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KATHERINE MANSFIELD
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LITERARY PORTRAITS

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY

KATHERINE MANSFIELD
and other
LITERARY PORTRAITS

PETER NEVILL LIMITED
London

PETER NEVILL LIMITED
50 Old Brompton Road
London SW7

Made and printed in Great Britain by Richmond Hill Printing Works Ltd.
Yelverton Road Bournemouth
MCMXLIX

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THE ISOLATION OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

It is curious how little good criticism of Katherine Mansfield's stories has been written. In England she established herself in her lifetime—as far as she did establish herself—in spite of the reviewers. Her work was appreciated by many of the most eminent of her fellow craftsmen, and for the most part damned by the reviewers. But of serious criticism of her work there was little or none. It was quite otherwise in France. There almost from the beginning the serious critics seriously criticised her work. Perhaps it was because she appeared before the French public as the author of a total *œuvre* in which her *Letters* and her *Journal* were given simultaneously with her stories, whereas in England they appeared piecemeal. Whatever the cause, there has always been in England a discrepancy between the public and the critical appreciation of her work which contrasts strangely with the reception of it in France. Whereas in France there must have been few of the outstanding critics who did not include in their *œuvre* a substantial essay on Katherine Mansfield, if only because in the French scale of values she was a writer about whom it was necessary to have a critical opinion, nothing comparable took place in England.

But in June 1946 Mr. V. S. Pritchett did something to fill the gap. He broadcast a criticism of her work which was at once serious and interesting. There was not very much in it with which I agreed; but both the parts I did agree with and those with which I did not were much more penetrating than the average criticism of her work (if criticism is the word for it) which has appeared in England.

> On the whole (says Mr. Pritchett) the stories about New Zealand, and especially about her childhood there, are the best, though there are also one or two good ones about vagrant life in London. Her bad stories are chiefly the semi-sophisticated ones she wrote about London love-affairs. I will quote the titles of some of her best stories. They are: "Prelude," "At the Bay," "The Garden Party," "The Little Governess," "The Woman at the Store," "The Daughters of the Late Colonel." From this list, you will see that it is women on their own, on the defensive before the excessive male, and their children, that are her characteristic subjects.

That is good. It has the right kind of superficiality: by which I mean that good criticism always returns to the surface of things. The description of Katherine Mansfield's women and girls as "on the defensive against the excessive male" is obviously the result of a good deal of careful and sensitive study of her work: it is superficial in the good sense—a cool judgment, in the terms of the surfaces of things, made after patient and receptive reading. And the stories which Mr. Pritchett calls bad, "the semi-sophisticated ones about London love-affairs," are the bad ones. They have not worn well.

But there are two things in the rest of Mr. Pritchett's criticism which I am impelled to challenge. One is relatively unimportant: but very misleading.

> Katherine Mansfield (he writes) belonged to the arty generation which isolated private sensibility, and detached private life from the life of its times. This was partly due to the appalling mass-pressure of the first world-war: it was a protest against the clumsy use and slaughter of the masses, the denial of human personality which that war instituted. One finds her shuddering, retreating protest, repeated in louder, more violent and evangelical terms by D. H. Lawrence.

That is in the main true. Since the generation impugned is the one to which I belong, it is a rather queer sensation to find it thus isolated and defined: almost as though one were looking at an X-ray of oneself. But one has to recognise the accuracy of the description. Mr. Pritchett, however, goes on:

> It is natural to compare her with Virginia Woolf, but Virginia Woolf was a more deliberate writer, a woman with an intellectual background and with roots. She was conscious of literature, where Katherine Mansfield was more conscious of the cult of the self-purified artist. Where Virginia Woolf is precious, Katherine Mansfield is priggish. Mrs. Dalloway is wayward, but is contained by her class. She will never be entirely lost; she can assimilate the iron that enters into her soul. But Miss Moss has nothing; she is hopelessly lost, between too many worlds. When Katherine Mansfield imitated Mrs. Woolf, she was a sophisticated failure.

Now Katherine Mansfield never imitated Virginia Woolf. That is a historic fact. Katherine Mansfield did not like Virginia Woolf's writing. "I hate *shrubberies*," she once said of it: thereby comparing it to the artificial, carefully designed and highly cultivated garden of the eighteenth century. I

think the comparison is apt: and it was, no doubt, a limitation in Katherine Mansfield that these arts of a high and slightly over-ripe civilization did not appeal to her. It was particularly unfortunate, since she genuinely liked Virginia Woolf as a person: and the fact that Virginia's writing left Katherine Mansfield cold created a feeling of embarrassment which is very evident in Katherine Mansfield's letters to her.

What Mr. Pritchett should have said was that when Katherine Mansfield chose subjects which apparently belonged to the highly civilized milieu of which Virginia Woolf wrote, she was "a sophisticated failure." These are the "semi-sophisticated stories of London love-affairs" which Mr. Pritchett has previously pronounced failures, as they are, when judged by the criterion of her finest work. And "semi-sophisticated" is an apter epithet than "sophisticated." *Bliss* is the most famous of these stories; *Marriage à la Mode* is another, and there are one or two besides. The most striking feature about them is that they are set on the bare fringe of cultivated society. Bertha in *Bliss*, Isabel in *Marriage à la Mode* are really quite simple women who have taken up with the stupider *intelligentsia*, which Katherine Mansfield too broadly caricatures. It is the discordant combination of caricature with emotional pathos that spoils *Bliss* and makes *Marriage à la Mode* ineffective. But the failure has nothing to do with imitation of Virginia Woolf. Such imitation is a figment of Mr. Pritchett's fancy.

Nevertheless, the contrast between the two writers is worth making; and Mr. Pritchett in making it elaborates an interesting thesis concerning Katherine Mansfield's spiritual pattern.

> Katherine Mansfield was a New Zealander. She spent her girlhood in New Zealand and her adult life mainly in England. She left New Zealand because she found no satisfaction in the life there. Once established in England she found she had lost her roots. What was she to do? She could either go back and, as it were, submit to New Zealand again, return like the mature prodigal. Or she could try to work out a new spiritual basis for her life. She could invent, as it were, a private religion, a private myth to live by; the myth of pure receptivity. This was the course she chose. One can see it clearly stated in her *Journals*, which are literary documents of great interest to the

students of this period. After reading between the lines one forms a much clearer picture of Katherine Mansfield's position. She is the prim exile who belongs neither to her own society nor to London; but who like some nervous spider lives on an ingeniously contrived web that she has spun between the two places. The traditions of the optimistic and ruthless pioneer are strong in countries like New Zealand, and they are oppressive to the sensitive. But the sensitive get their revenge in satire, in cynicism, in exposing the hollowness of spiritual life. Katherine Mansfield enjoyed her own hard, acute wit, her malice, her bitterness, but she felt guilty about them. Hence the cult of self-perfection, of pure art, the religious devotion to the idea that an artist must create within himself a clean heart.

Any hypothesis of this kind is better than none. But what does this one amount to? What does "having lost one's roots" really mean? The metaphor is a familiar one in spiritual analysis. French criticism equally makes use of the category: *déraciné*. It implies that one has parted from the social ambience in which one was unconsciously nurtured as a child, and has moved into a milieu where the values which one instinctively absorbed are not acknowledged. But Katherine Mansfield consciously rebelled against the values of New Zealand society. Her adolescent rebellion made her, as she came to realise, unjust to her own country; but, though she was intermittently visited by the desire to return to New Zealand, she never did.

It is true that she could not establish new roots in English society. She felt herself to be a sojourner in a strange land. The quality of her feeling of strangeness is beautifully rendered in a passage in her *Journal*, when she was living at Hampstead, in 1919.

> The red geraniums have bought the garden over my head. They are there, established, back in the old home, every leaf and flower unpacked and in its place—and quite determined that no power on earth will ever move them again. Well, that I don't mind. But why should they make me feel a stranger? Why should they ask me every time I go near: "And what are you doing in a London garden?" And I am the little Colonial walking in the London garden patch—allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger. If I lie on the grass they positively shout at me: "Look at her, lying on *our* grass, pretending this is her garden, and that tall back of the house, with the windows open and the coloured curtains lifting, is

> her house. She is a stranger—an alien. She is nothing but a little girl sitting on the Tinakori hills and dreaming: 'I went to London and married an Englishman, and we lived in a tall grave house with red geraniums and white daisies in the garden at the back.' *Im*-pudence!"

Mr. Pritchett's contention is that, in consequence of this lack of a spiritual home, Katherine Mansfield had to try to work out a new spiritual basis for her life. She therefore "invented, as it were, a private religion, a private myth to live by: the myth of pure receptivity. Hence the cult of self-perfection, of pure art, the religious devotion to the idea that an artist must create within himself a clean heart."

Though there are elements of truth in this theory, it is much too summary. It cannot be assumed, as Mr. Pritchett assumes, that the cult of self-perfection is the natural compensation for the lack of a country in which one feels at home. Many have practised the cult of self-perfection, many indeed practise it to-day, who have not been exiled from their native land. The natural consequence of living in exile from a familiar society is to seek compensation in a closer human relation. The friendliness, the ease of living, which is, as it were, diffused in one's manifold contacts with a familiar society, has to be recaptured in a more intense form in the ease and trust of more intimate and private relations. In a word, the natural consequence of social insecurity is the search for the security of love.

Love is a word which modern critics are chary of using. Nevertheless, it is sometimes irreplaceable. Any attempt to explain Katherine Mansfield's development without recourse to it is (I think) doomed to fail. Certainly, the account Mr. Pritchett gives of her will appear arbitrary to anyone who has studied her stories, her *Journal* and her *Letters* in close connection with one another. For what are the facts? At a certain definite point in her life, there is a marked change in the quality of her stories. A quite new quality of tenderness and richness enters her work with *Prelude*. Before that time, her work showed signs of originality and power—notably in *The Woman at the Store*, *Millie*, and *The Little Governess*, all of which would be included in a collection of her best stories; but, with *Prelude*, she entered, under full sail,

a new realm of gold. And, afterwards, her work, though marred by a few failures, on the whole maintained this high level of achievement. The failures themselves are of a different kind. *Je ne parle pas français*, for instance, is almost as interesting as a success: there is something equivocal and mysterious in its suggestion of a haunting and undefined evil lurking near the heart of life. The nearest she came to absolute success in this peculiar genre is in the unfinished but unfaltering *A Married Man's Story*, which has not yet received the recognition due to it.

It has always seemed to me that *Prelude* occupies much the same crucial place in the evolution of Katherine Mansfield's writing that the *Ode to Psyche* does in that of Keats. It is the prelude to a new range of utterance, a new comprehension of experience, new complex harmonies. We know something about the emotional background of the writing of *Prelude* The first version of it was written in the South of France, at the Villa Pauline, in Bandol, in January, 1916. Two distinct and definite strands of experience were woven together at that time. Her overwhelming grief at the death of her young and only brother, killed in France; and the almost simultaneous unfolding of a new love for her husband. The story of these two things is perfectly told in her letters of December, 1915: it is summed up briefly in a letter to S. S. Koteliansky from Bandol.

> When I first came here I was really very ill and unhappy, but that is over now—and London, you know, seems remote —remote—as though it did not exist. Those last hateful and wasted months are blotted out.

The emergence from darkness and despair into a new radiance had its material symbol in the taking of the little Villa Pauline.

> I am like that disciple who said: "Lord. I believe. Help thou mine unbelief." As I was dressing and your letter was already sealed the heavy steps really came along the corridor. The knock at the door—the old man with the blue folded paper that I scarcely dared to take and having taken—could not open. Oh, I sat by the side of my bed—and opened it little by little. I read all those directions for the sending of urgent telegrams in the night—At last I said: "He is not coming"

and opened it and read your message. . . . Since then I have never ceased for one moment to tremble. . . . I felt: "Now he is coming, that villa is taken" and I ran, ran along the quai. One day I shall tell you all this at length, but it was not taken until I saw the woman and took it.

This morning, I went to the little Church and prayed. It is very nice there. I prayed for us three—for you and me and Chummie.

Chummie was Katherine Mansfield's brother. About three weeks later, when she was embarked on the first version of *Prelude* (which was called "The Aloe"), she wrote in her Journal:

Now, really, what is it that I do want to write? I ask myself: am I less of a writer than I used to be? Is the need to write less urgent? Does it still seem as natural to me to seek that form of expression? Has speech fulfilled it? Do I ask anything more than to relate, to remember, to assure myself?

There are times when these thoughts half-frighten me and very nearly convince. I say: You are now so fulfilled in your own being, in being alive, in living, in aspiring towards a greater sense of life and a deeper loving, that the other thing has gone out of you.

But no, at bottom I am not convinced, for at bottom never has my desire been so ardent. Only the form that I would choose has changed utterly. I feel no longer concerned with the same appearance of things. The people who lived in or whom I wished to bring into my stories don't interest me any more. The *plots* of my stories leave me perfectly cold. Granted that these people exist, and all the differences, complexities and resolutions are true to them—why should *I* write about them? They are not near me. All the false threads that bound them to me are cut away quite.

Now—now I want to write recollections of my own country. Yes, I want to write about my own country till I simply exhaust my store. Not only because it is "a sacred debt" that I pay to my country because my brother and I were born there, but also because in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places. I am never far away from them. I long to renew them in writing.

And, the people—the people we loved there—of them too I want to write. Another "debt of love." Oh, I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World. It must be mysterious, as though floating. It must take the breath. It must be "one of those islands" . . . I shall tell everything, even of how the laundry basket squeaked at '75'. But all must be told with a sense of mystery, an

> after-glow, because you, my little sun of it, are set. You have dropped over the dazzling brim of the world. Now I must play my part.

