required, and gives testimony of a care and diligence which is certainly most commendable, as well as needful to him who would exercise the art of painting. In the third of these pictures San Filippo delivers a woman from evil spirits, and this also is delineated with all those considerations which can be imagined as proper to the due representation of such an event; wherefore all these pictures obtained for Andrea very great honor and fame. . . .

These various labors secured so great a name for Andrea in his native city, that among the many artists, old and young, who were then painting, he was accounted one of the best that handled pencil and colors. Our artist then found himself to be not only honored and admired, but also in a condition, notwithstanding the really mean price that he accepted for his labors, which permitted him to render assistance to his family, while he still remained unoppressed for his own part, by those cares and anxieties which beset those who are compelled to live in poverty. But having fallen in love with a young woman whom on her becoming a widow he took for his wife, he found that he had enough to do for the remainder of his days, and was subsequently obliged to work much more laboriously than he had previously done; for in addition to the duties and liabilities which engagements of that kind are wont to bring with them, Andrea del Sarto found that he had brought on himself many others; he was now tormented by jealousy, now by one thing, now by another; but ever by some evil consequence of his new connection.[1]

[1] In the first edition of Vasari, the history of Andrea's marriage is given at greater length. Our author there says: "At that time there was a most beautiful girl in the Via di San Gallo, who was married to a capmaker, and who, though born of a poor and vicious father, carried about her as much pride and haughtiness as beauty and fascination. She delighted in trapping the hearts of men, and among others ensnared the unlucky Andrea, whose immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art, and in great measure to discontinue the assistance which he had given to his parents.

"Now it chanced that a sudden and grievous illness seized the husband of this woman, who rose no more from his bed, but died thereof. Without taking counsel of his friends therefore; without regard to the dignity of his art or the consideration due to his genius, and to the eminence he had attained with so much labor; without a word, in short, to any of his kindred, Andrea took this Lucrezia di Baccio del Fede, such was the name of the woman, to be his wife; her beauty appearing to him to merit thus much at his hands, and his love for her having more influence over him than the glory and honor towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances. But when this news became known in Florence, the respect and affection which his friends had previously borne to Andrea changed to contempt and disgust, since it appeared to them that the darkness of this disgrace had obscured for a time all the glory and renown obtained by his talents.

"But he destroyed his own peace as well as estranged his friends by this act, seeing that he soon became jealous, and found that he had besides fallen into the hands of an artful woman, who made him do as she pleased in all things. He abandoned his own poor father and mother, for example, and adopted the father and sisters of his wife in their stead; insomuch that all who knew the facts, mourned over him, and he soon began to be as much avoided as he had previously been sought after. His disciples still remained with him, it is true, in the hope of learning something useful, yet there was not one of them, great or small, who was not maltreated by his wife, both by evil words and despiteful actions: none could escape her blows, but although Andrea lived in the midst of all that torment, he yet accounted it a great pleasure."

While Andrea was thus laboring over these works in Florence poorly remunerated for his toils, living in wretched poverty and wholly incapable of raising himself from his depressed condition, the two pictures which he had sent into France, were obtaining much admiration from King Francis, and among the many others which had been despatched to him from Rome, Venice, and Lombardy, these had been adjudged to be by far the best. That monarch therefore, praising them very highly, was told that he might easily prevail on Andrea to visit France, when he might enter the service of His Majesty; this proposal was exceedingly agreeable to the king, who therefore gave orders that everything needful should be done for that purpose, and that a sum of money for the expenses of the journey, should be paid to Andrea in Florence. The latter gladly set forth on his way to France accordingly, taking with him his scholar Andrea Sguazzella.

Having in due time arrived at the French court, they were received by the monarch very amicably and with many favors; even the first day of his arrival was marked to Andrea by proofs of that magnanimous sovereign's liberality and courtesy, since he at once received not only a present of money, but the added gift of very rich and honorable vestments. He soon afterwards commenced his labors, rendering himself so acceptable to the king as well as to the whole court,

and receiving so many proofs of good-will from all, that his departure from his native country soon appeared to our artist to have conducted him from the extreme of wretchedness to the summit of felicity. One of Andrea's first works in France was the portrait of the Dauphin, the son of the king, a child born but a few months previously, and still in his swathing bands; wherefore, having taken this painting to the king, he received in return three hundred ducats of gold.

Continuing his labors, he afterwards painted a figure of Charity for King Francis; this was considered an exceedingly beautiful picture, and was held by that monarch in all the estimation due to so admirable a work. From that time the king commanded that a very considerable income should be annually paid to Andrea, doing his utmost to induce the painter to remain contentedly at his court, and promising that he should never want for anything that he could desire; and this happened because the promptitude of Andrea in his works, and the easy character of the man, who was satisfied with everything around him, were both agreeable to King Francis; he gave very great satisfaction to the whole court also, painting numerous pictures and executing various works of different kinds for the nobles.

And now, had Andrea del Sarto only reflected on all that he had escaped from, and duly weighed the advantageous character of that position to which fate had conducted him, I make no doubt but that, to say nothing of riches, he might have attained to great honors. But one day being employed on the figure of a St. Jerome doing penance, which he was painting for the mother of the king, there came to him certain letters from Florence; these were written to him by his wife, and from that time (whatever may have been the cause) he began to think of leaving France; he asked permission to that effect from the French king accordingly, saying that he desired to return to Florence, but that when he had arranged his affairs in that city, he would return without fail to his majesty; he added, that when he came back his wife should accompany him, to the end that he might remain in France the more quietly; and that he would bring with him pictures and sculptures of great value. The king, confiding in these promises, gave him money for the purchase of those pictures and sculptures, Andrea taking an oath on the gospels to return within the space of a few months, and that done he departed to his native city.

He arrived safely in Florence, enjoying the society of his beautiful wife and that of his friends, with the sight of his native city during several months; but when the period specified by the king, and that at which he ought to have returned, had come and passed, he found himself at the end, not only of his own money, but what with building, indulging himself in various pleasures and doing no work, of that belonging to the French monarch also, the whole of which he had consumed. He was nevertheless determined to return to France, but the prayers and tears of his wife had more power than his own necessities, or the faith which he had pledged to the king; he remained therefore in Florence, and the French monarch was so greatly angered thereby, that for a long time after he would not look at the paintings of Florentine masters, and declared that if Andrea ever fell into his hands he would have no regard whatever to the distinction of his endowments, but would do him more harm than he had done him good. Andrea del Sarto remained in Florence therefore, as we have said, and from a highly eminent position he sank to the very lowest, procuring a livelihood and passing his time as he best might.

We conclude, then, with the opinion, that if Andrea displayed no great elevation of mind in the actions of his life, and contented himself with little, yet, it is not to be denied, that he manifested considerable elevation of genius in his art, or that he gave proof of infinite promptitude and ability in every kind of labor connected therewith; nor will any refuse to admit, that his works form a rich ornament to every place wherein they are found; nay, more, it is most certain that he conferred great benefits on his contemporaries in art, by the examples he left them in manner, design, and coloring; his works exhibiting fewer errors than those of any other Florentine; seeing that Andrea, as I have said before, understood the management of light and shade most perfectly, causing the objects depicted to take their due degree of prominence, or to retire within the shadows, with infinite ability, and painting his pictures with the utmost grace and animation. He likewise taught the method of working in fresco with perfect harmony, and without much retouching *a secco*,[2] which causes all his pictures in that manner to appear as if they were executed in a day; wherefore this master may serve as an example to the Tuscan artists on all occasions. He is entitled to the highest praise among the most eminent of their number, and well merits to receive the palm of honor.

[2] in the dry.

FRANÇOIS VILLON (1431-146-?)

That rogue, vagabond, Master of Arts, and poet who was named Villon has stimulated the genius of many writers, from Hugo to Stevenson, to recreate his reckless person in their pages. Twice he escaped hanging by the narrowest of margins, and much of his verse was written in prison. His *Petit Testament* and *Grand Testament*, which contain most of his ballades, show his great originality. Though composing in the conventionally complicated and artificial forms of the medieval poets, he infused into these traditional modes of expression a new note—that of poignant personal feeling. This appealing egoism makes him one of the first of the moderns, for it marks a break with the allegorizing of the Middle Ages.

His simplicity and directness have won him many admirers. But his Bohemianism and his concern with the neglected and the pathetic caused him to be a particular favorite of the later Victorians. His ability to "smile in tears" and his tender irony sounded an echo in the breasts of Rossetti and Swinburne, both of whom paraphrased some of his ballades. His technical dexterity within the confines of charming, if artificial, French forms made him all the more delectable to them.

THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES

(*Translated by D. G. Rossetti*)

Tell me now in what hidden way is
  Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thaïs,[1]
  Neither of them the fairer woman?
  Where is Echo,[2] beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
  She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloïse, the learned nun,
  For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?[3]
  (From Love he won such dule and teen![4])
  And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
  Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . .[5]
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
  With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
  And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—
  And that good Joan[6] whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
  Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
  Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword,—
  "But where are the snows of yester-year?"

[1] Famous ladies of antiquity. Flora may be the Goddess of Flowers or else a courtesan mentioned by Juvenal (Satire II, line 49). Hipparchia has been a puzzle to scholars. Thaïs was mistress of Alexander the Great.

[2] The nymph in Greek mythology who was reduced to a voice.

[3] Abelard, a famous scholar and theologian of the early twelfth century, won the love of Heloise, his pupil. They eloped and were married. Her uncle caused him to be emasculated.

[4] grief and pain.

[5] Marguerite, queen of Louis X of France who entertained lovers, among them Buridan, and then threw them into the Seine.

[6] Joan of Arc.

THE EPITAPH IN FORM OF A BALLAD

WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMRADES, EXPECTING TO BE HANGED ALONG WITH THEM

(*Translated by A. C. Swinburne*)

Men, brother men, that after us yet live,
  Let not your hearts too hard against us be;
For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
  The sooner God shall take of you pity.
  Here are we five or six strung up, you see,
And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
  And we the bones grow dust and ash withal;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
  But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
  Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law; ye know that all alive
  Have not wit alway to walk righteously;
  Make therefore intercession heartily
With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
  For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall;
We are dead, let no man harry or vex us dead,
  But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
  And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,

Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
  Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
  Our beards and eyebrows; never we are free,
Not once, to rest; but here and there still sped,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
  More pecked of birds than fruits on garden-wall;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
  But pray to God that he forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed;
  We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
  But pray to God that he forgive us all.

ALFRED DE MUSSET (1810-1857)

Foremost among French romantics of the famous 1830's, Alfred de Musset was a poet, playwright, and novelist. Born in Paris, he studied first law and then medicine but was unable to endure any profession. At 19, his first volume, *Tales of Spain and Italy,* won him immediate success, provoked very bitter opposition, and was soon followed by many unworthy imitations.

His famous *Ballade to the Moon*—a verse parody of certain creations of the romantic school—appeared in this volume. A fantastic little poem with a constantly recurring comparison between the moon shining above a steeple and the dot over an i, it puzzled both classicists and romantics and was taken quite seriously by the critics—much to Musset's great delight.

Asked to contribute to the *Revue des deux mondes,* he published two plays: *André del Sarto* in April 1833 and *Les Caprices de Marianne* six weeks later. The latter play best exhibits Musset's particular quality—that of mingling the grotesque with high comedy.