That is probably the best description of the rare quality of *Prelude* and *At the Bay* that has been written. Katherine Mansfield perfectly achieved her conscious artistic purpose.

The writing of *Prelude* followed a peculiar kind of spiritual purgation, and the entry into a condition of love. Katherine Mansfield did not stay there; but thenceforward she re-entered it again and again. It was inseparably associated in her mind with what she considered her best writing—and the world has endorsed her judgment. It was a condition to which she constantly aspired, and by which she judged her other conditions.

Of these only one was equally associated with the act of writing. She defined this in a letter, written two years after *Prelude*, which is (I think) just as important for the understanding of her genius as the passage from the *Journal* just quoted.

> I've two "kick-offs" in the writing game. *One* is joy—real joy—the thing that made me write when we lived at Pauline, and that sort of writing I could do in just that state, of being in some perfectly blissful way *at peace*. Then something delicate and lovely seems to open before my eyes, like a flower without thought of frost or a cold breath, knowing that all about it is warm and tender and "ready." And *that* I try, ever so humbly to express.
>
> The other kick-off is my old original one and, had I not known love, it would have been my all. Not hate or destruction (both are beneath contempt as real motives) but an *extremely* deep sense of hopelessness, of everything doomed to disaster, willfully, stupidly, like the almond tree and "pas de nougat pour le noël." There! as I took out a cigarette-paper I got it exactly—*a cry against corruption*—that is *absolutely* the nail on the head. Not a protest—a *cry*. And I mean corruption in the widest sense of the word, of course.
>
> I am at present fully launched, right out in the deep sea, with this second state.

Into those two categories, corresponding to those two originating emotions, all Katherine Mansfield's best writing falls with a remarkable precision. The basic human moods, of which the "kick-offs" are the corollaries in the realm of

artistic creation, alternate with a striking and poignant rhythm in her letters.

It is significant, too, that in this same letter, she speaks of the war as having finally invaded her inmost being. "It is *here in me* the whole time, eating me away, and I am simply terrified by it. It's at the root of my homesickness and anxiety and panic." It is the sign of the dread corruption against which she cries.

That brings us to Mr. Pritchett's judgment that Katherine Mansfield belonged to "the arty generation which isolated private sensibility and detached private life from the life of its times" and that "this was partly due to the appalling mass-pressure of the first world-war". There is a measure of truth in this. But I cannot see that the passing of the years has improved things. The succeeding generation of story-writers took up the job of official propaganda. I think their artistic integrity suffered in consequence, and perhaps their critical integrity, too. For there is a nuance of contempt in Mr. Pritchett's reference to "the arty generation" which springs less from a pursuit of truth—for it is singularly unapt to Katherine Mansfield or D. H. Lawrence—than from an uneasy conscience.

But that is a minor matter. What is more important is that in the process of assimilating private life to the life of the times, to which presumably Mr. Pritchett has submitted himself, something has been coarsened. The fine edge of discrimination has been blunted. Love has become too sentimental or too illusory a category for a truly modern critic to employ in examination or analysis. "We have changed all that." But what if the subject demands it? What if the creature examined expands its wings only in an atmosphere of love?

Katherine Mansfield lived in exile from her own country. That is the material fact. She re-created her own country. That is the spiritual fact. The country she re-created is not New Zealand, but a universal country, the land of innocence, to which the soul aspires. She longed for a home: but what she could not find in New Zealand, she could not have found in any country on this earth—or she could have found it in every one. Home, for her, was the security of love—of "being in some perfectly blissful way at peace."

> "It really is a heavenly gift to be able to put yourself, jasmine, summer grass, a kingfisher, a poet, the pony, an excursion and the new sponge-bag and bedroom-slippers all into an envelope. How does one return thanks for a piece of somebody's life? When I am depressed by the superiority of men, I comfort myself with the thought that they can't write letters like that".

So Katherine Mansfield wrote to a friend. I think there is something in it. Of all the great men letter-writers I know Keats came nearest to putting a piece of his life into them; but then he did it deliberately, in his letters to his brother and sister-in-law who were on the other side of the Atlantic. But Katherine Mansfield did it because she could not help it.

First, then, hers are the letters of a woman; second, of a woman in love; and third, of a woman in love, not with her husband only, but with everything. Not with everything always. Her letters are continually passing from gaiety to despair, and despair to gaiety. But she never gives rein to her despair for long; and she didn't believe that it was possible to express her despair directly. "I simply go dark", she says. "It is terrible, terrible. How terrible I could only put into writing and never say in a letter." Partly, no doubt, this was sheer fastidiousness. She had a horror of what she called "confession". But much more deeply it was a profound aesthetic conviction that despair should not and could not be expressed directly—the same conviction that inspired Keats's *Ode on Melancholy*. "No, no, go not to Lethe," to find the goddess of despair.

> "She dwells with Beauty—beauty that must die,
> And joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu."

I think this doctrine that despair should be, and only can be expressed by beauty, is extraordinarily profound. Katherine Mansfield hints at it continually in her letters, and applies it instinctively in her stories. In one letter she wrote:

> "We see death in life as we see death in a flower that is fresh unfolded. Our hymn is to the flower's beauty: we would make that beauty immortal, because we *know*.

> I mean by this knowledge . . .'deserts of vast eternity'. But the difference is . . . I couldn't tell anybody *bang out* about those deserts: they are my secret. I might write about a boy eating strawberries or a woman combing her hair on a windy morning, and that is the only way I can ever mention them. But they *must* be there."

I suppose it is no accident that Keats and Katherine Mansfield both died early of tuberculosis. Its toxic fevers seem immensely to heighten the beauty of the created world and give it an almost intolerable distinctness, at the same time as they sound an inward warning of the precariousness of one's hold of life. But the effects are dazzlingly rich. They give one a sense of what Katherine Mansfield called "the triumph of beauty".

Let Katherine Mansfield herself explain the meaning of her phrase.

> "Do you really feel that all beauty is marred by ugliness and the lovely woman has bad teeth? I don't feel quite that. For it seems to me that if Beauty were absolute, it would no longer be the kind of Beauty it is. Beauty triumphs over ugliness in life. That's what I feel. And that marvellous triumph is what I long to express. The poor man lives and tears glitter in his beard and that is so beautiful one could bow down. Why? Nobody can say. I sit in a waiting-room where all is ugly, where it's dirty, dull, dreadful, where sick people waiting with me to see the doctor are all marked by suffering and sorrow. And a very poor workman comes in, takes off his cap humbly, beautifully, walks on tip-toe, has a look as though he were in Church, has a look as though he believed that behind that doctor's door there shone the miracle of *healing*. And all is changed, all is marvellous . . . Life is, all at one and the same time, far more mysterious and far simpler than we know."

And again, she writes:

> "You see, I can't help it. My secret belief—the innermost credo by which I live is—that *although* Life is loathsomely ugly and people are often terribly vile and cruel and base, nevertheless there is something at the back of it all, which if only I were great enough to understand would make everything, *everything* indescribably beautiful. One just has glimpses —divine warnings, signs."

Now I have let Katherine Mansfield herself explain—far better than I could—why she can be truly described as a

woman in love with *everything*. The constant alternations of joy and despair in her letters, in themselves so painful, are expressed in terms of beauty. In that language she contrives, by her own natural magic, to convey the subtlest modulations of personal feeling. You need to read the letters over and over again to understand all that is contained in some of her pellucid, unpremeditated phrases. It is a kind of chamber-music, exquisitely controlled, in which vast depths of feeling are half-hidden in a slight change of tone. She writes to a friend:

> "Was there really a new baby in your letter? Oh dear, some people have all the babies in this world. And as sometimes happens to us women, just before your letter came, I found myself tossing a little creature into the air and saying 'Whose boy are you?' But he was far too shadowy, too far away to reply."

There's a personal tragedy uttered there.

Or again, when she writes in a mood of despair from her isolation in Italy, after being cheated by a gardener:

> "Oh, why are people swindlers? My heart bleeds when they swindle me, doesn't yours?
>
> Why am I not a calm indifferent grown-up woman? . . . And this great, cold, indifferent world like a silent, malignant river, and these creatures rolling over one like great logs—crashing into one. I try to keep to one side, to slip down unnoticed among the trembling rainbow-coloured bubbles of foam and the faint reeds. I try to turn and turn in a tiny quiet pool—but it's no good. Sooner or later one is pushed out into the middle of it all. Oh, I am really sadder than you, I believe.
>
> Shall I send this letter? Or write another one—a gay one? No, you'll understand. There is a little boat far out, moving along, *inevitable* it looks and *dead silent*—a little black spot, like the spot on a lung."

The power of that final phrase is terrifying. One understood—only too well.

Or, again, during one of the times when the high fever was upon her: "L.M. has broken my thermometer. Good! I got another for 18 francs, which seems to play the same tune, though the notes are not so plain." "The same tune"—it would be hard to pack more pain into a smiling phrase.

But the gaiety of her letters is never forced. Her natural mode of speech was gay; and her letters are full of jokes—rather rueful jokes many of them, but quite irrepressible: and all with an inimitable quality of their own. One might call it a blend of wit and humour: what is more peculiar is that they are illuminating. They flash in a quick glancing light, on a person or a situation so that they seem to be inherent in her peculiar magic of style. Of her, Buffon's famous maxim concerning style, is the obvious and literal truth: "Style is the woman herself". So, for that matter, is Flaubert's "Style is a way of seeing." And Katherine Mansfield's way of seeing was essentially a smiling way. As, for example, when she describes her fainting at an exhibition of Naval Photographs.

> "When I reached the final room I really did give way and was floated down the stairs and into the kind air by two Waacs and a Wren who seemed to despise me very much (but couldn't have as much as I did myself). They asked me, when I had drunk a glass of the most dispassionate water, whether I had *lost* anybody in the Navy—as though it were nothing but a kind of gigantic salt water laundry."

Because of her year's of wandering as an invalid, whole periods of her life are chronicled day by day in her letters. They become in one sense an intimate autobiography: but it is curiously and delightfully objective. Not so much that she saw herself objectively—though she did—as that she is seldom—and then against the grain—directly concerned with herself at all. She is for ever describing the life about her; the things she sees from her windows, the maids who look after her in the hotels, her doll and her cats. The doll and the cats she endowed with a language and a character of their own: they speak their own minute and enchanting commentary on the things that happen. And the women who wait upon her—what personalities they are! Juliet and Marie in the South of France, Mrs. Honey in Cornwall. Under Katherine Mansfield's touch they reveal the genius of the race. Marie and Mrs. Honey—they appear as the exquisite and simple flowering of a whole civilization.

And so it is that Katherine Mansfield's letters are like a long and lovely story, in which the joy and pain of life are inextricably entwined. They *are* life, but life seen in the

vision of one who, knowing that she had not very long to look at the pattern, turned all the energies of her eager soul to examining and marvelling at it, setting down its beauties with the tender fidelity of love—a love that laughs, yet with tears in its eyes.

And behind all this is the story of a struggle to live, first to live in order to be able to receive the wonder of life into her soul and to express it, and then, as the brief years draw to an end, a struggle to live in a different sense: to achieve an entire simplicity of soul, a central and crystal clarity which should not change, to which joy and sadness should be as one.

So it is that, since her letters were first published in 1929, they have made the conquest of the world. They have been translated into almost every European language. And though, when I first made up my mind to publish them, I hardly expected this to happen; it seems natural enough today. In one letter she speaks of "the only treasure, the only heirloom we have to leave—our little grain of truth"—the truth that can be discovered only by love. Her grain of truth—she would never have claimed that it was larger—is of such quality that it is self-evidently universal.

PORTRAIT OF A PA-MAN

The most tragic contrast in the life of Katherine Mansfield was that between her happiness at Bandol in the South of France in the winter and spring of 1915-16 and her suffering there exactly two years later, when the hardships and misery she endured gave her incipient phthisis its fatal hold upon her. The full extent of that later suffering has yet to be revealed. It was almost grotesque in its intensity. And not the least powerful of its elements was the bitterness of her knowledge that in that same place, two years before, she had been happier than she had ever been before or was ever to be again. There was sealed in the flesh and spirit of a delicate genius the terrible truth of Dante's saying:

> Nessun maggior dolore
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria

Since her happiness in Bandol in the winter and spring of 1915-16 Katherine Mansfield had cherished a golden memory of the little town. She fell ill in November 1917 with a severe pleurisy and was making a slow but satisfactory recovery, when her doctor, in all good faith, made the rash suggestion that she should go to the South of France to convalesce. She jumped at the possibility. She was quite certain that she had only to return to Bandol to get well as if by magic; and perhaps she would have done had conditions been what they had been two years before. But they were not. It was the last year of the 1914-18 war: and France was all but exhausted. The railways were in an appalling condition. Her journey South was one of fearful hardship. All the recovery she had made was instantly lost, and she arrived at Bandol much more ill than she ever had been before. She was terrified. For now she was cut off. She was not allowed to return to England; and if she had been, she was now quite incapable of making the journey alone. From the moment she arrived she had but one desire—to get back again. But for three months she was a prisoner. When eventually she did return she was, in body, a pathetic shadow of her former self. And her spiritual suffering had been extreme.

A week after she arrived at Bandol she revisited the Villa

Pauline where she had been so happy. The contrast was almost more than she could bear. In a letter she tells how on the slow walk to the villa: "I realised I was suffering—terribly, terribly." She was already so changed that the kindly old proprietress did not recognise her, except by her voice, which was indeed one to remember. The old woman and the young one sat together in the familiar little salon and talked.