All his life, Musset was nervous, oversensitive, and high-strung. But as he grew older, his very gifts were a source of torture to him. The brilliance of the prodigy gave way to a dim frustration. He lost neither his talent nor his genius, but any capacity he did have for work. Before he was forty, he was a senescent child—spoiled, frightened, unequal to his lifelong combat with the mediocrity he despised. Musset retreated more and more behind a natural hysteria aggravated by heavy drinking and abortive love affairs. His most celebrated affair with George Sand formed the substance of at least three contemporary volumes: George Sand's own confession, *Elle et Lui;* Paul de Musset's *Lui et Elle*—a bitter attack by Musset's brother against the Lélia who misled "the poor child," his brother; and *Lui,* written by Musset's last mistress, Louise Colet. But Paul de Musset's *Biographie* of his brother testifies to his gentleness, his ability to inspire affection in his contemporaries, and his naïveté in a world too unscrupulous for his understanding.

Musset's own character worked both for and against his success as a writer. His consciousness of his own weakness produced so beautiful a work—to take an instance—as the *Night of October.* All the *Night* poems are triumphs—tributes both to Musset's genius as a poet, and to his understanding as a man. His *Nouvelles* are extraordinarily brilliant. He was one of the first, the most original, and the most successful of the first-rate writers of "the 1830 period." And his greatness was recognized by his own contemporaries in spite of his opponents. In his later years, he was elected (though not without heavy opposition) to the French Academy.

Today, he holds the position Sainte-Beuve once accorded him, then denied, and then again accorded him—as a poet of the first rank. A highly colorful figure in a highly colorful movement, he contributed to and was destroyed by Romanticism. The poem that follows very well exhibits French Romanticism at its most characteristic. It was such poetry that Swinburne and his contemporaries preferred to the earlier English variety of the same school.

ON A DEAD LADY

(Translated by Germaine Loir)

She is dead, nor did she ever live!
The pretense ended in this quiet tomb
When the sombre voice that speaks of Doom
To other men bespoke her hence to give
To death the life she held so tentative—
That ephemeral spark, the hazy bloom
That quickly withered in the even gloom
Of moments fleeting and insensitive.

Once lovely, as a silent, starless night
Is lovely, radiant as the shaded rays
That shone upon her coffin and its band
Of weary watchers there in Death's despite,
She lies, unheeding these as other days,
The book of life still closed in her dead hand.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE (1821-1867)

Into one comparatively brief life Baudelaire crowded several lifetimes of excess. Nature had endowed him with superb gifts, but his perverseness constantly abused them. An intense rebel by temperament, he set himself against respectability and the accepted. At twenty he enjoyed for a while the role of dandy in the Latin Quarter of Paris—until he had spent his small fortune. Soon in debt, he busied himself with journalism and art criticism. Discovering Edgar Allan Poe's

tales, which powerfully impressed him with their excursions into the extremes of sensation, he introduced them to Europe through his wonderful translation of them (1856-65). From time to time original poems of Baudelaire's composition appeared in the journals.

These, a record of the soul-states of their author, were collected with many previously unpublished poems in 1857—the year of another epochal French book, Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*—under the "shocking" title of *Les Fleurs du mal* (The Flowers of Evil). It is by virtue of this one volume that Baudelaire has achieved immortality. To provide material for its contents, he lived in studious research of newer physical sensations, the characteristic concern of his poetry. He went from one violent dissipation to another, and as his constitution became enervated from frequent abuse he turned to stimulants to reawaken his deadened senses. Yet, all through his experiences he seems to have stood mentally aloof, a spectator of his own depravity, noting, with objective clarity for the purposes of his art, his own reactions to his rather insane life.

Flowers of Evil, which is a kind of psychological autobiography, presents the conscious duality of Baudelaire's character. On the one hand, we find a strong strain of Catholic mysticism: poems of atonement and repentance; appeals to God; adoration of the Virgin; a love of churchly ritual and vocabulary. On the other hand, we find tributes to Satan (see the *Litany,* below) and Cain; calm description of debauchery and horror; poems on corpses, ennui and spleen, cats, evil sunsets, and every kind of artificial imagining. Though Baudelaire, in his willful cultivation of the emotions thus represents romanticism in the extreme, his form is severely classic. He resented the effusiveness of the romantic poets, and is a master of restraint and condensation. It is this union of voluptuous content and impeccable form which gives distinctive quality to Baudelaire's poetry. Translating him has, therefore, always been an almost impossible feat. We are particularly indebted to Frances Winwar, in consequence, for the sensitive and accurate renditions which she has made expressly for this study.

The glorification of the flesh and its sensations to which Baudelaire was devoted created a deep impression on Swinburne (see p. 616) and the poets of the "Yellow Nineties" like Oscar Wilde (see p. 828). None of them, however ably they could join in the search for what Hugo called the "new shudder," reproduced Baudelaire's classic finish.

THE ALBATROSS

(*Translated by Frances Winwar*)

Ofttimes for sport the mariners will take
Some albatross—vast ocean-birds that keep
Like lazy fellow-voyagers the wake
Of ships that glide upon the treacherous deep.

Scarce are they freed upon the vessel's planks
When graceless, shamed, these monarchs of the air
Hang piteously their wings along their flanks,
Their great white wings, like paddles trailing there.

The winged traveller, how gauche[1] and weak!
How comic now, the bird that graced the sky!
With burning pipe one man will tease his beak,
Or, limping, mock the halt that once could fly.

The Poet to this prince of cloud is kin;
He courts the storm and scorns the archer's bow;
An exile in the midst of worldly din,
His giant wings impede his walk below.

TO BEAUTY

(*Translated by Frances Winwar*)

Great is my beauty, like a dream of stone,
O mortals! And my breast where each in turn
Lay bruised, inspires the poet heart to burn
With love as matter mute, eternal, lone.

Unriddled sphinx, I throne the azure deep;
To snow of swan I wed a heart of snow;
I hate all motion that disturbs the flow
Of line. I never laugh, I never weep.

Poets before my vasty attitudes,
Borrowed, 't would seem, from proudest monument,
Shall use their days in stern beatitudes;

For, to beguile these meek ones I present
Mirrors that make all things with beauty bright:
My eyes, my wide eyes of eternal light!

THE LITANIES OF SATAN

(*Translated by Frances Winwar*)

O thou of angels the most wise and fair,
A god betrayed of fate and robbed of prayer,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

O Prince of exile, victim of great wrong,
Who, vanquished, risest seven times more strong,

[1] awkward.

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Omniscient one, sovereign o'er all below,
Familiar healer of our human woe,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who to shunned, aye, sick whom all despise
Teachest, through love, the taste for Paradise,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who on thine old puissant mistress, Death,
Engenderedst foolish hope, that charming wraith,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Who giv'st the outcast that calm, lofty eye
That damns a people round the scaffold high,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who dost know where in the envious earth
God, jealous, hid fair stones of precious worth,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou whose clear eyes search out the deepest core
Where sleep unseen the denizens of ore,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou whose vast hand conceals the precipice
To sleeping strays on ledge of edifice,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who by magic makest young the bones
Of tardy drunkard, trampled on the stones,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who to solace those weak souls who pine
Taught'st us to mingle comfort anodyne,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who with subtle arts dost still impress
The brow of Croesus,[1] vile and pitiless,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

[1] King of ancient Lydia, taken as a symbol of wealth.

Thou who in maiden eyes and hearts dost sow
The love of tatters and the cult of woe,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Staff of the exile, the inventor's light,
Confessor of the hanged and foes of might,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou foster father of those children banned
From earthly heaven by God's stern command,

O Satan, pity my long suffering!

PRAYER

To thee, O Satan, praise and glory be,
From thy lost realm, to the profundity
Of Hell where, conquered, thou dost silent dream.
Beneath the Tree of Science may'st thou deem
Worthy my soul to rest with thine that hour
When o'er thy brow another Fane will tower.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER (1788-1860)

Just a month later than Byron, Arthur Schopenhauer was born on February 22, 1788, at Danzig. His father was a wealthy merchant and his mother a well-known novelist. Accompanying his father on various commercial trips, the boy early mastered several languages. He entered the University of Göttingen in 1809 to pursue studies in natural science. But his interest was soon evoked by philosophy, and he fell under the spell of "Plato the divine and the marvelous Kant." He also attended the lectures of the great Fichte. In October 1813 he was awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy at Jena.

In 1818 appeared his fundamental work, *The World as Will and Idea*. He spent a short and unsuccessful time lecturing on philosophy at the University of Berlin. In 1833 he settled permanently at Frankfort, still awaiting recognition. This came at last upon the publication of his *Essays* in 1851. Schopenhauer's style was of a lucidity uncommon to German philosophy, and his *Essays*, of which *On the Sufferings of the World* (*see below*) is highly characteristic, gained a currency rarely before achieved by philosophic speculation. During the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thousands of general readers all over Europe and America, who would have kept at a safe distance from the professional philosophers, read Schopenhauer avidly and quoted him constantly. His pessimism and misogyny made him peculiarly satisfying to the dis-

illusioned, the morbid, the Bohemian, and the adolescent. At various periods, in fact, Schopenhauerian pessimism has been a fashionable intellectual pose. He has thus been a potent factor in the intellectual atmosphere of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. His popularity, indeed, has done considerable injustice to his real stature as a philosopher. And his particular opinions are far better known than his major work.

Following in Kant's footsteps, Schopenhauer held that only intuition can penetrate to reality, which ultimately is the individual will. Human desires, which motivate human will, far outnumber and by long survive their satisfactions. Our desires and our will being irrational, Schopenhauer views all human activity as futile. The greatest evil is birth. Happiness is unattainable, and the nearest approach to it for human beings is the repression of our impulses so that we may attain an unconsciousness of the world about us. This Nirvana, which Schopenhauer came to idealize through his admiration of the Hindu mystics, can best be attained by cultivating the arts and philosophy as escapes from the problems of life.

William Wallace thus sums up Schopenhauer's contribution: "He has shown with unusual lucidity of expression how feeble is the spontaneity of that intellect which is so highly lauded, and how overpowering the sway of original will in all our action. He thus reasserted realism, whose gospel reads, 'In the beginning was appetite, passion, and will,' and has discredited the doctrinaire belief that ideas have original force of their own. This creed of naturalism is dangerous, and it may be true that the pessimism it implies often degenerates into cynicism and a cold-blooded denial that there is any virtue in truth. But in the crash of established creeds and the spread of political indifferentism and social disintegration it is probably wise, if not always agreeable, to lay bare the wounds under which humanity suffers, though pride would prompt their concealment. But Schopenhauer's theory has another side. If it is daringly realistic, it is no less audacious in its idealism. The second aspect of his influence is the doctrine of redemption of the soul from its sensual bonds, first by the medium of art and second by the path of renunciation and ascetic life."

These two strains can be found throughout this concluding period of our study. Pessimism is a large ingredient in the work of James Thomson (see p. 814), Verlaine (see p. 1175), Dowson (see p. 826), Hardy (see p. 837), and Housman (see p. 849). The devotion to art as an escape from life can be noted in Dowson, Pater (see p. 878), and Wilde (see p. 828). Just how much of both tendencies in the work of these men is directly traceable to the writings of Schopenhauer cannot, of course, be determined. What is certain is that Schopenhauer's philosophy was a very real factor in the intellectual heritage of the time in which they wrote.

(From the Essays)

ON THE SUFFERINGS OF THE WORLD

Unless suffering is the direct and immediate object of life, our existence must entirely fail of its aim. It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds everywhere in the world, and originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself, as serving no purpose at all and the result of mere chance. Each separate misfortune, as it comes, seems, no doubt, to be something exceptional; but misfortune in general is the rule.