> "But oh, as we sat there talking and I felt myself answer and smile and stroke my muff and discuss the meat shortage and the horrid bread and the high prices and *cette guerre*, I felt that somewhere, upstairs, you and I lay like the little Babies in the Tower, smothered under pillows and she and I were keeping watch, like any two old crones! I could hardly look at the room. When I saw my photograph, the one that you had left, on the wall, I nearly broke down, and finally I came away and leaned a long time on the wall at the bottom of our little road, looking at the violet sea that beat up high and loud against these strange dark clots of sea-weed. As I came down your beautiful narrow steps, it began to rain. The light was flashing through the dusk from the lighthouse, and a swarm of black soldiers were kicking something about on the sand among the palm-trees—a dead dog perhaps or a little tied-up kitten."

There is a terrible beauty and power in that simple prose. Katherine Mansfield was sick at heart and sick in body. And she was trying to begin writing again as the one solace for her suffering. Exactly a fortnight later she says in a letter. "As I write, I feel so much nearer my writing self—my 'Pauline' writing self—than I have since I came." Two days after she had begun to write. On February 1st she says: "I am rather diffident about telling you, because so many sham wolves have gone over the bridge, that I am working and have been for two days. It looks to me the real thing. But one never knows."

But she was writing that strange and painful story *Je ne parle pas français*, and she was not writing from her "Pauline" writing self. In a letter which is of crucial importance for a true understanding of her work, written two days later, she says:

> "I've two 'kick-offs' in the writing game. *One* is joy—real joy—the thing that made me write when we lived at Pauline and that sort of writing I could only do in just that state of

being in some perfectly blissful way *at peace*. Then something delicate and lovely seems to open before my eyes, like a flower without thought of frost or a cold breath, knowing that all about it is warm and tender and 'ready'. And *that* I try ever so humbly to express.

The other 'kick off' is my old original one, and had I not known love it would have been my all. Not hate or destruction (both are beneath contempt as real motives) but an extremely deep sense of hopelessness, of everything doomed to disaster, almost wilfully, stupidly. . . . There! as I took out a cigarette paper I got it exactly—*a cry against corruption*—that is *absolutely* the nail on the head. Not a protest—a *cry*. And I mean corruption in the widest sense of the word of course.

I am at present fully launched, right out in the deep sea, with this second state . . ."

Katherine Mansfield's genius for the precise word is here applied to the source of her own inspiration in a moment of entire clarity. She has, she says, the *absolutely* right word for the condition out of which she was writing *Je ne parle pas français*: it was "a *cry* against corruption". And *Prelude*, which she had written two years before at the Villa Pauline, in her time of happiness, was the outcome of a condition of love—of being in some perfectly blissful way at peace—unaware of, unheeding, ignoring, rising joyfully above corruption and the threat of disaster.

The connection between this lucid self-awareness in the act of writing and the immediate experience she had undergone on her return to the Villa Pauline is intimate. There the same contrast was experienced and expressed as it were instinctively. There was the memory of her life at Pauline —its joy and confidence and achievement—together with the knowledge that it had been swept away, doomed wilfully, stupidly to disaster: from the conflict came the agonised and agonising "cry against corruption". "A swarm of black soldiers was kicking something about in the sand among the palm-trees—a dead dog, perhaps, or a little tied-up kitten".

§

It is strange—indeed almost frightening to those who have some monition of the prophetic character of true literary genius, and of the symbolical significance of so much that

happens to the "experiencing nature"—that the agonizing contrast between Katherine Mansfield's joy at Bandol in 1915-16 and her suffering there in 1917-18 should have embraced even the two English doctors who attended her there at these different times. One belonged to the world of trust and candour and integrity, the other to the world of corruption. Happily, it is with the first of these that this story is chiefly concerned.

In November 1915, shortly after the death of her brother in the war, Katherine Mansfield left England for the South of France. Her conscious motive was to overcome her grief at her brother's death. But other motives were working in her. Her brother was killed almost immediately after going to France in October 1915. He had spent his last home leave with her and they had talked and talked together of their childish memories of New Zealand. For the first time for many years—really for the first time since she finally left New Zealand in July 1908,—her slumbering love of her country, and a nostalgia for her childhood was awakened in her. Her dislike of New Zealand quite suddenly changed into love. That rebirth of love for her own country was intimately and mysteriously mixed with her affection for her brother. She wanted to go to a country that was like New Zealand—to seek a new state of soul. "Un paysage, c'est un état d'âme" said Amiel. And it is assuredly true that for Katherine Mansfield in November 1915 the New Zealand, which her imagination had rediscovered by love, was a state of soul.

At the time I did not clearly understand her motives. Neither (I think) did she. I went with her rather reluctantly, for I felt that her grief for her brother was something into which I could not fully enter, any more than I could enter into the memories of New Zealand which I did not share. But we went together. After a miserable time exploring the coast for a modest place to settle in and being constantly disappointed, I decided to return home, as soon as we had found a place where Katherine would like to stay. We found it at Bandol, at the Hôtel Beau Rivage. I stayed there two days with her helping her to settle in, and then left for England.

On the night before I left, we noticed at dinner an attractive, thoroughly well-washed man of about sixty with a white

moustache, who had Englishman written all over him. The next evening (as Katherine Mansfield's letters record) he proved his nationality and his courtesy by "making her a leg and offering her two copies of the *Times*."

Shortly afterwards, she fell ill, not seriously, but with the fibrositis which sometimes painfully incapacitated her, and also with what she called her "Marseilles fever". She had to take to her bed. Two days later, on December 14, 1917, she wrote to me:

> "After mid-day that Englishman, terribly shy, knocked at my door. It appears he has a most marvellous cure for just my kind of rheumatism. Would I try it? All this was explained in the most preposterous rigmarole, in an attempt to appear offhand and at his poor unfortunate ease. I never saw a man so shy. Finally he says that if the pharmacien can't make it up here he will take the first train to Toulon and get it for me. It is a rubbing mixture which he got off a German doctor one year when he was in Switzerland for the winter sports. It sounds to me very hopeful—but I'd catch at any straw.
>
> So I thanked him, and humming and hawing he went off. I can't think what frightened him so. I shall have to put on a hat and a pair of gloves when he brings me the unguent."

Later on the same day she wrote:

> "My Englishman has arrived with his pot of ointment and refuses to take even a pin or a bead in payment. How kind he is! It's easy to see he hasn't lived with me three years."

Two days later, the ointment was working. She was still in bed, but

> "I think my Englishman's stuff is going to do me a great deal of good, and he has made me so perfectly hopeful—and has been in many ways such a *comfort* to me. Should this stuff not quite cure me, he has given me the address of a place in Normandy where one goes for a cure once a year . . . he says it's simply miraculous . . . 'You'll be skipping like a two-year old after a week there,' says my nice funny man. This man isn't really a doctor. He's the Head of Guy's Dental Hospital —but he is a queer, delightful, good-natured person, and he has certainly been a comfort to me . . . I have the bed covered with copies of *The Times*, marked at certain places with large blue crosses and a copy of *Le Temps* with arrows in the margin and 'this will interest you' written underneath. All from the same kind and only donor."

Another two days and "my rheumatism this morning *n'existe pas*. I've not been so free for a year."

> "I can positively jump. I'm to go on using the unguent and my Englishman is going to give me the prescription today, for he leaves here on Monday (the next day). He is also going to conduct me to the post and see I'm not cheated over my mandat from Kay, so that is all to the good."

But "my Englishman" did not leave on Monday. He stayed on another week for her sake. On the Wednesday, December 23, she wrote:

> "I am going to drive in a kerridge to that little Durer town I told you of". (That was the little town in Katherine Mansfield's poem, 'The Town between the Hills'). "The Englishman did not go away on Monday. He stayed till the end of the week to show me the different walks he has discovered here, and it is he who is taking me there this afternoon. How we get there, Heaven only knows, but he says there is a road. This man has certainly been awfully kind to me. You he can't understand at all, and for all I say I am afraid you will remain a villain. I can't persuade him that I am more than six years old and quite able to take my own ticket and manage my own affairs.
>
> 'But why should you?' says he. 'What did he marry you for if it wasn't to look after you?' He is 62, and old-fashioned at that. But I feel in a very false position sometimes, and I can't escape from it. However, it's no matter."

On Christmas Day she wrote:

> "Now I am going for a walk with the Englishman who leaves definitely the day after tomorrow."
>
> *Later.* It was a long walk through the woods and then we left the paths and he taught me *how* to climb as taught by the guides in Norway. It was boring beyond words but absolutely successful—we scaled dreadful precipices and got wonderful views. Then I had to learn how to descend, and how to balance if the stones roll when you put your foot on them—What a pa-man! All this he takes really seriously—and I find myself doing so too and I don't get one bit tired. I wish you could see my room. Even the blue glass vases we put away have had to come out for the big bouquets of yellow and pink roses. Tonight I have promised to dine with this pa-man. I don't doubt I shall get a lecture on touring in Spain. I already know more about how to travel in Italy than any living being, I should think."

Then "my Englishman" disappears for ever from Katherine's letters. He was indeed a true "Pa-man", to use the Beauchamp family word of which Katherine Mansfield was particularly fond. It meant an oldish man who was "a character", set in ways which were a trifle eccentric, but charming; old fashioned, courteous, and above all reliable. And behind all this it meant a man who belonged to the childhood world—a man whom a child could trust.

Among Katherine Mansfield's papers lately I found the precious prescription. It was signed, in a firm handwriting, "F. Newland-Pedley F.R.C.S." So he *was* a doctor after all —obviously, from his qualification, a distinguished surgeon, who had specialised in dentistry. I thought that I would like, if it were possible, to learn more about this Englishman who had befriended Katherine and been so great a comfort to her. Accordingly, I wrote to the Secretary of Guy's Hospital to ask for information. I was richly rewarded. I received a copy of *Guy's Hospital Gazette* for May 24, 1947, containing an article by Mr. Lees Read, the Clerk to the Governors, on the man himself. The substance of that article follows here. It gives a fascinating picture of the closing years of a lovable, distinguished and eccentric Englishman who richly deserves a niche in the temple of Fame, in his own right as a "character", as well as for his kindness to Katherine Mansfield.

§

Mr. Newland-Pedley was one of the co-founders in 1889 of the famous dental school at Guy's Hospital. He was evidently deeply attached to his foundation, for when he died at Aquaseria, near Como in Italy, on May 4, 1944, at the age of 90, it was found that he had bequeathed to Guy's Hospital the residue of his estate, of about £60,000, to be held by them in trust to commemorate his connection with the Dental School, by endowing existing prizes and scholarships and establishing others. But the first charge on his estate was the payment of annuities amounting to £900 a year to five Italians.

The Clerk to the Governors was accordingly deputed to go to Italy, where Mr. Newland-Pedley had become domiciled, to discover whether the Italian legatees still existed. In the

course of his investigations he learned much of the closing years of the surgeon's life.

Newland-Pedley arrived in the village of Aquaseria, a sick man, aged 76, in the year 1930, and asked for accommodation at the inn. He was taken in by the proprietors and nursed by them through a serious illness. But he made a good recovery, and declared that he had not felt so well for years and that he had decided to make the village his home for the rest of his life. He persuaded the owners to sell their inn and buy a villa where he would be the sole guest. He in return promised to provide for their future by his will.

The arrangement worked well. Newland-Pedley became the godfather of the little Italian village. Perhaps his most remarkable act was to build a church from no religious motive at all. The inhabitants of Aquaseria were hard hit in consequence of the sanctions imposed on Italy during the Abyssinian war. The only industry in the village closed down, and the people were near starvation. To remedy this, Newland-Pedley proposed to the parish priest that he should pay a weekly wage to every able-bodied man who did a full week's work in quarrying and hauling stone and in building the village church, of which only the foundations existed besides the crypt in which the services were held. Shrewdly, he left it to the padre to supervise the work and the payment. The padre saw to it that they earned their money. So the village was the richer by an excellent stone church, which cost Newland-Pedley £1500, and the villagers were saved from misery.

On one occasion he bought up the entire contents of the village sweet shop and distributed them in packets to the school children. The religious sisters, who taught in the school, remonstrated gently with him and suggested that there were many things more urgently needed by the children than free sweets—new blackboards, for instance. Would he not consult them before making any other gifts to the school? Perhaps their remonstrances had some effect, for his next gift to the school-children, during a severe winter, was skirts and pink woollen jerseys for the little girls and shirts and navy blue jerseys for the little boys, and a pair of stout boots for both alike. But he was unrepentant in the matter of the sweets, and he was heard to declare, after the sisters had gone, that

he knew far better than they what was good for children. At another time, on being asked to help with the provision of facilities for the education of the elder children, he retorted in the same spirit by buying a hoop and stick for every child in the school.

Plainly, there was method in his madness. It is easy to see that Newland-Pedley was mainly concerned that the children should play vigorously and grow up healthy. It is all in keeping with his own past passion for climbing, under which Katherine Mansfield had suffered a little, and his old addiction to winter-sports, which was the occasion of his getting the precious prescription. He remained true to type to the end: for the villagers told the story how at the age of 86 he had gone with ome village-friends to visit a sick neighbour. On the return journey he was confronted with a jump of three to four feet down into a sunken road. He brusquely refused the help that was offered him, saying he would make the jump by himself, even if it killed him.

His concern for the children of the village was unorthodox and continuous. Of his five annuities, three were to the older people who had cared for him for fourteen years, but the other two were for the care of children. One was to the sister of his housekeeper of whom Newland-Pedley had been fond ever since she was a little girl.