I know of no greater absurdity than that propounded by most systems of philosophy in declaring evil to be negative in its character. Evil is just what is positive; it makes its own existence felt. Leibnitz[1] is particularly concerned to defend this absurdity; and he seeks to strengthen his position by using a palpable and paltry sophism. It is the good which is negative: in other words, happiness and satisfaction always imply some desire fulfilled, some state of pain brought to an end.

This explains the fact that we generally find pleasure to be not nearly so pleasant as we expected, and pain very much more painful.

The pleasure in this world, it has been said, outweighs the pain; or, at any rate, there is an even balance between the two. If the reader wishes to see shortly whether this statement is true, let him compare the respective feelings of two animals, one of which is engaged in eating the other.

The best consolation in misfortune or affliction of any kind will be thought of other people who are in a still worse plight than yourself; and this is a form of consolation open to every one. But what an awful fate this means for mankind as a whole!

We are like lambs in a field, disporting themselves under the eye of the butcher, who chooses out first one and then another for his prey. So it is that in our good days we are all unconscious of the evil fate may have presently in store for us—sickness, poverty, mutilation, loss of sight or reason.

No little part of the torment of existence lies in this, that Time is continually pressing upon us, never letting us take breath, but always coming after us, like a taskmaster with a whip. If at any moment Time stays his hand, it is only when we are delivered over to the misery of boredom.

But misfortune has its uses; for, as our bodily frame would burst asunder if the pressure of the atmosphere

[1] Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646-1716), German philosopher and mathematician.

were removed, so, if the lives of men were relieved of all need, hardship and adversity; if everything they took in hand were successful, they would be so swollen with arrogance that, though they might not burst, they would present the spectacle of unbridled folly—nay, they would go mad. And I may say, further, that a certain amount of care or pain or trouble is necessary for every man at all times. A ship without ballast is unstable and will not go straight.

Certain it is that work, worry, labor and trouble, form the lot of almost all men their whole life long. But if all wishes were fulfilled as soon as they arose, how would men occupy their lives? what would they do with their time? If the world were a paradise of luxury and ease, a land flowing with milk and honey, where every Jack obtained his Jill at once and without difficulty, men would either die of boredom or hang themselves; or there would be wars, massacres, and murders; so that in the end mankind would inflict more suffering on itself than it has now to accept at the hands of Nature.

In early youth, as we contemplate our coming life. we are like children in a theater before the curtain is raised, sitting there in high spirits and eagerly waiting for the play to begin. It is a blessing that we do not know what is really going to happen. Could we foresee it, there are times when children might seem like innocent prisoners, condemned not to death, but to life, and as yet all unconscious of what their sentence means. Nevertheless, every man desires to reach old age; in other words, a state of life of which it may be said: "It is bad to-day, and it will be worse to-morrow; and so on till the worst of all."

If you try to imagine, as nearly as you can, what an amount of misery, pain and suffering of every kind the sun shines upon in its course, you will admit that it would be much better if on the earth as little as on the moon the sun were able to call forth the phenomena of life; and if, here as there the surface were still in a crystalline state.

Again, you may look upon life as an unprofitable episode, disturbing the blessed calm of non-existence. And, in any case, even though things have gone with you tolerably well, the longer you live the more clearly you will feel that, on the whole, life is a disappointment, nay, a cheat.

If two men who are friends in their youth meet again when they are old, after being separated for a lifetime, the chief feeling they will have at the sight of each other will be one of complete disappointment at life as a whole; because their thoughts will be carried back to that earlier time when life seemed so fair as it lay spread out before them in the rosy light of dawn, promised so much—and then performed so little. This feeling will so completely predominate over every other that they will not even consider it necessary to give it words; but on either side it will be silently assumed, and form the ground-work of all they have to talk about.

He who lives to see two or three generations is like a man who sits some time in the conjurer's booth at a fair, and witnesses the performance twice or thrice in succession. The tricks were meant to be seen only once; and when they are no longer a novelty and cease to deceive, their effect is gone.

While no man is much to be envied for his lot, there are countless numbers whose fate is to be deplored.

Life is a task to be done. It is a fine thing to say *defunctus est*;[2] it means that the man has done his task.

If children were brought into the world by an act of pure reason alone, would the human race continue to exist? Would not a man rather have so much sympathy with the coming generation as to spare it the burden of existence? Or at any rate not take it upon himself to impose that burden upon it in cold blood.

PAUL VERLAINE (1844-1896)

In revolt against realism in literature, a school of French poets emerged around 1870, under the influence of the English Pre-Raphaelites. Their chief was one of France's greatest poets, Paul Verlaine. The group, dubbed "les Décadents" by the critics, included gifted men like Arthur Rimbaud, Francis Jammes, Albert Samain, and Georges Rodenbach.

Verlaine was a man of completely Bohemian temperament, incapable of living with stability for any prolonged period. His first success was with *Fêtes galantes* (1869), in which he achieved the eighteenth-century grace of the painter Watteau. His next was a collection of poems of sentiment in honor of his future wife, *La Bonne Chanson* (1870). Soon after his marriage to the woman he dearly loved, fatality entered his life in the person of the strange, perverse boy wonder, Arthur Rimbaud. The latter sent Verlaine a sheaf of poems, obviously the creations of a genius. The older man, deeply impressed, soon was a bosom friend of the youth and evolving grand poetic theories with him. The fruit of this speculation was *Romances sans paroles* (1874), in which Verlaine's ability to portray evanescent moods in all their delicacy is revealed. He had found his style. But, unhappily, Rimbaud exerted a terrible fascination over him, began to corrupt Verlaine's pliable nature, and caused an estrangement between Verlaine and his wife. The two poets went off together to visit Belgium and England.

[2] he is dead.

After more than a year of nomadic life together, Verlaine in a quarrel wounded his friend with a revolver and was sentenced to a term in prison. There he became converted to Catholicism, and his ardent mystical faith found wonderful expression in his finest book, *Sagesse* (see p. 1177), published in 1881. On his release from jail, he lived in terrible poverty, earning by lectures and writing a mere pittance, and being dependent on his friends for sustenance. Deprivation destroyed his health, which was further damaged by his frequent recourse to the bottle in search of emotional stimulation. In his later years he spent much time in hospitals in vain hope of recovery. *Jadis et naguère* (1884) was his last important volume.

Verlaine states his artistic credo in the poem *Art Poétique*:

De la musique avant toute chose . . .
Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise
Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint.

("Music before all things. . . . Nothing is dearer than the gray song in which the Uncertain and the Exact are fused as one.") Master of impressionistic pigments and sentiment, Verlaine handles tone-color and onomatopoeia superbly. His love of making sheer music in verse is well illustrated in his marvelous tone-poem *Song of Autumn*:

Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l'automne
Blessent mon cœur
D'une langueur
Monotone. . . .

This superb piece of descriptive music is utterly untranslatable, for, as is characteristic of this school of poets, its delicate appeal is entirely to the ear, and its meaning lies in its overtones. These were the qualities which English "decadents" like Dowson (see p. 826) tried to capture in their verse. But Verlaine's naïveté, as pure and childlike as Blake's, and his burning sincerity were quite beyond the reach of his imitators. Impossible as it is to communicate his peculiar beauties in another language, we are nevertheless fortunate that his profound admirer, Ernest Dowson, himself a fine poet, translated the handful of poems we here present.

TEARS FALL WITHIN MINE HEART

Il pleut doucement sur la ville—Rimbaud.

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

Tears fall within mine heart,
As rain upon the town:
Whence does this languor start,
Possessing all mine heart?

O sweet fall of the rain
Upon the earth and roofs!
Unto an heart in pain,
O music of the rain!

Tears that have no reason
Fall in my sorry heart:
What! was there no treason?
This grief hath no reason.

Nay! the more desolate,
Because, I know not why,
(Neither for love nor hate)
Mine heart is desolate.

COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL[1]

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

Into the lonely park all frozen fast,
Awhile ago there were two forms who passed.

Lo, are their lips fallen and their eyes dead,
Hardly shall a man hear the words they said.

Into the lonely park, all frozen fast,
There came two shadows who recall the past.

"Dost thou remember our old ecstasy?"—
"Wherefore should I possess that memory?"—

"Doth thine heart beat at my sole name alway?
Still dost thou see my soul in visions?" "Nay!"—

"They were fair days of joy unspeakable,
Whereon our lips were joined?"—"I cannot tell."—

"Were not the heavens blue, was not hope high?"—
"Hope has fled vanquished down the darkling sky."—

So through the barren oats they wanderèd,
And the night only heard the words they said.

SPLEEN

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

Around were all the roses red,
The ivy all round was black.

Dear, so thou only move thine head,
Shall all mine old despairs awake!

[1] Sentimental Conversation.

Too blue, too tender was the sky,
The air too soft, too green the sea.

Always I fear, I know not why,
Some lamentable flight from thee.

I am so tired of holly-sprays
And weary of the bright box-tree,

Of all the endless country ways;
Of everything alas! save thee.

SAGESSE[1]

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

The sky is up above the roof
So blue, so soft!
A tree there, up above the roof,
Swayeth aloft.

A bell within that sky we see,
Chimes low and faint:
A bird upon that tree we see,
Maketh complaint.

Dear God! is not the life up there,
Simple and sweet?
How peacefully are borne up there
Sounds of the street!

What hast thou done, who comest here,
To weep alway?
Where hast thou laid, who comest here,
Thy youth away?

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT (1821-1880)

There have been few examples in history to parallel the devotion of Gustave Flaubert to literature. Master of realism though he was, he exhibited more than the most extreme of romanticists a complete consecration to the service of his art. His description of himself as a "Benedictine of letters" was accurate, for he held that all activity which did not conduce to his artistic growth was a sacrilegious waste of time and energy.

He was born at Rouen, the son of a distinguished surgeon, and went to Paris to study law. But when still a youth his preference for literature was already manifested in writings of a highly romantic cast. Of a peculiarly intense and passionate nature, he paid a heavy toll in health for his two ill-fated love affairs, and became subject to severe nervous attacks which darkened his days with melancholy. When only twenty-five he retired from the society of his friends to settle on the estate of his family at Croisset, near Rouen. There he assumed the voluntary servitude of a "galley-slave" to literature. Except for a long trip to the Orient with Maxime Du Camp in 1849, and brief visits to Paris, he rarely left his home. As he grew older he developed increasingly that hatred for everything "middle class" which the English esthetes, who were greatly influenced by him, shared. With the severity of a monk, he disciplined himself to remain constant in all things to his artistic convictions, of which the chief articles were his worship of perfection in style and his pursuit of undisguised truth in the representation of life.

This is not the place to discourse on the greatness of his masterpiece, *Madame Bovary* (1857), which many critics would call the finest of all realistic novels, or of his gorgeous recreation of Carthaginian civilization, *Salammbô* (1862), or of his wonderful collection, *Three Tales* (1877). What concerns us particularly is Flaubert's artistic method. Two principles were paramount with him: accurate (almost scientific) observation of life, and objectivity of style. In his elaboration of the perfect style, he insisted that for what one wished to write there was, at every point of the composition, only one precise phrase to express it—*le mot juste* ("the exact word"), as he called it. It is, he insisted, the artist's duty to be satisfied with nothing less than this perfection of expression. Flaubert's concept of style was adopted *in toto* by the English prose-artist Walter Pater, and by such younger esthetes as Oscar Wilde (see p. 828) who were affected by the teachings of Pater. No doctrine, in fact, became more identified with the esthetic movement of the late nineteenth century than this preoccupation with *le mot juste*.