Characteristically, he would never admit the possibility that Italy might be at war with England. So he stubbornly refused to make any financial arrangements which would have secured him some income in the event of war. In consequence when hostilities began he was almost destitute and had to be maintained by the people he had befriended. They had eventually to pay for his funeral. But for quite a while after England and Italy were at war he could not be persuaded that it was really impossible for him to obtain his income from England and carry on as usual. "I am very tired of being poor", he was heard to say more than once towards the end of his life.

But he had become almost a legendary figure. At a time when there were not a few dangerous characters in the country-side he could go anywhere unmolested. Neither was he in any way interfered with by either the Italian or the German authorities. They left him free to go his own road.

He died at the age of ninety and was buried in the village. A marble plaque in the village church commemorates his generosity in building it.

Such is the picture of the closing years of Katherine Mansfield's "my Englishman". One feels how he would have been drawn to her, and she to him. He was a man after her own childish heart. How she would have appreciated his gesture in giving all the sweets of the village at one swoop to the children—she who urged me, in the last months of her own life, never to go to a family of small children whom I knew without an ample supply of barley-sugar, that I might live in their memory as "the barley-sugar Man".

§

Now for the contrast. It is not a pleasant subject; so one may well be brief. Two years after "my Englishman" had tended her at Bandol in her brief illness, she was again ill in Bandol, but this time desperately. "As good luck (she said) would have it," an English doctor was in the place. Her good-luck was an illusion. He turned out to be "a shady medicine man": an addict of drink and drugs. There exists a painful and vivid letter in which she describes her final interview with him.

She, utterly mistrusting him, had paid his bill and severed all connection with him. But when at last she was preparing to return to England she discovered to her horror that the only chance of permission being given her to travel was to obtain a medical certificate. She sent to him to ask him to visit her again for this purpose. Again and again she sent. He did not come. Finally, after a long delay, he came, half-drunk and half-drugged.

He gave her the certificate and she left Bandol straightway. At a café in Marseilles, while waiting for the train, she wrote me a letter. Here is part of it.

> "He came far more than three parts on, and I sat down and played the old game with him—listened—looked—smoked his cigarettes—and asked finally for a chit that would satisfy the Consul. He gave me the chit, but whether it will I'll not know till tomorrow. It could not be more urgent in its way. I dictated it *and* had to spell it *and* had to lean over him as he wrote *and* hear him say—what dirty hogs do say . . . Ah,

the filthy little brute! There I sat and smiled and let him talk. . . .

Oh dear! Oh dear! I feel so strange. An old dead sad wretched self blows about, whirls about in my feverish brain —and I sit here in this cafe—drinking and looking at the mirrors and smoking and thinking how utterly corrupt life is —how hideous human beings are—how loathsome it was to catch this toad as I did—with *such* a weapon. I keep hearing him say, 'Any trouble is a pleasure for a lovely woman' and seeing my soft smile . . . I am very sick, Bogey."

Sick indeed she was, by this time very dangerously ill. Only an utterly inhuman doctor—or one whose professional conscience had been rotted by drink and drugs—would not have given her at sight the certificate she needed: that she was unfit to travel alone. Where, if anywhere, she had a *right* to expect integrity, she found corruption.

She does not say that she thought back to the far different doctor who had cared for her in the same hotel two years before. But she cannot have failed to think of him.

KEATS AND COLERIDGE

AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION

The conversation is imagined to take place in Dr. Gilman's house at Highgate in May, 1820. *Keats has recovered sufficiently from the severe haemorrhage which laid him low in early February to make the journey from Hampstead to Highgate. But he is quite incapable of walking the distance—and has had to hire a hackney carriage to drive him along the Spaniards Road. He cannot really afford this extravagance, but the matter is urgent. It is early Spring—the mid-May he loved so much and his eager eyes have been drinking in the luxury of an English spring, for the last time, as his foreboding heart declares. For the scheme is afoot, which he has neither strength nor hope enough to resist, to send him away to Italy. He has the sense, as he is driven along the familiar road, of looking his last on all things lovely.*

He is very small, only just over five feet; and the disease has made fearful ravages on him. The growing knowledge of the hopelessness of his passionate love for Fanny Brawne has weakened his resistance. Even his faith that man can overcome his destiny by accepting it seems to be slipping away from him. Nevertheless, he puts a brave face on his misery, cracks jokes about his determination not "to go off like a frog in a frost", and none of his friends is allowed to have a glimpse of his extremity. Yet he must speak to someone; and he has chosen Coleridge, taking advantage of a casual invitation given him a year before. He has written to Coleridge to ask if he might call, and Coleridge has appointed today.

Coleridge receives him in the ground floor room which the Gilmans set apart for him to receive his visitors. Coleridge looks older than he actually is. His hair is white. He is not entirely at his ease at the impending visit. He has the feeling that something more is required of him than one of his habitual monologues to his bevy of rather second-rate disciples. And for that cause he is more than usually conscious that he ought not to be where he is, in his safe but somewhat inglorious retreat, as a patient, honoured indeed, but still a patient, in the house of a doctor who cares for him as drug-addict.

But, in spite of his misgivings, he is gratified by Keats's visit, and he has taken care to hunt out and read the copy of Endymion *which Keats's publishers had sent him. All the best in Coleridge's nature is*

roused by the thought that the young man has chosen him to speak to.

At moments during the conversation Keats finds it difficult to control his cough.

KEATS: It is kind of you to let me come, Mr. Coleridge. You may have been surprised at my asking so long after your kind invitation, whether I might call on you. I owe you an explanation.

COLERIDGE: You certainly do not owe me an explanation. But naturally I should be interested to hear it.

KEATS: Well, let me confess that at the time you invited me: in April last year, after I had walked with you and Mr. Green through Ken Wood—

COLERIDGE: I remember the occasion well.

KEATS: At the time I did not think that I should take advantage of your invitation. Not of course that I did not wish to, or that I was not grateful to you. But I thought you had probably asked from politeness,—and I have a horror of presuming.

COLERIDGE: So you have overcome your horror. I am glad.

KEATS: Thank you, Mr. Coleridge.

COLERIDGE: But how came you to change your mind, Mr. Keats?

KEATS: A year ago, it seemed probable that one day—when I had a little more work to my credit, I might meet you without forcing myself upon you. But now it appears less probable. I shall be leaving England very shortly, and I wanted to see you before I went.

COLERIDGE: But where are you going; and why?

KEATS: To Italy, I believe. It is not entirely settled yet. Kind friends are busy with the arrangements. They are truly kind. But—well, my heart is not in the business. But I shall go. One end is as good as another.

COLERIDGE: Believe me, Mr. Keats, I am sincerely glad you came to see me. Though I may have spoken out of politeness, that does not mean there was nothing specific to yourself in my invitation. It was at least spoken as from one poet to another—or from one who was a poet to one who is.

KEATS: To one whose ambition it was to be a poet, Mr. Coleridge.

COLERIDGE: To one who *is* a poet, from one who was. And yet, I hope, I am still, in some fashion a member of the brotherhood. I like to believe that, although the particular power of poetic utterance no longer visits me, I am nevertheless still occupied in the work of a poet. I even say to myself that I am perhaps more wholly occupied in the work of a poet than I was when I was young. (There is a pause before Coleridge resumes).

Poets are not poets only when they sing, Mr. Keats. The moment comes when they must think as well as feel, and feel the more deeply—the more deeply they have thought; and it has become my conviction that beyond that moment only the poet of commanding genius can retain both "the vision and the faculty divine", the power to utter the vision in words which touch the heart and convince the mind. It is the greatest and the noblest of all powers, for it is the power of revealing the truth, which can only be revealed. It is not false modesty, therefore, which contrains me to confess that I have not this power. Neither can I say that I had it and it left me. When the time came for me to advance into the possession of this power (to possess which is to be possessed by it) I was as it were paralyzed. With only part of myself could I enter into the kingdom; the other part remained outside the gate. But with the part which is within I labour all I can. It is the work of the philsosopher, not of the poet; but it is the work of the poet-philosopher,—or so I would believe.

KEATS: It is generous of you, Sir, to confide your thought to me; and I hope you will not think me presumptuous if I say I think I understand it. Indeed, Sir, you have broached the very matter on which I hoped to consult you. You will forgive me if, by comparing your experience with mine, I appear to set them on an equality. But, as I listened to your description of your own experience, it seemed to me that I had come to the turning-point of which you spoke, at which the once spontaneous poet is overwhelmed by the necessity of deeper thought. By the effort towards deeper thought, feelings quite incommensurable with those he felt before are awakened within him. It is as though one died. For the experiences which compel us to deeper thought are experiences which shatter the frame of our personal identity. Things happen to

us which, we childishly feel, *ought* not happen to us; they come from beyond the frontiers of the world of our expectation. They are monstrous things. And for a moment we want to cry out against them, with a terrible cry that shall pierce the ears of God—not to arraign him, but to appeal to him, and to remind him that we exist, and that he has forgotten us. But we know that that is childish. God, what ever he may be, is not like that.

COLERIDGE: You are right, Mr. Keats. God is not like that. We have the best reason for knowing that, for God himself has revealed it to us. Is it not plain that to his Son, our Lord, happened the most monstrous thing of all—indeed, a thing so monstrous that the human mind and heart must reel before it? To physical pain as fearful as physical pain can be, was added spiritual pain such as no human imagination can conceive when He, who knew himself to be the Son of God, and had gone in that knowledge obediently to his agonizing death, suddenly had that knowledge taken from Him. Then He cried, once and for all, on behalf of all humanity: "My God, my God! Why has thou forsaken me?"

That was, and is, and ever shall be the most terrible and most wonderful cry ever wrung from the lips of Man. Of all human words it is the most human; of all divine words the most divine—the most human because it tells us, beyond all possibility of denial, that Our Lord was utterly man; the most divine because without that knowledge we could not know him as God. We need the certainty that He was man to give us the certainty that he was God.

It would perhaps be esteemed sacrilege if I were to say in the market place what I can say to you here, as poet to poet, namely, that this revelation is as it were the archetype and consummation of poetry itself, the complete suffusion of utterance with meaning. There it is absolute; here it is never more than partial. But I have never doubted that all true poets reflect, nay participate in, the creative power of God.

KEATS: I am not sure that I understand you, Mr. Coleridge: but what you say may be of very great importance to me. It seems to ratify some of my own speculations, though I feel it goes far beyond them. You say, do you not, that the nature of God is revealed in the love and the suffering of Jesus, and that

his life, being absolutely filled with meaning, is self-evidently divine, so that the creative power of God is nakedly and blindingly visible? You affirm that this revelation is, as it were, the absolute idea of poetry: the incommensurable perfection to which poetry tends—that as the life, the words, the love, the suffering of Jesus reveal the very truth of God, so the words of the poet may reveal the hem of God's garment. Further, by bringing so tremendous an endorsement to the poet's putting aside the temptation to cry to God, when the monstrous things happen to him, you seemed to infer that the poet's life itself might reflect the divine pattern.

COLERIDGE: I do truly believe that what distinguishes the moral nature of the true poet is a power of obedience, whereby barriers of the self are overborne, and he becomes all permeable to a higher power. It is not possible to comprehend man's moral nature at all, except by assuming the idea of a Fall of some kind, whereby individual selves were separated from their divine origin. Quite apart from the Christian revelation, finite mind presupposes infinite mind. We cannot wholly overcome that separation of ourselves nor escape the finitude of our minds, but we can become conscious of our condition, not with the sickening cant of false humility, but as vehicles of Reason.

Reason is the power which comprehends that things must be, and is utterly distinct from the Intelligence which can only understand that things are. Intelligence understands, Reason overstands. So it is our duty, by the power of Reason, to overstand our selves, and to comprehend the necessity of our own separation and finitude, not in order that we may snivel over our human condition, but in order that our selves may cease to be an obstacle whereby the truth is obscured. That is the moral duty of man, as man.

But the poet and the philosopher are those to whom this duty is pre-eminently delegated. I distinguish between them, but I do not separate them. In every genuine poet there is an element of the philosopher, and in every true philosopher an element of the poet. The form which this moral duty assumes in the philosopher is that of overstanding the partial views of the mere intelligence, not by denying to them their measure of validity, but by seeing by an act of the Reason that

they can be, and must be, only partial. But in the poet this contemplative or meditative process becomes creative. The reality, which the philosopher apprehends by Reason, and which I denominate as the Idea, becomes in the poet a power to shape and body forth representations of human nature which are as distinct and partial as are the views of the Intelligence, but with which he is not identified. Thus we may speak of the poet as reflecting the creative power of God, as the philosopher reflects the contemplative mind of God. To those who do not comprehend these processes from the centre from which they radiate such a description will suggest detachment or impassivity. It is not so. There is no condition of more perfect activity, for the finite human being, than that of being used by a power which, so far as he apprehends, he loves.

KEATS: I remember, Mr. Coleridge, that when I first began to take poetry seriously, to consider what a thing it is to aspire to be a poet—it is not so very long ago, but much has happened to me since then—I was depressed. But then a thought came to me, which encouraged me greatly, namely, that the man of poetic genius had not any individuality, any determined character, any clearly-defined and proper self. When I understood this, as I thought I did, my feverous impatience to achieve began to abate; and lately I came to this resolution —never to write for the sake of writing or making a poem, but from running over with any little knowledge an experience which many years of reflection might perhaps give me. It is, I fear, unlikely that I shall be allowed to abide by this resolution, for I have to make my living. But I should like to make it, if I could, by other means than writing verses for the market, if I could make it that way: which I gravely doubt. But I should like your judgment upon my surmise that there is something essentially submissive in the man of genius which prevents him from having a defined character.