Flaubert's letters to Louise Colet and other friends, written when he was in his twenties, show how early the bent of his artistic sincerity was determined. Walter Pater's essay on *Style* (see p. 888) makes plain that he profoundly respected the French master's literary opinions. Indeed, it is impossible not to revere Flaubert's unstinting surrender of self to the severe demands of his religion of beauty. There will always be a fascinating paradox in the career of this most conscientious of artists: no novel before *Madame Bovary* presented so devastatingly and mercilessly truthful a portrait of a sentimental woman; but no author more consistently than Flaubert remained in an "ivory tower" above the stress of everyday life for the sake of keeping his art pure.

Dr. Isabel Gordon has graciously made the following translations from Flaubert's *Letters* expressly for this work.

[1] Wisdom.

From his LETTERS

(Translated by Isabel Gordon)

To Louise Colet, August 12, 1846

The young man of today, the soul that at sixteen flowers to a great love which makes him yearn for luxury, for glory, for all the splendors of life,—that poetry, murmurous and sad, of the adolescent heart,—*there* is a new chord no one has yet struck. Oh, Louise, what I'm going to say is hard; and yet it springs from the most profound sympathy, from the most intimate pity. If ever it happens that some poor boy falls in love, finds you lovely,—such a child as I was, timid, gentle, trembling,—a boy who is afraid of you, and yet seeks you out, avoids you and pursues you—be good to him; don't repulse him. Only give him your hand to kiss,—he will die of joy. Drop your handkerchief; he will pick it up, and take it to bed with him; he will fling himself upon it, weeping. The spectacle I saw a little while ago has once more opened the grave where my mummified youth slept; I have breathed once more those spent odors; there came back to me something that was like those forgotten melodies one recaptures in the twilight of dawn, in those slow hours when Memory walks among our thoughts of the past like a ghost among the ruins. No, my dear, no woman will ever know anything of all that; still less, would a woman ever speak of it. Women do love; perhaps they love even better than we do—their love is stronger, but not so forward. And then, does being possessed by an emotion give one the power to express it? Was any drinking song ever written by a man who was drunk? One mustn't always think the emotion itself is everything. In the arts, emotion is nothing without Form. All this is to say that women know nothing of love, they who have loved so much, because they have been too much taken up with love. They have not a *disinterested* appetite for the Beautiful. For them the Beautiful must always be attached to something—to a goal, or to a practical question. They write to satisfy their hearts, but not because of the magnetism of Art, a principle complete in itself, with no more need of support than a star. I know very well that this is not your idea of women's love, but it is mine.

August 15, 1846

I have always tried not to degrade Art to the satisfying of an isolated personality. I have written some very tender pages without love, and some burning pages without the slightest fire in my blood. I have imagined, I have recalled, and I have combined. What you read is not the memory of any event whatsoever. You prophesy that I shall one day do great things. Who knows? (that's my favorite expression). I doubt it; my imagination is dying out; I am becoming too much of a gourmet.[1] All I ask is to go on being able to admire the master with that intimate inward enchantment I'd give up everything else for—everything, everything! But as for my getting to be one—never; I'm sure of that; there is so much I lack—first of all, true inwardness, and then, perseverance at my work. Style can be achieved only by atrocious labor, by fanatic and self-sacrificing stubbornness. Buffon's[2] saying is a great blasphemy: genius is not a long patience. But there is some truth in it, and more than people think, nowadays especially.

To Louise Colet, September 18, 1846

You tell me, my angel, that I have not initiated you into my inmost life, my most secret thoughts.

Do you know what is most intimate, most hidden in my heart,—the most "me" in me? Two or three poor ideas about Art that I have brooded over lovingly; that is all. The greatest events of my life have been some thoughts, some readings, certain sunsets at Trouville by the sea, and some conversations, five or six hours long, with a friend who is now married and lost to me. The way I look at life is so different from the way others look at it that it has led me to isolate myself always (alas, not enough) in a lonely bitterness out of which nothing could come. I have been so often humiliated; I have shocked people so, and caused so much talk, that I came to realize long, long ago, that if you wish to live in tranquility, you have to live alone, and seal your windows to keep out the air of the world . . .

Poet of the form! that is the final insult the utilitarian hurls at the true artist. As for myself, so long as no one has succeeded in distinguishing clearly and in so many words, the form from the content, I shall maintain that those two are words empty of all meaning. There are no beautiful thoughts without beautiful form, and no beautiful form without beautiful thoughts. Beauty emanates from Form in the world of art, just as in our world, temptation, love, emanate from Beauty. Just as you cannot abstract from a physical object the qualities that constitute it,—i.e., color, extension, mass, without reducing it to an empty

[1] a person of exquisite taste in eating and drinking.
[2] celebrated French naturalist (1707-88).

abstraction, in a word, without destroying it; just so you cannot separate the Form from the Idea, for the Idea exists only by virtue of its form. Imagine an Idea without Form,—impossible; so, too, a form that expresses no idea. All that is just a heap of stupidities that criticism thrives on. People who write a good style are accused by the critics of neglecting the Idea, the moral end, as if the physician had any end but healing, or the painter any aim but painting, the nightingale any aim but singing, as if the end of Art were not above all else the Beautiful.

September 27, 1846

. . . or else the only man who can take the place of all the rest, my old Shakespeare, whom I mean to reread from cover to cover, and whom I shall not leave this time until I have the pages at my fingers' end. When I read Shakespeare, I become greater, more intelligent and more pure. When I reach the climax of one of his works, I feel as though I were on a high mountain: everything disappears and everything appears. One ceases to be a man, one is an Eye; new horizons widen about one; perspectives lengthen out to Infinity; one does not pause to think that one has lived in the cabins one can scarcely make out below; that one has drunk of all those streams that seem smaller now than little brooks; that one has been tossed about in that ant-hill and has left it behind. I wrote once, in a surge of happy pride (I wish I could feel it once more) a sentence you would understand: I was speaking of the joy that springs from reading the works of the great poets: "It seems to me sometimes that the enthusiasm they inspire in me makes me their equal and raises me up to them."

To Louise Colet, October 3, 1846

. . . don't be annoyed at my speaking to you about Shakespeare, instead of about myself. It seems more interesting to me, that's all. And, besides, what should one speak of, if not of that which is the exclusive subject of preoccupation of one's mind? For my part, I don't know how people manage to live, who are in an esthetic state of mind from morning to night. I have enjoyed more than most people the pleasures of family life; as much as any man of my age, the joys of the senses; more than many, those of love. Well, none of these has ever given me any joy comparable to that inspired in me by the illustrious dead, whose works I have read or contemplated.

The three loveliest things God has made are: the sea, Hamlet, and Mozart's *Don Juan*.

October 23, 1846

No, I do not despise fame; no one despises what he cannot attain. More than the hearts of other men, my heart has thrilled to that word. I used to spend long hours dreaming of overwhelming triumphs whose acclaim startled me as if I had already heard them. But, I don't know why, one fine morning I woke up and found myself rid of that desire, and more completely so than if the desire had been fulfilled. I realized then that I was not great and set all my powers of reasoning to work to study my own nature, its depths and above all its limitations. The poets I admire seemed to me all the greater, removed as they were further from me, and I rejoiced, in the good faith of my heart, in that humbleness which might have made another burst with rage. When one has some worth, seeking success is a mere self-indulgence, and seeking fame may be complete ruin. For there are two types of poet. The greatest, the rare one, the true masters, sum up humanity; without being taken up with themselves or their own passions, setting aside their own personalities, to lose themselves in those of others, they represent the Universe which is reflected in their works, sparkling, various, multiple, like a whole sky mirrored in the sea with all its stars and all its azure. There are others who have only to cry out to be harmonious, who have only to weep to touch the heart, only to be absorbed in themselves to remain eternal. They could not perhaps have gone any further by doing anything else; but they have ardor and verve to make up for the lack of scope, so that, if they had been born with other temperaments, they might not have had genius at all. Byron was of this family; Shakespeare of the other. Who can tell what Shakespeare really loved, what he hated, what he felt? He is a colossus that terrifies us; it is hard to believe that he was ever a man. Well, to return to fame. Fame should be pure, real, solid, like the fame of the demi-gods; one strains and struggles to clamber up toward them; one prunes one's capricious artlessness and one's instinctive fantasies with one's talent to force them into a set type, a ready-made mould. Or else, other times, one is vain enough to believe that one can create beauty by saying what one thinks and what one feels (like Montaigne and Byron). This last plan is perhaps the wisest for original people, for one would often have more qualities if one did not seek them, and any chance-comer might if he could write correctly, make a superb book by writing his memoirs in full, if he could only write them sincerely. So, to come back to me, I found myself not lofty enough to create true works of art, nor eccentric enough to be

able to fill all my works with myself alone. And, having neither the cleverness to attain success nor the genius to achieve glory, I have condemned myself to writing for myself alone, for my own personal diversion, just as one rides horseback or smokes. Almost certainly I shall never have one line printed, and my offspring (I use the word "offspring" in its literal sense, for I no more desire family posterity than I count on the other kind) will probably make cocked hats for their grandchildren of my whimsical novels, and screen their kitchen candles with the oriental tales, the plays, the mystery stories and the other nonsense I so seriously set down on good white paper. There, my dear Louise, you have, once and for all the very depths of my thoughts on this subject and on myself.

I do not need to be sustained in my studies by the idea of any sort of reward; and the queer thing is that, though I busy myself with Art, I no more believe in it than in anything else, for the cornerstone of my faith is to have no faith at all in anything whatever. I do not even believe in myself; I do not know whether I am stupid or clever, good or bad, stingy or prodigal. Like everybody else, I am now the one, and now the other; my merit is perhaps that I am aware of it, and my chief fault that I am frank enough to admit it. Besides, is anyone sure of himself? Is one sure of what one really thinks? of what one feels? You for example, you who love me, who love me so much that you would wish to deny it to yourself, is it really me you love in me, or is it some other man you think you have seen in me, who is not really to be found in me at all . . . ?

The Literary Medium

By Professor RALPH GORDON

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1. THE LITERARY MEDIUM

We do not often enough think of language as spoken music. To the writer, as to the student of the writer's craft, it is indispensable to do so. The literary artist works in music as well as in meaning. His medium is one of sound and rhythm as well as of thought. Indeed it is in the mastery of this medium in its two-fold nature of music and meaning that he must show his subtlest skill. If he is a poet, he will raise the music of his language until it of itself will seem almost to be eloquent of the thought; he will seem to release thought from music:

> Untwisting all the chains that tie
> The hidden soul of harmony.

If, on the other hand, he works in what Milton called "the cool element" of prose; if he seeks, as Dryden put it, "the other harmony" of prose, he will subdue his music, in tactful and logical service to the thought.

2. VERSE AND PROSE

A versifier is not necessarily a poet. Verse differs from prose in rhythmic idea only:

> *I* before *e*, except after *c*;
> Or when pronounced *ay*, as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

A thought, a "rule" rather, has here for our convenience been made into a jingle. Verse is language of which the free rhythm has been accommodated to some simple pattern of syllables, called meter. Upon this pattern, the rhythm turns (verse<Latin *versus*< *verto*, turn), to make line after line of patterned language. Prose, on the other hand (prose<Latin *prosa oratio*, straightforward discourse), is language the rhythm of which is free of syllable pattern or line, keeping straight ahead, and expanding and contracting easily with the thought.

3. METER

The syllables of speech are distinguished from one another by the varying qualities of stress, length, pitch, and timbre. Syllables marked by relative insistency as to stress, length, pitch, and timbre are called *strong*, the others, *weak*. Meters in Greek and Latin, as in English, are patterns of strong and weak syllables. Greek and Latin the characteristic mark of insist is length. One scans Greek and Latin verse fr (—) and short (˘) syllables:

— ˘ ˘ — ˘ ˘ — ˘ ˘ — ˘ ˘ — ˘ ˘ —
Reliquias veterumque vides monumenta viro.
VIRGIL, *Aeneid VIII*, ?