COLERIDGE: I should be only too eager to confirm it; but I am restrained by the thought that there is more than one kind of poetic genius. Evidently, Shakespeare towers at the head of the species you describe. Indeed, only the other day, in conversation, contrasting him with Milton, I said that his poetry, was characterless, whereas John Milton himself is in every line of the Paradise Lost. But to say that poetry is

characterless, in the sense I apply that epithet to Shakespeare's poetry, is not the same as to say that the poet is characterless. We have a very definite conception of Shakespeare's character, despite the impossibility of attributing to him the opinions of his dramatic characters.

Consider, for example, the idea of love in Shakespeare. Who, that reads Shakespeare with a discriminating mind, could deny that there is a profound difference between Shakespeare's attitude to women and Milton's, or that Shakespeare's is the nobler and more humane? For Shakespeare woman in idea is at least the spiritual equal, and perhaps one should say, the spiritual superior of man—at least in potentiality. That he represents woman who lacks tenderness as a monster of cruelty, in Regan and Goneril, serves only to set in sharper relief how highly he esteemed woman. Even his harlots have tenderness, and his women in love from Portia to Miranda are such that every man, with a spark of fineness in his soul, would deem it a high privilege to be loved by any one of them. But, for all the beauty of Eve—and partly because of it—we feel and know that for Milton woman was by nature a being inferior to man. Yet Milton was a very great poet.

KEATS: I see, Mr. Coleridge, that I have used the word character carelessly. Shakespeare has a character, and we are conscious of it—most distinctly conscious of it in his attitude to this semi-ethereal matter of Love. As it came first to your mind, so it comes first to mine, when we compare Shakespeare and Milton as human beings. But is not perhaps this very thing—the exquisite refinement in his conception of love—

COLERIDGE: Pray do not use the word conception, Mr. Keats—Shakespeare's "idea" of love.

KEATS: I will, Mr. Coleridge. Is not Shakespeare's possession of the true idea of love the very thing which makes his character indefinite compared to Milton's? He could not possess the idea, without being possessed by it. There must have been an exquisite power of love in Shakespeare—for it is not only in portraying the love of man for woman, that he manifests it, but in picturing the love of man for man—in Cassius and Brutus, in Enobarb and Antony, in Horatio and Hamlet, in Antonio and Bassanio. He continually astonishes and exalts us by his revelation of the power of love

and friendship. In the most unlikely places he makes it shine forth like a pearl in rubbish—in Doll Tearsheet even. Until we feel that this power of love alone, in Shakespeare's eyes, was what made men and woman human—or divine. It is as though he were, for ever, turning mortal clay into gold.

COLERIDGE: That is well and justly said, Mr. Keats. He is like the sun,

> "Turning with splendour of his precious eye
> The cloddy meagre earth to glittering gold".

KEATS: May not this power and alchemy of love in Shakespeare have been the very thing that makes his character indistinct in other particulars, as though Love itself were his character. And might it not be that Love, in this superlative degree, excludes every other kind of character? Forgive me, Mr. Coleridge, if I speak obscurely. I can scarcely express what I dimly conceive. But does not Love mean that the self is transcended, and where there is no self, there is no character —no character that is, as the world counts character?

COLERIDGE: I think it does—nay, I am sure of it. You have, almost without knowing it, set forth the very idea of Love.

KEATS: And when you say, Mr. Coleridge, that Shakespeare's poetry compared to Milton's is characterless, you mean it, do you not, in the sense that whereas Milton's identity seems stamped on every line, Shakespeare's seems to have uttered *itself*? We recognise it as Shakespeare's, *because* it has this impersonal quality—as though in the very utterance of his verse, his self were continuously obliterated and surpassed. The verse of Milton is John Milton's verse—and perhaps no man ever forged and stamped a verse more marvellous; but Shakespeare's verse is—

COLERIDGE: God's, Mr. Keats. Say it. For it is true. Milton himself recognised the difference.

> For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art
> Thy easie numbers flow, and that each heart
> Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd book
> Those Delphick lines with deep impression took,
> Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
> Dost make us marble with too much conceiving.

Every word of that tribute needs to be weighed. *Delphic* lines, Mr. Keats,—inspired and mysterious.

KEATS: Shakespeare's verse seems actually to grow into itself before our mind's eye, to be animated and urged by an inward life. It is not designed or controlled from without. I heard you say in a lecture that the construction of his periods is the necessary and homogeneous vehicle of his peculiar manner of thinking. It is not the style of his age, you said: I would go even further and say that his style it is not a style at all, in the same way that his character is not a character. Marlowe has a style, Jonson has a style, Milton has the greatest style of all. Shakespeare has not one. Probably, Milton has the greatest character of all our poets. Shakespeare has not one.

COLERIDGE: Milton's egotism is truly sublime. His Satan, his Adam, his Raphael—nay, almost his Eve are all John Milton. It is a sense of this intense egotism that gives me the greatest delight in reading his works. The egotism of such a man is a revelation of the possibilities of the human spirit.

KEATS: May not this palpable impress of Milton's identity upon his verse—and his characters—be connected with his conception of woman as an inferior being? Is there not something in common between the effort to dominate a woman, and the effort to dominate words?

COLERIDGE: Why not? I cannot imagine Shakespeare dominating a woman, in spite of *The Taming of the Shrew*; but neither can I imagine him happily married. I suspect that he dreamed of a felicity which he was far from having attained. Poets of the one kind may set the idea of woman too high, as the others set it too low; but it is rare, I believe, that great poets attain domestic happiness, and when they do the faculty of poetry is apt to leave them. The very fact that Shakespeare bodied forth the idea of woman as it had never been bodied forth before, and made it prophetic, may itself be the reason why the record he has left of his own relation with a woman is one we could well be spared. He seems to have been dominated by her, or by his animal desire for her.

But if there is an affinity between the effort to dominate words and the effort to dominate a woman, would you suggest to a kindred affinity between being dominated by words and being dominated by a woman? There may be something in that too.

KEATS: I did not suggest, Mr. Coleridge, that the only

alternative to trying to dominate words is to be dominated by them. Shakespeare does neither, unless in some of his early conceits. There seems to be a condition in which words are born as it were out of a darkness, as though Nature herself were heaving into utterance immediately, without the interposition of the intelligence, but we feel that the darkness is in the Light, that the Light does not deny the darkness but is the meaning of it.

COLERIDGE: In the beginning was the Word. The Darkness does not comprehend the Light, but it is comprehended by the Light. I have often wondered what Shakespeare's religious beliefs really were. Although I am certain that he was tender to the old religion, I am not so sure that he held closely to the Christian faith. Nevertheless, I feel that he was more deeply Christian than the majority of those who have held it. There is a mystery in Shakespeare, as there is a mystery in every Idea, for every idea is a revelation, and every revelation is a mystery. Truth is not something we understand, but something in which we participate.

KEATS: I too, Mr. Coleridge, have never been able to understand how men could believe that truth was arrived at by a process of consecutive reasoning.

COLERIDGE: You are fortunate. Most young men pass through a period when they cannot believe that Truth can be reached in any other way, and many of them are permanently corrupted. The only thing that can save them then is to experience a deep feeling. But it is easy for feelings to be corrupted by the false intelligence. No, the best remedy is for such a young man to *love* someone, sincerely and deeply. That will give him the assurance of something real which his vaunted intelligence cannot comprehend. Then he may begin to think, instead of dreaming that he is thinking. But you, Mr. Keats, not having the disease, do not need the remedy. Besides, sir, I have read your *Endymion*, and I do not think you can be accused of over-indulgence in the vice of consecutive reasoning.

KEATS: It is a slipshod poem, Mr. Coleridge; but it was the best I could do. Its mawkishness is distasteful to me, and it must be repulsive to you. Nevertheless, I cannot disown it. It was myself, and though it may be hard for you to credit,

it was a striving after truth,—though with feelings alone to guide me. But sometimes I regret that I exposed myself—to be flyblown on the review-shambles.

COLERIDGE: There are things one can say only to friends —only with the certainty of not being wilfully misunderstood. Your poem may be one of them. But remember, though the tongues of malice do their worst, it may *find* friends, Mr Keats—it may *find* friends.

KEATS: You are too kind, Mr. Coleridge. Believe me, I am grateful; but I do not want you to be kind.

COLERIDGE: But to find friends, Mr. Keats. Is that not our deepest desire, and to lose friends our greatest anguish?

But do you think, Mr. Keats, it is really possible to lose a *friend*? Is not a friend, by nature, something that one cannot lose, but only find? Is not the idea of a friend the incarnation of that love which always understands, always discerns the pure intention behind the shabby deed, the soul beneath the subterfuge?

KEATS: It seems it must be so. But I have not thought about it, sir. I do not . . . *believe* I have ever lost a friend.

COLERIDGE: Neither had I, when I was your age. I lived, I think, in a world where friends could not be lost. Now, it seems, I live in one where friends cannot be found. In that world I live my waking hours—and it is the world of my dreams also. That is the more terrible. But, thanks be to God, when Reason and Imagination achieve the idea of a friend, they find Him there already—before all worlds.

(There is a long pause before Keats speaks.)

KEATS: I may never see you again, Mr. Coleridge. Indeed, I do not believe I shall. Therefore, I must be honest with you, even in exposing my own ignorance and insufficiency. I am not convinced of the truth of Christianity. No one, I think, could desire more ardently than I at this moment to be convinced of the reality of an after-life beyond the grave; what are called the intellectual objections to the Christian faith make little impression on a mind like mine. My heart is hungry for faith. But there is some step I cannot take . . . It is as though it would make life too difficult for me. I might be tempted to arraign God, if I imagined Him too clearly. I don't want to rebel. I don't believe in rebellion. The greatest happiness I

have known—and I have known very great happiness, Mr. Coleridge—has come to me by the other way, by acceptance. I want to accept, Mr. Coleridge. I want to participate in the Truth, as you put it a little while ago. I think I understand what you meant. I want to be part of the Truth. I am afraid, if I were a Christian, I might become incapable of the small thing that is left to me.

COLERIDGE: And what may that be, Mr. Keats?

KEATS: To be faithful to the principle of beauty in all things, and to endure to the end . . I may be deluded, Mr. Coleridge —I hope I am—but I do not believe that I have much longer to live. There is a core of weakness which I now feel within me of which I shall not be rid. Anyhow, it has been decided that I must not risk another winter here. For my own part, I think the risk is equal wherever I am. My mother died of this disease, so did my brother. I shall hardly escape by going to Rome.

COLERIDGE. I, too, have felt within myself an ineradicable core of weakness. Yet here I am. How old are you, Mr. Keats?

KEATS: Twenty-four.

COLERIDGE: And I am—let me see—forty-eight. No, forty-seven. I little dreamed while I felt myself at death's door on a voyage home from Malta that I should live to forty-seven.

KEATS: I shall not do that. I would be—I would *have* been —well content with less, much less. But I must be going. I had to hire a coach. Your hill would have been too much for me. It is hard to believe I climbed Ben Nevis less than two years ago.

You have done me a great kindness, Mr. Coleridge, in allowing me to call upon you. I had a deep desire to talk with you—I do not know how to put the reason in words. Perhaps there were many reasons. I think I wanted to be reassured, and I knew of nobody who could reassure me—except perhaps yourself.

COLERIDGE: Have I reassured you?

KEATS: (slowly) I think . . , I have been reassured. But I wish to ask you one final favour. It will not take many minutes of your time. I have copied out a poem which I wrote a year ago, very soon after you allowed me to share your walk

with Mr. Green—the demonstrator at Guy's—in the lane beside Lord Mansfield's park. You will not remember, I imagine, that you spoke of the Nightingale in poetry. You said that you thought no one—not Chaucer, not Milton, not the Countess of Winchilsea, not even Mr. Wordsworth—had conveyed the mystery of the nightingale's song. This is an Ode to a Nightingale, which (as it happened) I wrote soon afterwards. I thought of sending it to you. But I might have appeared to press you for a judgment. And since then I have hoped to re-write the last stanza, which is not what it ought to be. But I have not the strength for this kind of composition, any more.

I am making a great to-do about a poem. But such as it is, Mr. Coleridge, it owes something to you. I would like to know you had read it—but not now. Good-bye, Mr. Coleridge.

COLERIDGE: Good-bye, Mr. Keats . . . And God bless you.

ON THE ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

For sheer loveliness this poem is unsurpassed in the English language. It is a poem of midnight, and sorrow, and beauty. Its pattern is intricate; it is an instantaneous exploration of the experience declared in the opening line: "My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense." That is the poet's condition as he listens in the dead of night to the song of the nightingale. The heart ache comes from his excess of happiness in participating in the bird's happiness. But a drowsiness steals over him as though he had drunk a death-potion.

At the thought he asserts himself. "O for a draught of vintage": and in some astonishing lines he conveys what he would have called the "sensation" of drinking a bumper of claret: what Blake would have called "the spiritual sensation" of wine that maketh glad the heart of man. The draught he longs for would carry him out of the world, into the nightingale's dim hiding-place, into forgetfulness (as deep as the bird's ignorance) of human sorrows. Those he tells of reflect his particular and personal griefs. The youth that grows pale and spectre-thin and dies is his dearly loved brother Tom who had died but five months before; and Beauty's lustrous eyes are Fanny Brawne's, and the new love that cannot pine at them beyond tomorrow is Keats' own new love which had already become an agony by his premonition that he too was doomed to go the way of his brother. The stanza is tense with the emotion of personal suffering controlled by poetic genius.

And poetic genius transports him. Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, but on the viewless wings of poesy he flies to the realm of forgetfulness and immortality which the nightingale inhabits and of which she sings. Her perch amid the leaves is a haven of eternity—a warm rich darkness into which the poet follows, and where he listens, darkling. Now more than ever it seems to him rich to die. It had seemed so many times before. In one of his early poems—perhaps his first completely successful one—he had told of the quiet joy that came to him with the first breath of spring.

The calmest thoughts come round us—as of leaves
Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—autumn suns
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves—
Sweet Sappho's cheek—a sleeping infant's breath—
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs—
A woodland rivulet—a poet's death.

Strange how prophetic that lovely sonnet was of Keats' loveliest poetry to be! That bud blossomed into fullness in the *Odes*. But the bud was born a long while ago. The thought had come to him again, only a week or two before he composed the *Ode to a Nightingale*. He had cried:

I know this being's lease;
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads.
Yet could I on this very midnight cease
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds.
Verse, Fame and Beauty are intense indeed,
But death intenser: Death is life's high meed.

The very phrase "cease on the midnight" returns now with an added depth and richness of experience.

Now more than ever seems it rich to die
To cease upon the midnight with no pain.

For indeed in the Ode he has imaginatively passed through a death—flown on the wings of imagination to the nightingale's immortality, and his soul is poured forth with her soul in her ecstasy.

Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a tranced senseless thing
But melodious truth divine

But the recoil comes. Were he indeed to die, he would not hear the song. Mortality is reasserted against the immortality of which the bird's song is at once the symbol and the elixir.

Then with a magnificent sideways sweep of the imagination, from the poor vantage of the mortality he has re-claimed, he sees the song and the bird as one. The bird becomes pure song, and inherits the eternity of beauty.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,
No hungry generations tread thee down.

The effect is incomparable, or comparable only with a similar sudden swerve from the world of time to the world of eternity in the *Grecian Urn*. The song of the bird is the voice of

eternity, sounding in the ear of high and low—of Ruth in tears amid the alien corn,

> The same that oft-time hath
> Charm'd magic casements, . . .

The *Ode* itself is a most marvellous example of this very miracle. The imaginative vistas on to which it opens are indeed of perilous seas—of thought and experience.

For there is a connection between the *Ode to a Nightingale* and some lines which Keats had written a year before.

> O never will the prize—
> High reason and the love of good and ill—
> Be my award. Things cannot to the will
> Be settled, but they tease us out of thought.
> Or is it that Imagination brought
> Beyond its proper bound, yet still confined,—
> Lost in a sort of purgatory blind,
> Cannot refer to any standard law
> Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
> In happiness to see beyond our bourn—
> It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
> It spoils the singing of the nightingale.

To use that language, the *Ode to a Nightingale* is such a spoiling of its singing. The pure bird voice is interwoven with the anguish of human destinies. Keats' great coeval Shelley expressed what is essentially the same realization:

> Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
> Stains the white radiance of eternity.

Of that eternity the nightingale's song is the symbol; and its purity is stained by the poet's despair. It is as it were caught and enmeshed in the still sad music of humanity.

Yet it would be a sacrilege to describe the *Ode* as a poem of despair. Its marvel is that it holds suspended in a moment of absolute beauty the tension between Time and Eternity, between Joy and Sorrow, between Mortality and Immortality, between Life and Death. It denies nothing of human experience, and it makes a great affirmation: an incontrovertible affirmation—that the truth, completely apprehended as it can be, only by an act of the Imagination, is completely beautiful —that the bitterest human experience if it can be contemplated by the Imagination turns or can be transmuted into the beauty which is truth.

The *Ode to a Nightingale* is a song of Victory. Keats, in the weeks before he wrote it, had been battling with great waves of disaster: his younger brother's death, his elder brother's departure to America—and no news. And, as he confessed, his love of his brothers was passing the love of women. Then he had fallen headlong in love with Fanny Brawne. Then he had realized that he too was threatened with an early death and had little hope of ever marrying her. Then that the little that remained of his small inheritance on which he had depended for his independent life as a poet was now tied up in a Chancery suit and he must live on the charity of his friends. And behind all this was the cruel and blasting attack made upon his poetry by the *Quarterly Review*, which had appeared six months before. Thank heaven, he had loyal publishers to help to sustain him against this, but it hit him hard—harder than he let appear.

Truly a cornucopia of misery had been emptied on this young man's head, in the winter which preceded the spring of 1819 when the *Ode to a Nightingale* was written. With this misery he struggled, as a man and as a poet. As a man he reached the conclusion, beyond which no mortal man has gone, that the world is a Vale not of tears and sorrow, but of Soul-making. "Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul?"—a unique spiritual being. And as a poet, too, how he had laboured! Those who read carefully his letters of this period—some of the greatest letters in the English language—can watch him gradually fashioning his magical instrument: the flexible and subtle stanza of the *Odes*. His technical labours during this time of spiritual struggle are often forgotten. It is easy to forget them, so enthralling is the spectacle of the struggle of his mind with his heart, of the effort of his intelligence to become a soul.

But of this spiritual struggle his technical labours were an intrinsic part: they were consubstantial with it. For he was sustained in his effort to accept his destiny by his conception of the function and the glory of poetry—the proud privilege of being "a miserable and mighty poet of the human heart." And so, over and above our wonder at the heroism of his struggle to master his suffering by accepting it into the inmost

recesses of the heart, it is our duty to think of him as the hero too of pure poetry, experimenting, searching, rejecting, till he had fashioned an instrument capable of greater range and more delicate inflection than English poetry had known before: only a few days before this *Ode* he had written a poem which is a perfect record of his striving for technical mastery—the lovely Andromeda sonnet with a new rhyme scheme, beginning "If by dull rhymes our English must be chained."

"Dull rhymes" . . . . Now think of the Odes. Perhaps their greatest technical triumph is the spiritual subtlety of their rhymes. Rhyme in the English language had never been used—before, or since—to carry such implications—"to pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone". There is no more marvellous ryhme in the English language than this:

> Perhaps the self-same song that found a *path*
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
> The same that oft-times *hath*
> Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

By such a rhyme the voice of Eternity makes a secret way into the human heart. Keats discovered that way.

COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH

As it is hard to separate the names of Coleridge and Wordsworth, so it is hard to separate their work; and if the disentanglement were to involve a final separation, it would (I am sure) be better not to attempt it. The intimate connection of those two men of genius is a unique and precious thing in the history of our literature. It is also a pathetic thing; for when that wonderful friendship decayed, the men and the work of the men both suffered. They dwindled to shadows of the splendid creatures they had been.

But their decline was not equal. Wordsworth was strong before he met Coleridge, and he remained strong after they had parted. He was the tree—as it were the elm, round which the vine of Coleridge twined itself to flourish in the happy and fruitful years of their friendship. The elm stands firm to the eye long after it has ceased to grow within. But take the support away from the vine, and instantly it trails impotent upon the ground; it can no longer "dedicate its beauty to the sun". After the severance, Coleridge collapsed with a completeness both foreign and repulsive to Wordsworth. Morally, Wordsworth was unassailable; Coleridge, emphatically, was not. But to the eye of imagination, which sees differently from the eye of current morality, the contrast between the men is not so absolute. They had both begun to decline, though the beginning of the decline was much earlier and the rate of the decline much quicker and more spectacular with Coleridge than with Wordsworth. But by 1818, twenty years after the zenith of their friendship, they were both dead to young Keats. He revered them both for what they had been; what they were was little to him. It was not very much, I suspect, in their heart of hearts to themselves.

I do not intend to try to probe the strange relation between these two men to the depth; still less to estimate the enigmatic part played in it by Dorothy Wordsworth. I must content myself, for my present purposes, with examining an aspect of it which seems, in the bare statement, almost painfully obvious. The relation, during the glorious and creative years, was not one of identity. Between men of such different "character",

in the ordinary moral sense, that was impossible. Wordsworth and Coleridge were not "two minds with but a single thought". They complemented, not repeated one another. Nor was this complementary relation one of equality. That is plain from the nature of their collaboration in the famous volume of *Lyrical Ballads.*

In the *Biographia Literaria* (Ch. IV) Coleridge describes how at the age of twenty-four, after having admired Wordsworth's *Poetical Sketches*, he first met Wordsworth personally; and he describes "the sudden effect" upon him of Wordsworth's reading to him a manuscript poem.

> It was not . . . the freedom from false taste . . . which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and subsequently on my judgment. It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dewdrops.

And in Ch. XIV, in a very famous passage, he describes the birth of the plan of writing and publishing the volume of *Lyrical Ballads.*

> During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, 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 colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both.

It will be observed that, if Coleridge's memory of his hearing Wordsworth recite his poem is accurate—and there is no cause to doubt it—Wordsworth had already achieved precisely this combination, and the novelty of his achievement had been recognised by Coleridge. It is equally noticeable that Coleridge's simile for the kind of effect which they were discussing is much more apt to Coleridge's own contribution than to Wordsworth's. However, he goes on :—

> 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 endeavours 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 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 from 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.

Now not only are those two sorts of poetry very different, so different indeed that it is only by a kind of verbal sleight that they can be assimilated to the same fundamental type; but it is notable—and we have already noticed—that Wordsworth's kind of poetry was already in existence, and that it was Coleridge's response to his actual achievement which had brought them together. We are therefore scarcely surprised when Coleridge's account continues:—

> With this view I wrote "The Ancient Mariner", and was preparing among other poems, "The Dark Ladie" and the "Christabel", in which I should more nearly have 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.

That, in a sense, it was. The difference between Wordsworth and Coleridge was real. And it is of importance to understand more closely the nature of this difference.

§

It went back to their childhood. In what is, I think, much the most beautiful of Coleridge's meditative poems, *Frost at Midnight*, he tells the pathetic story of his schoolboy faith that the fluttering film of soot on the bars of the fire-grate, called a "stranger" (because it was supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend), would really bring to him, in his loneliness at school, some visitor from home. I, too, have looked into the fire in my ward at old Christ's Hospital, in the city of London, and sought comfort for my loneliness, so that it may be that this poem makes a particular and personal appeal to me. When Coleridge has remembered all this, he turns to the baby sleeping beside him as he writes:

> 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.

To put it simply, what Coleridge desires for, and promises to, his little child—Hartley Coleridge that was to be—is a childhood like Wordsworth's, and unlike his own. He shall not be condemned to see "nought lovely but the sky and stars".

This profound difference between the "conditioning" of the two men was recognised by themselves; and it must have been a frequent theme of discussion between them. It was frankly admitted by Coleridge that Wordsworth's nurture was both natural and ideal. That is clear from the end of *Frost at Midnight*; and in another poem—*The Nightingale*—Coleridge tells, with a naivety that is touching, how when his baby cried he took it into the garden and held it up to the moon: obviously, to expose it to "the skyey influences." But the crucial passage is Wordsworth's comparison between their childhoods in Book VI of *The Prelude*. This was addressed to Coleridge, and admired by Coleridge.

> I too have been a Wanderer; but, alas!
> How different is the fate of different men
> Though twins almost in genius and in mind!
> Unknown unto each other, yea, and breathing
> As if in different elements, we were framed
> To bend at last to the same discipline,
> Predestined, if two beings ever were,
> To seek the same delights and have one health,
> One happiness. Throughout this narrative,
> Else sooner ended, I have known full well
> For whom I thus record the birth and growth
> Of gentleness, simplicity and truth,
> And joyous loves that hallow innocent days
> Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
> And groves, I speak to thee, my friend; to thee
> Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths
> Of the huge City, on the leaded roof
> Of that wide edifice, thy home and school,
> Was used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
> Moving in heaven; or haply, tired of this,
> To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
> See trees and meadows, and thy native stream
> Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
> Of thy long exile . . .
>
> Oh! it is a pang that
> Calls for utterance, to think how small a change
> Of circumstances might to thee have spared
> A world of pain, ripen'd ten thousand hopes
> *For ever withered* . . .
>
> I have thought
> Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence,
> And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
> Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse

Among the Schoolmen, and Platonic forms
Of wild ideal pageantry, shap'd out
From things well match'd or ill, and words for things,
The self-created sustenance of a mind
Debarr'd from Nature's living images,
Compell'd to be a life unto itself,
And unrelentingly possess'd by thirst
Of greatness, love and beauty . . .

. . . If we had met
Even at that early time; I needs must hope
Must feel, must trust, that my maturer age
And temperature less willing to be moved,
My calmer habits and more steady voice
Would with an influence benign have soothed
Or chas'd away the airy wretchedness
That battened on thy youth.

That seems to me very beautiful: a heartfelt utterance of true friendship, and a profound statement of the startling difference between the men.

To Wordsworth, Coleridge was a man who had been nurtured as a man should not be: a natural thing cruelly cut off from the sustenance of Nature, and withered. And Coleridge realised the truth of this in Wordsworth's presence, and gratefully agreed. To Coleridge, Wordsworth was a man who had been nurtured as a man should be. So Wordsworth was to himself also; and because this was in the main true, we can never afford to give much scope to our impatience with him. There was, indeed, in him that element of "intellectual egotism" at which Keats later took offence, but, at the time when he met Coleridge at least, it was justified. He had the right to compose an autobiographical poem in many books describing the "growth of a poet's mind", because that process of growth was "natural", almost in the ideal sense of the word, wherein what is and what ought to be are found to coincide. He was, from the beginning, at one with the reality about him; he had no need nor impulse to withdraw from the world he knew. For him the objective thing really was: the visible and sensible world really existed, and (it seemed to him) by the power of its own real existence called forth in him a kindred and analogous power, a sense of his own unshakeable being, so strong that there were moments when it seemed to gather the external world into itself. Wordsworth describes, in language.

precious for an understanding of him, this strange natural process; and he describes it, significantly enough, in a passage which later he omitted from *The Prelude*. Quite rightly, the timid orthodoxy of his later years was afraid of it.