In English, however, as in all Teutonic la stress is the characteristic mark of insistenc scans for stressed (′) and unstressed (–) syllables:

′ – ′ – ′ – ′ –
Tiger, tiger, burning bright.
BLAKE, *The Tiger*

Four simple arrangements of stressed and unstressed syllables provide the standard meters of English verse. They are:

1. Two-syllable rising, or iambic (–′)

– ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
If all would lead their lives in love like me.
CAMPION, *My Sweetest Lesbia*

2. Two-syllable falling, or trochaic (′–)

′ – ′ – ′ – ′ –
Double, double, toil and trouble.
Macbeth

3. Three-syllable rising, or anapestic (––′)

– – ′ – – ′ – – ′ – – ′
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade.
COWPER, *The Poplars Are Felled*

4. Three-syllable falling, or dactylic (′––)

′ – – ′ – – ′ – – ′ – –
We that have loved him so, followed him, honored him.
BROWNING, *The Lost Leader*

Besides these two-syllable and three-syllable meters, there are two four-syllable meters in English, which

in the last century came into frequent use, in the hands of Kipling and others. These are:

1. Four-syllable rising, or double iambic (–'–ˋ or –ˋ–')

– ' – ˋ – ' – ˋ – ' – ˋ – ' – ˋ

Quixotic is his enterprise, and hopeless his adventure is.
W. S. GILBERT, *The Played-Out Humorist*

2. Four-syllable falling, or double trochaic ('–ˋ– or ˋ–'–)

ˋ – ' – ˋ – ' – ˋ – ' – ˋ – ' –

When the rich Allobrogenses never kept amanuenses.
KIPLING, *In the Neolithic Age*

'ief characteristic of these meters is the suppres-
lternating stresses, and the doubling-up, ac-
of two-syllable into four-syllable feet. The
l or secondary stresses we have marked here
half-stress mark (ˋ).
se six meters the iambic is by far the most
it. The anapestic, trochaic, and dactylic meters
ly found in pure form, the anapestic com-
bining freely with the iambic, and the dactylic with the trochaic. The double meters are too emphatic for general use.

We describe a line technically according to its syllable pattern, and according to the number of times the *foot*, or unit, of the pattern is repeated. A line of five iambic feet, for example, is called an iambic pentameter (pentameter <Greek, *pente*, five; *metron*, measure):

And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.
MILTON, *Paradise Lost*

Lines of one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine feet, are called respectively: 1, monometer; 2, dimeter; 3, trimeter; 4, tetrameter; 5, pentameter; 6, hexameter; 7, heptameter; 8, octameter; 9, nonameter.

4. VERSE SCANSION

We have defined verse as language the free rhythm of which is accommodated to some simple syllable pattern or meter. It is important now to realize that the movement of language can never approximate the mechanical tick-tock of a meter. The rhythm of verse, like the rhythm of music, must be conceived of as playing a perpetual variation upon a given base or measure. Here the poet will use long syllables to retard or enlarge his movement; here he will contort, there loose, his rhythms; here drop, there add, a syllable —all in skillful keeping with his meter, and in subtle enhancement of his thought. The purpose of our analysis, of our "scansion" of a line of verse, is to determine: 1. its meter, that is, the fixed and conventional basic syllable pattern upon which the line is made; 2. its rhythm, that is, the free and ever changing movement of the line, as brought out by natural, expressive reading; 3. the subtle relationship between meter and rhythm, the meter, once suggested, arousing a certain expectancy in the reader, by the satisfaction or the disappointment of which the poet can make the least rhythmic fluctuation of his line infinitely expressive.

Consider two lines from Tennyson's *The Princess*:

They lost their weeks, they vexed the souls of deans.
A little clockwork steamer paddling plied

These lines are regular enough. Each weak syllable is followed by a syllable of relative insistency. Are then the lines mechanically regular? By no means; for: 1. each weak syllable and strong syllable has its individual qualities of length, pitch, timbre; and the degree of stress varies; 2. there is a pause or cesura (Latin, *caesura*, cutting) in the first line, after "They lost their weeks," and the pattern, in the second line, of "A little clockwork" is not –'–'–, but –'–'ˋ; that is, the second syllable of "clockwork" has too much insistency to be called weak; 3. the *phrasing*, that is, the grouping of unstressed syllables about the stresses, as determined of course by the constitution of the words themselves and by the syntax, is not at all the same in both lines: in the first line it is: They lost their weeks, they vexed the souls of deans; in the second line it is: A little clockwork steamer paddling plied.

Ordinary scansion cannot picture all these irregularities; syllables must be marked roughly, stressed, unstressed, or half-stressed, without regard for subtle differences of intensity, or length, or pitch, or timbre. We can, however, easily mark pauses, and we can indicate the phrasing:

They lost their weeks, they vexed the souls of deans.

Meter –' –' –' –' –'
Rhythm –' –' / –' –' –'

A little clockwork steamer paddling plied.

Meter –' –' –' –' –'
Rhythm –' –' ˋ' –' –'

The difference between the two lines can now be seen at a glance. Both are iambic pentameter lines, but the first has a cesura (marked with a slant line), and its phrasing (marked by underscoring) is regularly rising or iambic; the line flows equably, in the rhythm of smooth innocuousness. The second line has a slightly irregular third foot, (˘ ˊ) instead of (- ˊ), and its phrasing is predominantly falling or trochaic; the line running its rhythm with mechanical consistency against the metric base, may, in its toylike precision, be felt to be suggestive of the image it carries.

Before attempting to illustrate further this system of scansion, let us observe that all rhythmic variations —and the possibility here is infinite—must necessarily fall under one of three heads: 1. variation of stress, 2. variation of cesura, 3. variation of syllable number. The first two have already been introduced; let us spend a moment on the third.

The fact is, that, as regards syllable number, there are two great metric traditions in English poetry, the Anglo-Saxon and the French. One scans Anglo-Saxon verse by counting stresses, classical French verse by counting syllables. We call the one type of verse *stress verse*, the other, *syllable-counting verse*.[1]

Fyrst forð gewāt; flota wæs on yðum,
Time (forth) passed; [the] ship was on [the] waves,

bāt under beorge. Beornas gearwe
[the] boat under [the] hill. [The] warriors ready

on stefn stigon; strēamas wundon,
on [to the] stem sprang; [the ocean-] streams twisted,

sund wið sande; secgas bǣron
sea against sand; [the] men bore

on bearm nacan beorhte frætwe,
into [the] bosom of [the] ship bright armor,

gūð-searo geatolic; guman ūt scufon,
war-armor splendid; [the] men out shoved,

weras on wil-sīð, wudu
[the] men on [the] willing-journey, [the] ship [well-]
bundenne.
braced.

gewāt þā ofer wǣg-holm winde gefȳsed
Departed then over [the] billowy sea wind impelled

flota fāmī-heals fugle gelīcost.
[the ship] foamy-necked [to a] bird most like.

Beowulf, 210-218

The Anglo-Saxon line is made up regularly of two half lines held together by alliteration; each half line is composed of two feet, and each foot, in turn, is composed of a single predominant stress, either standing alone (monosyllabic foot) or accompanied by one or more unstressed or half-stressed syllables, the number of unstressed syllables constantly varying.

In the centuries following the Norman Conquest, English stress verse, though it persists in certain notable instances—Layamon's *Brut*, 13th Century; Langland's *Piers Plowman*, 14th Century—slowly gives way before the growing influence of French syllable-counting verse. Under this influence a new technique is developed, a technique brought to its perfection by Chaucer:

Love, ayeins the which who-so defendeth

Him-selven most, him alder-last avayleth,

With desespeir so sorwfully me offendeth,

That streyght un-to the deeth myn herte sayleth.

Ther-to desyr so brenningly me assaylleth,

That to ben slayn it were a gretter Ioye

To me than king of Grece been and Troye!

CHAUCER, *Troilus and Criseyde, Book 1*

These lines do not have the strict syllable numbering of French verse. The classic French poet wrote to a fixed syllable count. The alexandrine, for example, is a verse of twelve, or, with feminine ending, of thirteen syllables:

N'allons point plus avant, demeurons, chère Oenone,
Je ne me soutiens plus—ma force m'abandonne:
Mes yeux sont éblouis du jour que je revoi,
Et mes genoux tremblants se dérobent sous moi.

RACINE, *Phèdre*

Chaucer, like all English poets—except of course those who write on the stress system—steers between the free syllable count of Anglo-Saxon verse, and the fixed syllable count of French verse. His favorite meter is the decasyllabic, or ten-syllable iambic line; he will occasionally omit the first syllable; he very frequently ends on an extra-metrical syllable (feminine ending), and he freely inserts an extra syllable here or there in the line, making an anapest of an iamb. The other variations of stress and of pause, he, of course, uses also:

[1] Gerard Manley Hopkins speaks not of "stress" and "syllable counting," verse but of "sprung" and running rhythms.

Love, ayeins the which who-so defendeth

Meter –′ –′ –′ –′ –′
Rhythm ∧′ / –′ –′ / ∨′ –′–

The first syllable is here omitted; there is a pause after the first and after the third foot; the fourth foot has a half-stressed in place of an unstressed syllable, and there is an extra syllable at the end; that is, the line has feminine ending. The place of an omitted syllable is marked, in scansion, by a caret.

Following Chaucer, the great English poets have, for the most part, written in iambic, trochaic, dactylic, and anapestic meter, rather than in stress meter, allowing themselves, as Chaucer did, certain rhythmical variations of syllable number. In the more formal verse types—the heroic couplet, heroic blank verse, the sonnet, the Spenserian stanza, ottava rima, rime royal—variation of syllable number has, conventionally, been limited; in the less formal, lyrical types, variation of syllable number is exceedingly free. In the lyric, and in the lyric narrative, accordingly, it is often difficult to draw the line between stress and syllable-counting verse:

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.
TENNYSON, *Break, Break, Break*

The first line here may be scanned either upon a simple three-stress meter:

Break, break, break

Meter ′ ′ ′
Rhythm ′ / ′ ′

—or, in keeping with the other lines of the stanza, upon an anapestic trimeter base, with omission of syllables:

Break, break, break

Meter –′ –′ –′
Rhythm ∧ ∧′ / ∧ ∧′ / ∧ ∧′

Even in a poem written expressly on the stress system, a poet will occasionally fall back upon syllable counting:

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
COLERIDGE, *Christabel*

Coleridge asks us in his note to *Christabel* to scan by "counting in each line the accents, not the syllables." Most of the lines of the poem do indeed, scan in this way. Note, however, that the fourth line here (Áll in the míddle of the gáte) does not have four accents, as most lines in *Christabel* do. Nor can we scan it—without making it impossibly heavy, awkward, and tumbling—as a three-stress line (Áll in the míddle of the gáte). The peculiar rhythmical charm of the line, its light mysteriousness, depends, in fact, upon the iambic tetrameter base, which, without pegging the movement upon four stresses, gives it the rhythmical compass of four, and so lends it its floating quality.

All in the middle of the gate

Meter –′ – ′ – ′ –′
Rhythm ∧′ – –′ – – –′

Compare Milton's line, in the same meter, though in slightly different phrasing:

Under the hawthorne in the dale
L'Allegro

Meter –′ – ′ – ′ –′
Rhythm ∧′ – –′ – – –′

So much then for the one variation of syllable number. We return now to the illustration of variation in general, and to the study of the expressiveness of rhythmic variation. In the lines following, from different ages of English poetry, may be found some suggestion of what the poet can do.