> No outcast he, bewilder'd and depress'd;
> Along his infant veins are interfus'd
> The gravitation and the filial bond
> Of nature that connect him with the world.
> Emphatically such a Being lives,
> An inmate of this active universe;
> From nature largely he receives; nor so
> Is satisfied, but largely gives again,
> For feeling has to him imparted strength,
> And powerful in all sentiments of grief,
> Of exultation, fear, and joy, his mind,
> Even as an agent of the one great mind,
> Creates, creator and receiver both,
> Working but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds.

Thus, for his infancy; and in his boyhood the same natural reciprocity goes on.

> I was left alone,
> Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
> The props of my affection were remov'd,
> And yet the building stood as if sustained
> By its own spirit.

The creative response within himself was so strong that there were moments when

> Such a holy calm
> Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
> That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
> Appear'd like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in my mind. (*1st Prelude* II, 368 sq.)

It was the *intense reality* of the outward world to him that made it like a dream, with all the strange and overwhelming vividness of a dream: but a dream that was reality. The experience is magically recorded in the sonnet composed on Westminster Bridge.

> Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep
> Dear God! the very houses seem asleep,
> And all that mighty heart is lying still!

That is often misunderstood. A reciprocal reality and activity of the natural human creature and Nature is what Wordsworth

insists upon. He *sees* the calm, outside himself; he *feels* the calm, inside himself: object and subject act upon one another.

> A plastic power
> Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
> Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
> A local spirit of its own, at war
> With general tendency, but *for the most*
> *Subservient strictly to the external things*
> *With which it commun'd.* An auxiliar light
> Came from my mind which on the setting sun
> Bestow'd new splendour . . .
>
> (*1st Prelude*, II, 381 sq.)

Wordsworth once said of Coleridge that "he was not under the influence of external objects". The implied distinction between them was radical.

§

It appears in the very texture of the poetry of the two men. Coleridge's observation of nature is rare, and precise with an almost scientific precision. The famous, indeed almost hackneyed instance, is in the *Ode to Dejection*:

> All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
> Have I been gazing on the western sky
> *With its peculiar tint of yellow green*:
> And still I gaze, and with how blank an eye!

We feel how perfectly appropriate in that place is the prosaic flatness of the line, and we regard it as a sort of triumph of poetry. But we must not deceive ourselves. Coleridge always saw the visible world in this fashion, when he sought to see it exactly. He had not lost, as he believed he had, a power of exact yet imaginative vision which he once possessed. In April 1798 his vision of nature is of precisely the same *kind*. "But the dell", he wrote then in *Fears in Solitude*,

> Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
> As vernal cornfield, or the unripe flax,
> When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
> The level sunshine glimmers with green light.

This is, indeed, precise observation, but it is not exact imaginative vision. It is not of the same order at all as Wordsworth's vision. The distinction between them almost exactly corresponds to Wordsworth's distinction between the Fancy and the

Imagination—except that Coleridge's observation (even in this realm of Fancy) is not so spontaneous and free as Wordsworth's. Characteristic of Wordsworth, in this lesser mood, is his picture of the Linnet:

> Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
> That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
> Behold him perched in ecstasies,
> Yet seeming still to hover;
> There! where the flutter of his wings
> Upon his back and body flings
> Shadows and sunny glimmerings
> That cover him all over

Compared with this Coleridge's observation is deliberate; above all, it is static, and lacks the immediate sense of life. It is not a quick and sudden capture of a living essence. Yet this is so frequent in Wordsworth that it is part of the normal texture of his poetry, become so familiar that we scarcely notice it. Take *The Kitten and the Falling Leaves*: one of Wordsworth's quite minor poems.

> But the kitten, how she starts,
> Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts!
> First at one, and then its fellow,
> Just as light and just as yellow;
> There are many now, now one—
> Now they stop, and there are none:
> What intenseness of desire
> In her upward eye of fire!
> With a tiger-leap half-way
> Now she meets the coming prey,
> Lets it go as fast, and then
> Has it in her power again.

That, too, is "observation" (or Fancy) as distinct from imaginative vision; but the distinction, though Wordsworth made it himself, and on real grounds, is hard to maintain in his poetry. He lives with and in the thing he is describing; it becomes, as it were, a mode of his own being, in a supremely non-egotistical sense. The linnet and the kitten and William Wordsworth are modes of one Being. That is what we feel, and what he says he felt: no wonder we believe it. And indeed the distinction between Fancy and Imagination as Wordsworth applied it to his own work is best understood as a distinction

between the levels on which Wordsworth's own being was operant. The first is when his sympathy is mainly instinctive, immediate and physical; when he is, as it were, simply watching and participating in the life of Nature: while the second, which he justly valued more highly, is when he felt "the plastic power" rising within himself and going out to dominate Nature with a sort of sudden compulsive illumination. Thus it is by no caprice that he placed under "Poems of the Imagination" the seemingly simple, and apparently naive:

> The cock is crowing,
> The stream is flowing,
> The small birds twitter
> The lake doth glitter,
> The green field sleeps in the sun:
> The oldest and youngest
> Are at work with the strongest;
> The cattle are grazing,
> Their heads never raising;
> There are forty feeding like one.

It is an almost staggeringly simple example of what Wordsworth meant by the Imagination: of how it works and what it does. The clinching vision comes almost with a snap. At a slightly different level the quality is just as striking in a single line at the end of *Airey Force Valley*.

> . . . Not a breath of air
> Ruffles the bosom of this leafy glen.
> From the brook's margin, wide around, the trees
> Are steadfast as the rocks; the brook itself,
> Old as the hills that feed it from afar,
> Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm
> Where all things else are still and motionless.
> And yet, even now, a little breeze, perchance
> Escaped from boisterous winds that rage without,
> Has entered, by the sturdy oaks unfelt,
> But to its gentle touch how sensitive
> Is the light ash! that, pendent from the brow
> Of yon dim cave, in seeming silence makes
> *A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs*,
> Powerful almost as vocal harmony
> To stay the wanderer's steps and soothe his thoughts.

In that line the whole scene is gathered into a unity, which is, as it were, its meaning and its life.

§

I have no doubt at all that Coleridge was the first to understand and appreciate and unfeignedly admire this imaginative power of Wordsworth's; and I have not much doubt that Coleridge built his whole theory of Imagination upon Wordsworth's peculiar achievement. It was for precisely this singular power of Wordsworth's that Coleridge coined his phrase "the *esemplastic* power"—or the power of "moulding into unity"—as a definition of Imagination. And it is quite possible that Wordsworth accepted from Coleridge this specific theoretical distinction of the Imagination. There is a careful and notable discrimination in Wordsworth's 1814 preface to *The Prelude*, where he speaks of that poem in its original form as having been addressed to "a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the author's *intellect* is deeply indebted". That is to say, Coleridge helped to make Wordsworth intellectually conscious of his own nature and his own achievement; and very probably he provided Wordsworth with a terminology.

But the important point is that the "esemplastic" Imagination which Coleridge distinguished and admired in Wordsworth, he did not himself possess: that "fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed". Even that memorable image from nature in *Christabel*—

> 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 . . .

is, as we know, not Coleridge's own. It is the classic example of his borrowing of Dorothy Wordsworth's vision. She wrote in her Journal:—

"One only leaf upon the top of a tree—the sole remaining leaf—danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind."

Coleridge's seeing of Nature, as we have said, is not of that kind at all: it is static and deliberate, scientific and almost superinduced. Indeed, my own feeling about it is that he is trying, with an effort and in vain, to do what Wordsworth did,

naturally. Contact with external nature was, essentially, artificial for Coleridge.

His province, or his kingdom, was thought and dream—a dream quite different from Wordsworth's. It is commonly enough admitted, if stated in those simple terms. It is indeed obvious when we merely consider his three most famous poems—*The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*—unfinished, *Kubla Khan*—a fragment. Outside these, what have we? A few beautiful and indeed characteristic poems, all of one type and tone: *Frost at Midnight*, *This Lime-Tree Bower*, *The Ode to Dejection*, the verses *To William Wordsworth* after hearing *The Prelude*. Of these four—the next best of all Coleridge's poems—one tells the story of a childhood divorced from Nature, and promises his baby son a childhood like Wordsworth's, not like his father's; the two last lament the decay of "his shaping spirit of Imagination" while the second—*This Lime-Tree Bower*—appears to me deeply interesting as an effort to find in his kind of nature-observation a substitute for the true imaginative response in which (I suspect) he participated only in the company of Wordsworth and his sister.

This little group of Coleridge's poems as a whole is very illuminating; but most illuminating of all in the context of the whole is *This Lime-Tree Bower*. The occasion of the poem, which was written in 1797, was a visit of Charles Lamb to Stowey. Coleridge had scalded his foot and was confined to the house. The poem is an account of his feelings while William and Dorothy and Charles Lamb walked the hills together. He sees them, in fancy, wandering to

> The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
> And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
> Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
> Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
> Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
> Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
> Fanned by the water-fall! And there my friends
> Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
> That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
> Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
> Of the blue clay-stone.

The memory picture is exact; but it is, essentially, prose not

poetry,—good prose, better prose than Coleridge was accustomed to write—but still prose.

He sees his friends, in fancy, emerge from the dell to the hill-top, all happy, but happiest of all Charles Lamb who, "in the great City pent, has pined and hungered after Nature". And Coleridge calls on the familiar scene to shine more bright for his friend:

> So my Friend
> Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
> Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
> On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
> Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
> As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
> Spirits perceive his presence.

At the recollection of that ecstasy, and the thought that Charles may be sharing it, Coleridge's disappointment vanishes; and he remembers that in his lime-tree bower he has "marked much that has soothed him".

> Pale beneath the blaze
> Hung the transparent foliage; and I watched
> Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
> The shadow of the leaf and stem above
> Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
> Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
> Full on the ancient ivy which usurps
> Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
> Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
> Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
> Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters
> Yet still the solitary humble-bee
> Sings in the bean-flower. Henceforth, I shall know
> That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure.

I do not, for one moment, deny the beauty of that description; but even at the risk of appearing over-subtle in discrimination, I would insist on its essential prose-quality. It is, I think, the most poetical—with one exception—of all Coleridge's nature-descriptions; but it is not, in the sense that Coleridge himself distinguished that quality, imaginative. Coleridge is, as it were, watching himself watching. That is, indeed, the real argument of the poem. He has discovered a consolation, or a substitute, for the ecstasy forgone, in this careful and deliberate observation of Nature. The little note from Bartram which he

added to the poem tells its own tale. He is pleased with his own power of observation.*

The real content of that charming poem appears to me significant of Coleridge; and its significance is the more apparent as we discover that it can only be clearly understood in terms of Coleridge's own distinction of the Imagination as "esemplastic"—that "shaping spirit of Imagination", whose loss he was to lament in "The Ode to Dejection". For the question which starts up immediately is whether he ever possessed it. That he did not possess it before he met Wordsworth we know by his own confession, as well as by the quality of his previous poetry. In the IVth Chapter of the *Biographia Literaria* he acknowledges that it was the peculiar and characteristic power of Wordsworth's imagination which set him pondering on its nature. "This excellence, which in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings is more or less predominant and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt than I sought to understand." But to understand the "esemplastic" imagination is not to possess it.

It will seem, to some, almost absurd to be challenging Coleridge's possession of imagination. The author of *The Ancient Mariner*, of *Christabel*, of *Kubla Khan*, without imagination! We must be clear what it is that we are denying that Coleridge possessed. The peculiar faculty that is manifest in Coleridge's three most famous poems he surely did possess; and what is more, possessed it at this time of his intimate association with the Wordsworths, and at no other—the power to tell a strange and fascinating story, to bathe imaginary events in a glamorous supernatural light, to be supremely "romantic" in what was, in Coleridge's day, the accepted sense of the word. This peculiar power Coleridge for a little while pre-eminently possessed. But he never did possess the power of transfiguring Nature—the common substance of the

* *When the last rook . . . flew creeking.* Some months after I had written this line, it gave me pleasure to find that Bartram had observed the same circumstance of the Savanna Crane. "When these Birds move their wings in flight, their strokes are slow, moderate and regular; and even when at a considerable distance or high above us, we plainly hear the quill-feathers: their shafts and webs upon one another creek as the joints or working of a vessel in a tempestuous sea."

lives of men; or of making simple ordinary experience suddenly significant and symbolic, by the power of the imaginative unity at once drawn from it and imposed upon it.

What Coleridge did possess, for a fleeting moment, was the power to organise his dream. If this is what he meant by "the shaping spirit of Imagination" in the *Ode to Dejection*, it is true that he had had it, and lost it. But if he meant the kind of power that Wordsworth possessed, then he was deluding and tormenting himself into the belief that it was ever his to lose. And this is what he certainly seems to imply in the *Ode to Dejection*.

> O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood
> To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
> 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.

There is—this is the point—no evidence in all Coleridge's poetry that he had ever seen Nature with a different vision from this. The descriptions in *This Lime-Tree Bower* are of precisely the same quality. The only difference is not a difference intrinsic to the *poetry* at all. That there was a difference, that this difference was real, that it was important to Coleridge as a man, is indubitable: it was a simple and human difference. He was happy at the moment of *This Lime-Tree Bower*, he was miserable at the moment of the *Ode to Dejection*. But as far as his imaginative power over Nature was concerned, it was the same in both poems—exactly what it had been, totally unchanged.

Yet the whole argument of the *Ode to Dejection* is a denial of this patent fact. And, far more important, on this self-deception is based an explicit denial of all Wordsworth's experience.

> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

It is ambiguous, so far. The passion and the life may be within the outward forms of Nature, or within Coleridge himself. But the famous passage following makes his meaning clear.

> 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.