Spenser, by running trochaic and dactylic phrasing against iambic meter, conveys, with beautiful art, his sense of the complexity of woven boughs:

With boughes and branches, which did broad dilate
Their clasping arms, in wanton wreathings intricate.
Faerie Queene

Meter –′ –′ –′ –′ –′ –′
Rhythm –′ –′ / –′ –′ –′ –

Shakespeare, in a famous scene of passion and darkness, makes his rhythm waver and pulse with the uncertainty of candleflame:

'Tis her breathing that
Perfumes the chamber thus; the flame of the taper
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids.
Cymbeline

The doubtful stress of *that*, of *Perfumes*, of *toward* gives to the movement a hovering, flickering quality

eloquent beyond speech. The scansion of the third line here is open to interpretation, as the scansion of a good line may very well be. We may scan (pronouncing *tōwárd*):

Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids.

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm ′– ′– / ––′ –′ –′

—or (pronouncing *tówārd*):

Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids.

Rhythm ′ ′ ––/– – ′ – ′ – ′

—or (making *toward* a monosyllable):

Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids.

Rhythm ′ ′ –/– – ′ – ′ – ′

The truth is, we must not scan the line into inertness. It is the uncertainty of the rhythm—always felt, whatever the actual pronunciation may be—that makes all the charm.

In the lines following, Milton, whose rhythm always speaks for him, makes us feel, through the vehemence of juxtaposed stresses, and the tug of complex phrasing upon an iambic base, the clash of irreconcilable forces:

His utmost power with adverse power opposed
In dubious battles on the plains of Heaven,
And shook his throne.
Paradise Lost

The first line, making *power* a monosyllable, may be scanned:

His utmost power with adverse power opposed.

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm ′ ′ ′ – ′ ′ – ′

Contrast this enlocked line with Dryden's satirically loose and scuttling pentameter upon a less heroic rebel than Lucifer:

Turn rebel and run popularly mad.
Absalom and Achitophel

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm ′ ′ – ′ ′ – ′

There is a good deal of movement in this line. The next, written by a poet who never fails to be passionate about bad art, is flat enough:

And ten low words oft creep in one dull line.
POPE, *An Essay on Criticism*

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm – ′ ′ ′ – ′ ′

For startling, abrupt, vigorous movement, the poet will often begin his iambic line with a trochee: so Byron, in the line following, depicting the sudden gigantic movement of thunder:

Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud.
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm ′– ′ ′ –/– –′ –′ ′

Shelley, whose rhythms are wonderfully free, loved especially to buoy his lines upon multiplied stresses, quivering with intensity, or throbbing with passion:

Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood, it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix.
Prometheus Unbound

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm ′ ′ ′ ′ ′ ′ ′ ′ ′ ′

Especially charming is the movement, filled with romantic distance, of the line following, by that chief inheritor of Spenser's alexandrine (iambic hexameter), Keats:

Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.
The Eve of St. Agnes

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm – ′ – ′ – ′ ′– – ′ – ′

But perhaps the greatest virtuoso among nineteenth-century poets is Tennyson, to illustrate whose technical ingenuity would require endless particularization. We content ourselves with one example, a line in which the poet—through skillful phrasing, stress manipulation, and the use of extra-metrical light syllables—amuses himself by capturing the delicate eccentricity of water:

Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn.
Song, The Princess

Meter – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′ – ′
Rhythm ′– – ′ –′ – – –′

5. TONE QUALITY

Having thus far studied the movement, we must now turn to a study of the sound of the poet's language. We are to see that as the poet works in specially patterned and specially expressive rhythm, so he works also in specially tempered and specially expressive sound. Following the usual procedure, we shall study:

1. *Rime:* the matching of the terminal sounds of words, the correspondence including the last accented vowel, and all that may follow the last accented vowel:

In the stormy east wind str*aining*;
The pale yellow woods were w*aning*.
TENNYSON, *The Lady of Shalott*

2. *Assonance:* sometimes called vowel rime; the correspondence of terminal accented vowel sounds in words whose terminal consonant sounds do not match:

While their hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine.
MILTON, *Samson Agonistes*

3. *Alliteration:* called also initial or head rime: the writing together, or in close proximity, of words whose first accented syllables begin with the identical consonant sound (consonant alliteration), or of words beginning with vowels, whether identical or not (vowel alliteration):

I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers.
HERRICK, *The Argument of His Book*

Bright effluence of bright essence increate
MILTON, *Paradise Lost*

4. *Coliteration*—a comprehensive term, invented by the late American poet, Bliss Carman: the general agreement of consonant sounds, and the general agreement or expressive variegation of vowel sounds throughout the line:

Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore.
MILTON, *Paradise Lost*

Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.
SHELLEY, *Prometheus Unbound*

Trellised with intertwining charities.
THOMPSON, *The Hound of Heaven*

Thompson, in this line, suggests, through the winding of the rhythm upon expressively variegated vowels, the mystic maze of a Gothic window. The suggestive power of sound in poetry is indeed infinite. We shall limit ourselves to the brief illustration of what we may call the structural and expressive functions of sound.

The structural function of sound has, of course, its most obvious illustration in rime, by the help of which the poet may bind his lines together in couplets or stanzas:

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.
POPE, *An Essay on Criticism*

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.
TENNYSON, *The Lady of Shalott*

But assonance and alliteration, too, may perform structural function: assonance, by lending the tonal stress of recurrent vowel sounds to the strong end-syllables of lines in series; alliteration, by bringing together the parts of a line (Anglo-Saxon verse), or by bracing the whole line with prominent initial sounds in repetition:

Assonance:

O how comely it is and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppressed!
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honor truth.
MILTON, *Samson Agonistes*

Alliteration:

hlūdne in healle; þǣr wæs hearpan swēg.
Beowulf, 89

In sun-struck petal or in sun-struck bud.
SWINBURNE, *Tristram of Lyoness*

The structural function of sound may, however, be seen in its subtlest as well as in its most effective form in coliteration, which gives to the line, as a whole, an appropriate sensuous quality, light or heavy, rough or smooth, brittle or pliant—and here, of course, the

structural and expressive functions of sound may be seen to meet:

> The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
> And murmuring of innumerable bees.
> TENNYSON, *Song, The Princess*

These lines of Tennyson are obviously onomatopoeic; that is, the sounds are imitative. So are the lines following, by Milton—lines which, as it happens, Tennyson himself singled out as a good example of onomatopoeia:

> on a sudden open fly
> With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
> Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
> Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
> Of Erebus.
> *Paradise Lost*

Milton's art is subtler than Tennyson's, but onomatopoeia, even at its best, is the most obvious of poetical devices. Sounds need not be actually imitative to be expressive. It is enough that the poet should know when to use vigorous, when gentle, sounds; when to make liquid, when brazen, melody. For strong utterance, for rant—in satire, perhaps, or comic writing—he will put together explosive sounds:

> The raging rocks
> And shivering shocks
> Shall break the locks
> Of prison gates.
> *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*

So speaks the soul of bully Bottom. His playmate Quince cries:

> Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
> He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast.
> *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*

W. S. Gilbert tunes the praise of his stout hero, Alum Bey, to the same note:

> Oh, big was the bosom of brave Alum Bey,
> And also the region that under it lay.
> *Brave Alum Bey*

And Chaucer, by the same means, slyly touches off the embonpoint of his good monk:

> A manly man to been an abbot able.
> *Prologue, Canterbury Tales*

We learn that where Keats, in his great sonnet on Homer, wrote *Cortez*:

> Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes

—he should have written Balboa. But substitute Balboa for Cortez in the line, and what an exophthalmic hero you have: No, every line has its own texture, its own coliteration. You cannot patch it with foreign matter. Consider the magical richness of the word "gules" in the lines:

> Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
> And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
> As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
> Rose-bloom fell on her hands together prest.
> KEATS, *The Eve of St. Agnes*

We need scarcely forgive Keats the preciousness of the heraldic term "gules." Try in its place—if you can permit yourself the profanity—its modern equivalent, "red." How the depth, the liquid quality, the mystery passes from the picture: Observe the play on the deep "oo" sound in this passage: *boon, Rose-bloom, moon.* Shelley, too, makes it suggestive of depth:

> The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
> The sapless foliage of the ocean.
> *Ode to the West Wind*

The "l" and the "s" sounds, too, in the second line here, take on special appropriateness: indeed the "l" and "s" sounds, sometimes combined with "k" and "r," appear with remarkable frequency in images of light and of sheen:

> Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
> Now the sun is laid to sleep;
> Seated in thy silver chair,
> State in wonted manner keep.
> Hesperus entreats thy light,
> Goddess excellently bright.
> BEN JONSON, *Hymn to Diana*

> Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star.
> MILTON, *Comus*

> The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
> Soft o'er the shrouds aerial whispers breathe,
> That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.
> Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,
> Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
> Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
> Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light,
> Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
> Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew.
> POPE, *The Rape of the Lock*

> Fill your dim glens and liquid wildernesses.
> SHELLEY, *Prometheus Unbound*

In this last line, by Shelley, note—besides the characteristic coliteration for an image of light: (l, r, s, q)—the vowel focus of the line, upon the (i, e) sounds. Such medial assonance, as we may call it, seems to

have the efficacy of staying the image. Contrast the fixed direction of this line, with the erratic:

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion.
COLERIDGE, *Kubla Khan*

The rhythmic maze presented by a long word, of varied vowel pitches, may, of course, be made especially expressive:

Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
Up-coiling and inveterately convolved.
WORDSWORTH, *Yew Trees*

Pope, indeed, in a well-known line, makes his rhythm seem to turn full circle, upon the usually humdrum and respectable word *circumference*:

To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the Petticoat:
Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Though stiff with hoops, and armed with ribs of whale;
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.
The Rape of the Lock

But indeed it is not at all uncommon for a word, prosaic or colorless enough in the dictionary, to take on, with benefit of rhythm and sound, a new virtue, sometimes even a new meaning, in poetry. Consider what impetuosity is expressed by the apparently sober word *unpremeditated*, what unexpected signification is assumed by the unpromising word *snarling*, in the two passages following:

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
SHELLEY, *To a Skylark*

Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide.
KEATS, *The Eve of St. Agnes*

The rough "ch" sound, in the word *chide* here takes up beautifully the cue of the "snarling"—albeit silver snarling—of the trumpets. The "ch" sound has humbler function in the following satirical passage, in which, also, may be found further illustration of the expressiveness of movement upon variegated vowels:

The man who laugh'd but once, to see an ass
Mumbling to make the cross-grain'd thistles pass,
Might laugh again, to see a jury chaw
The prickles of unpalatable law.
DRYDEN, *The Medal*

One visualizes clearly enough here the industrious routine of the ass's jaws. Compare:

a few cattle looking up aslant
With sleepy eyes and *meek mouths ruminant.*
LEIGH HUNT, *Story of Rimini*

Dryden, who on one occasion defined poetry as "wit-writing," has all too infrequently been given his due as one of our chief craftsmen in sensuous language. What can be better, as regards merely the clever suiting of the music to the sense, than the last line of the following passage, in which MacFlecknoe, the prince "Through all the realms of nonsense absolute," may be seen bowing his mighty and stupid head three times—so we may imagine it—three colossal nods of conclusiveness, over the weighty matter of deciding "which of all his sons was fit To reign, and wage immortal war with wit":

This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,
And blest with issue of a large increase,
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the state.
MacFlecknoe

How the rhythm lurches forward—one syllable, three syllables, and again three—to the alliterated and coliterated s-sounds:

To Set—tle the sucCes—ion of the State.

Elsewhere he makes the same design upon the "p" sound:

And popularly prosecute the Plot.
Absalom and Achitophel

The word *popularly*, in this satire of Dryden's, can be depended upon to clown it: *Turn rebel and run popularly mad; On each side bowing popularly low.*

Dryden, like many another English poet, exploits the "p" sound in vehement, indignant, or ceremonious utterance:

The Presbyter, puff'd up with spiritual pride.
The Medal

Swift, unbespoken pomps thy steps proclaim.
Absalom and Achitophel

This may recall Shakespeare's:

Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war.
Othello

The "p" sound, in combination with the more sonorous "b" and the energetic "r", makes one of the ruling

sounds in the coliteration of the voluptuous picture of the famous Nile scene:

> The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
> Burn'd on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
> The winds were love-sick with them.
> *Anthony and Cleopatra*

The medial assonance (burnish'd, Burn'd, Purple, perfumed) seems here—as medial assonance is likely to do—to fix and intensify the image. Contrast these gorgeous and Egyptian harmonies with the delicate textures and tones of the English picture, following:

> On her left breast
> A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
> I' the bottom of a cowslip.
> *Cymbeline*

Here again, the medial assonance (On, spotted, drops, bottom)—but here the coliteration is made up predominantly of l's, r's, s's.

Shakespeare is indeed the master of what Newman called "the two-fold logos, the thought and the word." There is no important character in his pages, scarcely a character at all, who does not speak his own language, whose passion does not mould its own music. Othello has his amplitude, Hamlet his penetrating and earnest clarity, Macbeth his rounded and mysterious harmonies, Lear his impatient thunderings and sudden helpless transparencies:

> *Othello:* Set you down this;
> And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
> When a malignant and a turban'd Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
> I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
> And smote him thus.

> *Hamlet:* O! I die, Horatio;
> The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
> I cannot live to hear the news from England,
> But I do prophesy the election lights
> On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;
> So tell him, with the occurents, more or less,
> Which have solicited—The rest is silence.

> *Macbeth:* She should have died hereafter;
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time.

> *Lear:* And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!
> Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
> Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
> Look there, look there.

There are no bristling coliterations or dainty assonances in these passages—the thought is all; but the thought has its proper music.

6. VERSE FORMS

Rime, we have seen, serves to group single lines of verse into couplets or stanzas. We have now to describe briefly the most important—because historically the best established, of such groupings. But rime, as Milton pointed out, is essential neither to the music of the line, "which consists only in apt numbers [feet, measures], fit quantity of syllables," nor to the grouping of lines, the natural unifying agent of which is "the sense variously drawn out from one line to another, not . . . the jingling sound of like endings." We shall accordingly review, first, the chief English rimed forms; secondly, the unrimed—the so-called *blank verse* forms, and free verse.

The Ballad Stanza. The ballad stanza, the typical stanza form of the folk ballads or popular ballads, is a quatrain of alternating iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter lines, rimed on the short lines only, the rime scheme being: *x a y a.* (See page 199.)

Rime Royal. Rime royal, probably so named after the French *chant royal*, was, in England, first used by Chaucer, with whom it was a great favorite. It is a stanza of seven iambic pentameter lines, riming *ababbcc.* Rime royal is seen at its best in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde.*

Ottava rima. This stanza, used most brilliantly by Byron in his *Don Juan*, is the stanza of the great Renaissance Italian epic poets, Ariosto and Tasso. It was brought into England by Wyatt. The stanza has eight iambic pentameter lines, rimed *abababcc.*

The Spenserian Stanza. This, one of the most beautiful of English stanza forms, was created by Spenser, for his *Faerie Queene.* It consists of two intertwined iambic pentameter quatrains, and of a concluding rime-linked iambic hexameter, the rime scheme being *ababbcbcc.* The Spenserian stanza is the stanza form of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Shelley's *Adonais*, Keats's *The Eve of St. Agnes.* Not even Keats, ardent disciple of Spenser that he was, could equal his master's art in this stanza.

The Sonnet. The sonnet is not a stanza form, but a poem—characteristically, though not invariably, a lyrical poem—of fourteen iambic pentameter lines, rimed in the Italian manner (Italian sonnet), or in the English manner (English sonnet).

The Italian sonnet—introduced into England by Wyatt, a translator and imitator of the greatest Italian sonneteer, Petrarch—falls into two parts: an octave (rimed generally, *abbaabba*), and a sestet (rimed on two or on three rimes, two typical arrangements being *cdcdcd* and *cdecde*). The greatest practitioners in the Italian form are Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and D. G. Rossetti.

The English form of the sonnet, contrived by Wyatt's younger friend, Surrey, falls into three quatrains and a couplet, the typical scheme being *abab cdcd efef gg*. The greatest writer of English sonnets is Shakespeare, after whom the form is sometimes named the Shakespearean sonnet.

The Ode. The ode (Greek *ōdē*, song) is, in its more elaborate forms, the most complex of lyrical structures. Four types of ode are distinguished in English: 1. the true Pindaric; 2. the false Pindaric, or free English; 3. the regular stanzaic; 4. the free choral ode, or chorus.

The true Pindaric ode, named after the greatest Greek lyrical poet, Pindar, is built up in large three-part periods of strophe (turn), antistrophe (turn back), and epode (stand)—these figures having originally corresponded with the movements of the Greek choral dance. Strophe and antistrophe—structurally alike in any one period—may change their forms from period to period; the form of the epode, differing from that of the strophe and antistrophe, is fixed throughout the poem. The first English poet to attempt the Pindaric structure was Ben Jonson; the best odes in this form are, by general consent, Gray's *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*.

The free English ode was popularized by Cowley. It is made up of strophes of ever varying length and meters. Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, his *Alexander's Feast*, and his *Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew*, are the first masterpieces in this type. Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, is perhaps our greatest free English ode.

The regular stanzaic ode differs from non-odic verse only by its greater elevation of tone, by its rhapsodic or ceremonial quality, and by the technical characteristic that it tends to combine long and short lines. Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* and *Ode on a Grecian Urn* may be taken to be the best examples of this type. Certain regular stanzaic odes, the stanza form of which is relatively simple and seems to be modeled upon the odes of Horace, may suitably be called Horatian. We may mention Andrew Marvell's *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland* and Collins's *Ode to Evening*.

The free choral ode or chorus—an imitation of the choral odes of the Greek drama—is the freest of metrical forms, and is indeed but a step removed from free verse, that is, verse without meter. The chorus is seen at its best in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*; Milton here, without quite abandoning his iambic base, moves freely and daringly upon lines of various length, and modulates easily and expressively from rime to assonance, and from assonance to blank verse—verse without rime.

Terza rima. Terza rima, the rime scheme of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, is a species not so much of stanzaic as of continuous verse, the lines being arranged in an unbroken chain of rime-linked tercets, according to the scheme *aba bcb cdc ded*, etc. At the end of his canto Dante would conclude the series with a closing fourth line: *xyx yzyz*. Terza rima, though introduced long ago, by Chaucer, has never enjoyed frequent use in England. It may be seen at its best in Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, and—in modified form—in his *Ode to the West Wind*. Browning uses it in *The Statue and the Bust* and William Morris in *The Defence of Guinevere*.

The Rimed Couplet. Two forms of the English rimed couplet surpass all others in importance: the octosyllabic or iambic tetrameter couplet, and the decasyllabic or iambic pentameter couplet. The tetrameter couplet has never been more beautifully used than by Milton in his *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. The pentameter or heroic couplet is one of the greatest of English verse forms, and deserves special attention.

It was apparently in the seventeenth century that the term "heroic" came to be applied to the iambic pentameter, as being the meter of the greatest English dramatic, epic, and narrative poetry. The heroic verse of ancient Greece and Rome is the dactylic hexameter; the heroic verse of France is the alexandrine. In English criticism the expression "heroic" seems to be reserved for the iambic pentameter couplet (the heroic couplet) and for iambic pentameter unrimed (heroic blank verse).

We distinguish two forms of the heroic couplet: the open and the closed. In the open couplet the sense is variously drawn over the line endings; the lines are, as we say, run-on lines (French: *enjambement*); in the closed couplet, the sense is cut to the line endings, the lines are, as we say, end-stopped.

Chaucer, the first and perhaps the greatest master of the heroic couplet, combines, with the finest artistic tact, the open and the closed types. He gains succinctness and emphasis by the use of end-stopped lines, freedom and colloquial ease by the use of run-on lines. He will stop the clause or the sentence, as it suits him,

at the end of the first or at the end of the second line of the couplet:

This maked Emelye have remembraunce
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
Y-clothed was she fresshe, for to devyse;
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
Bihynde hir bak a yerde long, I gesse;
And in the gardyn at the sonne up-riste,
She walketh up and doun, and as hire liste
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hire hede,
And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.

CHAUCER, *The Knight's Tale*

Chaucer's rhythm is the delightful rhythm of the story-teller. A tidier art, following, in the seventeenth century, upon the lawlessness of a good deal of late Renaissance verse, patterned English heroic couplet verse into what may be described as a mosaic of distichs, that is, into a series of rhythmically independent closed couplets. It is this perfectly conventionalized verse—capable within its fixed limits, be it noted, of infinite variety—which became established in the neoclassical or Augustan age, as the accepted mode of poetical expression:

Nature to all things fixed the limits fit,
And wisely curbed proud man's pretending wit.
As on the land while here the ocean gains,
In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
The solid pow'r of understanding fails;
Where beams of warm imagination play,
The memory's soft figures melt away.
One science only will one genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit:
Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
But oft in those confined to single parts.

POPE, *An Essay on Criticism*

The young Keats rebels at the formalism of the closed couplet:

Yes, a schism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories: with a puling infant's force
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake?

KEATS, *Sleep and Poetry*

We must not look for justice here. An intimation of Keats's maturer acquaintance with neoclassical art may be found in the couplets of his *Lamia*, the rhythms of which seem to have benefited by a close study of Dryden's versification.

The lack of firmness, often commented upon, in Keats's earlier verses, may be partly accounted for by his uncertainty in the use of rime. In Chaucer, in Pope, the rimes are honest and expressive; in the writing of the young Keats, the enemy of formalism, the rimes are often merely formal. Chaucer could never have harbored the naïve theory that rimes are to be used casually or with an affectation of nonchalance; his rimes fall always into one of two well-recognized classes: they are either good strong *paused* rimes, that is, end-stopped rimes, or good strong *poised* rimes, that is, rimes upon which the voice, without pausing, may, in passing, linger, or increase its intensity, or pitch, or somehow modify its tone quality (timbre) to mark the end of the line. Every capable reader, every actor whose purpose is not the mistaken one of turning his verse systematically into prose, knows how to poise his line endings.

A careful reading of the passage from *Sleep and Poetry*, given above, will make it sufficiently clear that Keats, not yet passed from his apprenticeship, had but a very exceptional beginner's understanding of the subtle art of riming. The rime *barbarism* may be technically described as a slighted rime, that is, a rime without stress; a slighted rime may nevertheless be expressive, and *schism* and *barbarism* go very well together; unfortunately *barbarism* is the last word one can apply to neoclassical art. The rime *understand* is a good strong poised rime, but the stress it demands is slightly false to the sense. The word *horse* makes a vigorous and expressive end-stopped rime; the rime *roll'd* is an excellent poised rime; but the rime *dew* cannot be either paused or poised, a pause being offensive to the syntax, a poise to the sense. Finally, the rime-word *make*, being completely lacking in associative power, the echoing word *awake* seems to be conscripted by mechanical law, rather than by any imaginative necessity.

Heroic Blank Verse. Heroic blank verse, iambic pentameter unrimed (Italian: *versi sciolti:* verses "freed" [from rime]), was first used in England by Surrey in his translation of the second and third books of the *Aeneid*. Blank verse is the supreme verse form, the "organ voice" of England, the metric instrument of Shakespeare (in drama), of Milton (in epic), of Wordsworth (in philosophical and narrative poetry), of Tennyson (in epic, narrative, and lyric).

Technically, it is convenient to distinguish three types of blank verse: 1. end-stopped blank verse; 2. run-on blank verse with paused and poised, and sometimes with feminine, endings; 3. run-on blank verse with paused, poised, feminine, and slighted endings. Illustration of all three types may be found in the plays of Shakespeare, whose technical development may be described as a progress from the first to the third type.

End-stopped blank verse:

Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live register'd upon our brazen tombs,
And then grace us in the disgrace of death;
When, spite of cormorant devouring Time,
The endeavour of the present breath may buy
That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge,
And make us heirs of all eternity.

Love's Labour's Lost

As Shakespeare's art advanced he sought for freer rhythmic expression, and attained it by varying the structure of his line, and by variously drawing out the sense from line to line:

Run-on blank verse:

Under an oak, whose boughs were moss'd with age,
And high top bald with dry antiquity,
A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back: about his neck (pause)
A green and gilded snake had wreathed itself,
Who with her head nimble in threats approach'd (poise)
The opening of his mouth; but suddenly, (pause)
Seeing Orlando, it unlink'd itself,
And with indented glides did slip away (poise)
Into a bush; under that bush's shade (pause)
A lioness with udders all drawn dry,
Lay couching, head on ground, with catlike watch,
When that the sleeping man should stir; for 'tis (poise)
The royal disposition of that beast
To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead.

As You Like It

Toward the end of his career Shakespeare, without losing any of the vigor of his middle period, moved still further in the direction of freedom and naturalness; he would sometimes slight altogether the end-syllables of his lines (weak, or slighted endings)—sometimes overburden his last foot with an extra-metrical syllable (feminine ending):

Remember, sir, my liege, (pause)
The kings your ancestors, together with (slighted ending)
The natural bravery of your isle, which stands (pause)
As Neptune's park, ribbed and paled in (pause)
With rocks unscaleable and roaring waters,
With sands, that will not bear your enemies' boats,
But suck them up to the topmast.
A kind of conquest (feminine ending)
Caesar made here, but made not here his brag (poise)
Of "came, and saw, and overcame".
with shame—
The first that ever touch'd him—
he was carried (feminine ending)
From off our coast, twice beaten;
and his shipping— (feminine ending)
Poor ignorant baubles!—on our terrible seas,
Like egg-shells mov'd upon our surges, crack'd (poise)
As easily 'gainst our rocks.

Cymbeline

7. FREE VERSE

Free verse may be defined simply as verse without meter. It is distinguished technically from prose by the fact that it is written in lines; that is, its rhythms are composed, not merely printed, in lines. Free verse, like regular or metrical verse, should be read with due attention to syllable quantity, and to the various expressiveness of paused and poised line endings. In the free choral odes of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, and in such poems as Matthew Arnold's *Philomela*, may be seen the approach, on the part of our classical poets, to the complete freedom of free verse.

Once, Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent with bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

WHITMAN, *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*

Glossary of Literary Terms

Alexandrine the French heroic line; in classical French verse, a line of twelve, or with feminine ending, of thirteen syllables; in English verse, a line of six iambic feet.

Alliteration the writing together, or in proximity, of words beginning with identical consonant sounds: *bed, bird* (consonant alliteration), or with vowel sounds, identical or not: *ever, aye* (vowel alliteration).

Antistrophe counterturn, the movement following the strophe, or turn, in the Pindaric ode.

Apostrophe literally, a turning away; a digression within a discourse, the speaker turning to address a real or imaginary person, power, or thing.

Assonance the matching of vowel sounds within words. **Assonantal rime** the riming of accented vowel but not consonant sounds: *victory, billow.*

Aubade a morning song.

Ballad a song narrative, or story in song. **Folk ballad, popular ballad, traditional ballad** a ballad of the people, a ballad of unknown authorship. **Literary ballad** a modern ballad in the manner of the old or traditional ballads.

Ballade a lyrical French form of three stanzas and an envoy, made upon a single set of rimes; stanzas and envoy end with the same refrain line.

Blank verse verse unrimed. **Heroic blank verse** iambic pentameter unrimed.

Burden (burthen) refrain.

Cadence rhythmic fall, or relaxation of movement partial or complete.

Cesura (cæsura) a break or pause in the line.

Chant royal a lyrical French form, a more elaborate form of the ballade; it consists of five stanzas and an envoy, all made upon the same set of rimes; stanzas and envoy end upon the same refrain line.

Conceit an ingenious or far-fetched figure or image; an involved or affected thought or expression.

Dactyl a foot of three syllables; in English: stress, unstress, unstress (′--).

Dimeter a line of two feet.

Dissonance in verse, a riming of consonants but not of vowels: *prod, prude.*

Distich a couplet.

Elegy a form of lyrical poetry; a mourning song.

End-stopped rime the rime of an end-stopped line; that is, of a line whose sense does not overflow into the next.

Enjambement the running on or overflow of the sense of one line into the next.

Epic a heroic narrative poem, of which the elements—in the classical epic—may be enumerated as: a national hero or heroes, a struggle involving man and the gods, a cosmogony or world view, the grand style.

Epigram a pithy or pointed saying or poem.

Epitaph a memorial inscription, in verse or prose.

Euphuism expression in the manner of Lyly's *Euphues*; that is, characterized by artificiality, overclaborateness, or preciousness, and by conscious manipulation of rhythm and tone quality.

Figure an extension or heightening of the ordinary powers of expressiveness of language by the imaginative, or striking, or suggestive use of words and word orders.

Foot the measure or bar in metrical verse.

Free verse verse in free rhythm; that is, poetical language whose rhythm is made to "turn" upon the line, but answers to no metrical norm or syllable pattern.

Heroic couplet see page 886.

Heroic verse the verse form of epic or tragedy; English: iambic pentameter; French: alexandrine; Greek and Latin: dactylic hexameter.

Hexameter a line of six feet.

Hyperbole figure of speech; exaggeration.

Iambic patterned upon the *iamb*, a foot of two syllables; in English: unstress, stress (-′).

Idyl (idyll) a descriptive or pictorial narrative poem.

Invocation a calling upon, a prayer, as to the muse, or the Deity.

Lyric a poem of songlike quality. The chief types of the English lyric are: the song, elegy, ode, sonnet, ballad (narrative lyric).

Madrigal a love poem.

Measure the foot or bar in metrical verse.

Metaphor a figurative *identification* of one person or thing with another. Shylock speaks of Portia as "a Daniel come to judgment."

Meter the rhythmic norm, or basic syllable pattern to which the rhythms of "regular" verse are accommodated.

Miltonic sonnet a sonnet rimed in the Italian man

ner; more especially, a sonnet in which the octave is run over (according to Milton's occasional practice) into the sestet.

Monometer a one-foot line.

Octave (octet) the first division, or eight lines, of a sonnet.

Onomatopoeia imitative sound.

Parallelism a figure of speech; the repetition of an idea in similar form or phrasing: *But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?*

Pastoral poetry poetry concerned with shepherds or rural life and scenes.

Pentameter a line of five feet.

Petrarchan sonnet a sonnet rimed in the Italian manner, the octave being *abbaabba*, and the sestet, typically, *cdecde* or *cdcdcd*.

Pindaric ode a highly wrought and impassioned or lofty lyrical poem in large periods of three-part structure: strophe (turn), antistrophe (turn back), and epode (stand).

Prosody the science of the elements and forms of verse.

Quatrain a stanza or rimed grouping of four lines.

Refrain (sometimes called **burden**) the repetition, exact or varied, of a phrase, line, or stanza, usually at regular intervals in a poem.

Rhythm ordered and expressive movement. **Metered rhythm** rhythm composed upon a given stress count (stress verse), or upon a given syllable pattern (syllabic verse). **Free rhythm** rhythm without meter; the rhythm of free verse and prose.

Rime (rhyme) the matching, in words, of the last accented vowel, and of such sounds as may follow the last accented vowel: *rod, pod; frittering, glittering*.

Rime royal a stanza of seven iambic pentameter lines riming *ababbcc*.

Rondeau a lyrical French form of thirteen lines (type 1), or of ten (type 2). In type 1 the first part of the first line serves for the refrain, which recurs according to the scheme *aabba, aabR, aabbaR*. In type 2 the first word of the first lines serves for refrain, recurring according to the scheme *abbaabR, abbaR*.

Rondel a lyrical French form; a poem of fourteen (type 1), or of thirteen (type 2) lines, with a two-line refrain. Type 1 is rimed according to the scheme *a(R)b(R)ab, baa(R)b(R), ababa (R)b(R)*. Type 2 rimes: *a(R)b(R)ba, aba(R)b(R), abbaa(R)*.

Roundel a lyrical French form of nine lines. The first part of the first line serves for refrain, which recurs according to the scheme: *aba(R,* riming with *b), bab, aba(R,* riming with *b)*.

Rune a letter of the primitive Teutonic alphabet; a cryptic poem.

Running rhythm see *sprung rhythm*.

Sestet six lines; the second part of a Petrarchan sonnet.

Sestina a lyrical French form of six six-line stanzas, and an envoy of three lines. The six terminal words of the lines of the first stanza recur in varying order, according to a complex scheme, as the terminal words of the lines in stanzas two to six, and as the medial and terminal words in the lines of the envoy. The sestina, originally without rime, is sometimes rimed by modern poets.

Shakespearean sonnet a sonnet rimed in the English manner: *abab cdcd efef gg*.

Simile a figurative comparison, the *likening* to one another of persons and things in different realms of being: *So like a shattered column lay the king*.

Sonnet a lyrical poem of fourteen iambic pentameter lines, rimed in the Italian manner (see *Petrarchan sonnet*) or in the English manner (see *Shakespearean sonnet*).

Spenserian stanza a nine-line stanza made up of eight iambic pentameters followed by one iambic hexameter, the rime being *ababbcbcc*.

Spondee a foot of two syllables; in English: stress, stress (″).

Sprung rhythm the rhythm of stress, as distinguished from syllabic, verse. Gerard Manley Hopkins speaks not of stress and syllabic verse, but of verse in sprung and in running rhythm.

Stanza a group of lines of a fixed number, arrangement, and metrical pattern.

Strophe turn; the first part of the three-part period of a regular Pindaric ode. More loosely: any paragraph of odic or choral verse.

Terza rima see page 886.

Tetrameter a line of four feet.

Trimeter a line of three feet.

Triolet a lyrical French form of eight lines. Lines one and two are used as the refrain, the scheme being: *a(R)b(R)aa(R)aba(R)b(R)*.

Triplet three lines riming *aaa*.

Trochee a foot of two syllables; in English: stress, unstress (′-).

Vers libre free verse.

Villanelle a lyrical French form of six stanzas, five three-line stanzas (*aba*) and one four-line stanza (*abaa*). The first and third lines of the first stanza make the refrain; the first line recurs at the end of the second and fourth stanzas, the third line recurs at the end of the third and fifth stanzas; lines one and two recur together at the end of the sixth stanza.

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