Here, addressed to Dorothy Wordsworth, is a flat negation of all that creative reciprocity between Man and Nature which Wordsworth had experienced and expounded and in which he believed. That there was in the poet "a plastic power" he had never denied. What he asserted was a mutual and progressive interaction between Nature and Man. Man properly submissive to and worked on by the influences of Nature, becomes himself creative. To declare that from Nature "we receive but what we give" to Nature was to Wordsworth a heresy, of which the whole of the original *Prelude* is a splendid and sustained refutation. The heresy was untrue to Wordsworth's experience, and it is denied by nearly all of his best work. But it was true of Coleridge's very different mode of "imagination". In his three famous poems the "atmosphere" is manifestly an emanation from the poet's mind or soul.

This is the absorbing interest of the *Ode to Dejection*. It is one long unconscious equivocation. My "imagination" has failed (says Coleridge in effect) because I am unhappy. Therefore the source of all "imagination" is in the happiness of the poet.

> Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power
> Which wedding Nature gives to us in dower

William's belief is all wrong. He can "imagine", simply because he is happy; and the luminous cloud goes forth from his happy soul. I am unhappy (cries Coleridge) therefore I feel nothing, create nothing.

It is, of course, far more personal and intimate than this. The Wordsworths were meant to understand, and beyond all

doubt understood what Coleridge meant when he wrote.

> 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.

Why should Coleridge have enforced upon himself "not to think of what he needs must feel"? Why was he deliberately seeking, "by abstruse research, to steal from his own nature all the natural man?" It was the very opposite of the remedy for the condition he has been describing in his poem. And what are the afflictions which bow him to the earth? Coleridge quotes those lines in a letter to Tom Wedgwood (October 20, 1802)—"for the Truth and not for the Poetry"—as describing his condition of mind during the months when "scarce a day passed without such a scene of discord between me and Mrs. Coleridge, as quite incapacitated me from any worthy exertion of my faculties by degrading me in my own estimation". There is no doubt whatever that the "afflictions" are one affliction—the affliction of being married to Sara Fricker, and not to—whom? In answering that, we touch the very quick of Coleridge—for the strange fact is that poem was addressed in turn to Sara Hutchinson, to William, and to Dorothy Wordsworth. It seems particular and personal. but Coleridge was incapable of a particular and personal love; just as in his artistic life, so in his personal life—and these can never be separated in a living man of genius—he was not "under the influence of external objects". The answer to the question: "Whom did Coleridge want to be married to,

instead of to Sara Fricker?" is the strange one: To Sara Hutchinson, to William and to Dorothy. What he wanted and what he felt was a diffused condition of "being in love", not concentred on any particular being. And precisely that is what he wanted and what he felt, in his poetry. To attend to, to care for, a particular thing, a particular person was for him a strained and unnatural condition.

In 1810 Dorothy Wordsworth, the long suffering, was to speak the bitter truth about his 'love' for Sara Hutchinson, who spent herself in vain in trying to keep him to *The Friend.*

> His love for her is no more than a fanciful dream—otherwise he would prove it by a desire to make her happy. No, he likes to have her about him as his own, as one devoted to him, but when she stood in the way of other gratifications it was all over.

It took the Wordsworths years of bitter, and self-denying experience, to discover that. But how significant it is that in the first letter we have mentioning Coleridge's domestic unhappiness ("Sara—alas! we are not suited to each other": to Southey, October 21, 1801) he describes this peculiarity of his own nature. In that letter, Coleridge, after warning Southey that "if our mutual unsuitableness continues" he and his wife will separate, passes to a discussion of Humphry Davy's character. Chemistry "prevents or tends to prevent a young man from falling in love".

> We all have obscure feelings, that must be connected with something or other—the miser with a guinea—Lord Nelson with a blue ribbon, Wordsworth's old Molly with her washing tub—Wordsworth with the hills, lakes and trees . . . Now chemistry makes a young man associate these feelings with inanimate objects . . . That to be in love is simply to confine the feelings prospective of animal enjoyment to one woman is a gross mistake—(Who, of Coleridge's friends at any rate, believed this?) it is to associate a large proportion of our obscure feelings with a real form. A miser is *in love* with a guinea, and a virtuous young man with a woman, in the same sense without figure or metaphor.

Here the parallel I have drawn between the imaginative love of the poet, and the personal love of the man, is drawn by Coleridge himself. Working backwards along the line of his argument, we have, first, the assertion that a man is in love

with a woman in precisely the same sense as a miser is in love with a guinea. In other words, no man loves a woman *for herself*; he is merely under the necessity of associating his 'obscure feelings' with, and concentering them upon a real form: which is, no doubt, what Coleridge did when he fell 'in love' with Sara Fricker. This, Coleridge says, is what Wordsworth does when he is in love with his hills, lakes, and trees. He does not love them for themselves.

So that for Coleridge to fall out of love with Sara Fricker is perfectly in order. Coleridge not only implies it, but says it. "A young poet may do without being in love with a woman —it is enough if he loves." So it is enough if Coleridge goes on "loving"—any thing or person. So Wordsworth, when he comes to see things as truly as Coleridge does, will cease to imagine that he really loves his trees, lakes and hills.

What I suggest is that the movement of thought and feeling in this letter is precisely the same as that of the *Ode to Dejection*; and that both are, to put it brutally, justifications of his behaviour to his wife. His affliction is that he is married to her; he is now required to love *her*, for herself. Because he is incapable of this, he asserts that no man is capable of it. Wordsworth, in thinking that he loves things and persons for themselves, is merely self-deluded. At the time of the letter to Southey, the thought is just taking shape in his soul. In a few months, he has written the *Ode to Dejection*; in exactly a year he is writing his marital woes to Tom Wedgwood and quoting the Ode as giving the truth of them.

Now we can see clearly what the naked argument of the *Ode* really is. 'Wordsworth can create, not for the reason he persuades himself, because he is responsive to the beauty and the life of nature in things and persons; but simply because he is happy. And he is happy because he has Dorothy and Mary and Sara; whereas I cannot create because I have them not. It is not objects to love that one needs, but to be in a condition of lovingness'. No wonder that the next strophe begins: "Hence, viper thoughts that coil around my mind." But Coleridge has really been indulging them throughout the Ode. It is an example of precisely that fearful moral inertia of the mind, concerning which, when it declared itself more plainly in 1808, Wordsworth wrote to him:—

> "There is more than one sentence in your letter which I blushed to read, and which you yourself would have been unable to write, could never have thought of writing, nay, the matter of which could never have passed through your mind, had you not acquired a habit which I think a very pernicious one, of giving pen and voice to your most lawless thought . . .

However valuable as a document, or even as poetry, the *Ode to Dejection* may be, the waste-paper basket was the place for it, if Coleridge was to retain his own self-respect. One may be, one is deeply sorry that Coleridge was unhappy; but what are we to think of the basic and not really unconscious equivocation behind it all—the not really unconscious desire to make, if he could, his beloved friend Wordsworth more wretched than himself? Wordsworth's religion of Nature (for all his fortunate boyhood) had not been easily won. He had to suffer and struggle out of the age when "the sounding cataract haunted him like a passion" into the higher and rarer realm of experience of

> 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.

To tell the man who had fought his way to this experience and this conviction, that it was illusion, a mere projection of his own happiness upon the world, was an insidious treachery.

And a very subtle one. Coleridge was intellectually subtle by nature in a way Wordsworth was not; and now he appears to me to be using his intellect with a peculiar cunning. For this word "joy" which Coleridge now declares to be the source of the poet's glorious vision of the unity of the world is a word drawn from the heart of Wordsworth's experience. In *Tintern Abbey* he feels "a presence that disturbs me with the *joy* of elevated thoughts"; and in the still more famous lines of that crucial poem, he describes, aye and almost communicates

that serene and blessed mood . . .
When with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

"It is true", Coleridge is saying. "But the joy is in you, nowhere else. It is not, as you believe, a response within yourself to the truth and beauty of Nature; not the recognition, in a truly responsive soul, of the one Being of which itself and the world beyond are modes. It is simply the overflow of your own good spirits, which derive from your own good fortune. Be wretched like me, and you will see into the life of things no more; and seeing into it no more, you will come to believe as I do that you never did see into it at all."

Coleridge himself has passed sentence on this action of his, in the preface to his *Poems*. "There is one species of egotism which is truly disgusting; not that which leads us to communicate our feelings to others, but that which would reduce the feelings of others to an identity with our own."

Woman, said Lawrence, is the nemesis of doubting man; Mephistopheles said Goethe, is "the spirit that ever denies." A feminine Mephistopheles inspired the author of the *Ode to Dejection.*

§

The *Ode to Dejection* may be forgiven. It is the utterance of a real despair; and it may well have been that Coleridge, when he uttered it, did not really understand the profound difference between Wordsworth's experience of Nature and his own. Some ecstatic experience, of which Nature was the occasion, if not the cause, he had had; and he had had it at a moment of great joy. I think it was of two kinds, corresponding to the kinds of joy which he experienced in his intimacy with the Wordsworths. There was the joy which Dorothy's tender and delicate sympathy brought to him: she surrounded him with the aura of love which he craved, and as it were momentarily enriched him with her delicate perceptions. What she saw, he seemed to see; and what those perceptions of hers contributed to the creation of *Christabel* is known to all. He was momentarily completed by the rich "experiencing nature" of a rare woman.

On the other side, he was the feminine complement to Wordsworth's sterner and more purposeful nature. He adopted Wordsworth's experience of Nature. When we first meet, in Coleridge's poetry, with a description of Nature ecstasy, it is 1795, when Coleridge was staying at Clevedon in Somerset. On August 20 of that year he wrote *The Aeolian Harp.*

> O! the one Life within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought and joyance everywhere—
> Methinks, it should have been impossible
> Not to love all things in a world so filled . . .
> And thus, my love!

(It is Sara his wife whom he is addressing.)

> as on the midway slope
> Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
> Whilst through my half-closed eyelids I behold
> The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main
> And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
> Full many a thought, uncalled and undetained,
> And many idle flitting phantasies
> Traverse my indolent and passive brain
> As wild and various as the random gales
> That swell and flutter on this subject lute.
> And what if all of animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversely framed,
> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of All?

This experience (it is obvious) is purely passive, a vague self-surrender to sunshine and tranquillity—a common experience and an enjoyable one, which generally ends in sleep. There is nothing *particular* about it, in any sense; indeed, so far as visual perception is concerned, it definitely avoids particularity: Coleridge looks at the sea "with half-closed eyelids", and gives himself up to warmth and dreaminess, to a relapse into animal quiescence. There are those who maintain that this is all the rapture of Nature ever is— it was a favourite dogma of the late Irving Babbitt, for example. But it is not so. The authentic nature-rapture is very different from this stream of undifferentiated sensation, which is familiar to us all.

What distinguishes it in Coleridge is that he has a theory, or conjecture about it. This passivity, he surmises, is the real condition of "all animated nature"; the "idle and flitting phantasies" which "traverse his indolent and passive brain" may be the sound made, in one particular human Aeolian harp, by the "one intellectual breeze, at once the soul of each and God of All". And that is what he has just before greeted as

> O! the one life within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul . . .

Thus described, it seems to take on an added dignity, though I must confess that the lines are really incomprehensible to me —a splendid verbal incantation, but no more. From this angle they are, I think, the best lines that Coleridge had written so far; and by the very vagueness and ambiguity of their content they provide a stepping stone from the indolent and animal tranquillity celebrated in the subsequent lines, to the intellectual conception he had expressed, in very poor poetry, nine months before in *Religious Musings.*

> There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind
> Omnific. His most holy name is Love.
> Truth of subliming import! with the which
> Who feeds and saturates his constant soul,
> He from his small particular orbit flies
> With blest outstarting! From himself he flies,
> Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
> Views all creation; and he loves it all,
> And blesses it, and calls it very good!
> This is indeed to dwell with the Most High!
> Cherubs and rapture-trembling Seraphim
> Can press no nearer to the Almighty's throne.

Although these lines are, as I say, poor poetry, the thought is clear, and it is a genuinely religious thought. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that there was genuine spiritual experience behind it. In the lines, at any rate, Coleridge accurately describes the self-detachment of spiritual contemplation, whether or not he derived the description from the neo-Platonic mystics, or from his own intellectual experience. The Sun, in which the self-detached spirit stands, is the metaphorical Sun of the mystics: the creative One—the Father who, in the unforgettable phrase of Jesus, "makes his sun to shine on good men and bad and his rain to fall on the

just and on the unjust". It is the spiritual sun, which Blake (like other mystics) saw in and through the physical one. "What? (it will be questioned) when the sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire, somewhat like a Guinea?" "O no, no, I see an innumerable company of the Heavenly Host, crying 'Holy, holy, holy! is the Lord God Almighty!'"

A different sun altogether from the one beneath whose radiance Coleridge had basked at Clevedon when he gazed with half-shut eyes upon the sea. But he contrives, by his lines of verbal incantation, to blur the difference between them almost completely. The idle phantasies which stream through his indolent brain under the caress of the sun may be the workings of the intellectual breeze which is at once "the Soul of each and God of all". He felt rather guilty about it, as well he might, for it was a piece of legerdemain—too barefaced even for the straightforward and pious Sara. She "darts a mild reproof from her more serious eye", and rejects such "dim and unhallowed thoughts".

> Well hast thou said, and holily dispraised
> These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
> Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
> On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring,
> For never guiltless may I speak of him,
> The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
> I praise him, and with Faith that inly *feels*;
> Who with his saving mercies healed me,
> A sinful and most miserable man,
> Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
> Peace, and this cot, and thee, heart-honoured maid!

To which rather blush-making snuffle, one can only reply that, if Coleridge really meant it, he would have put his poem in the waste-paper basket. In fact, he treasured it as his best so far. Obviously, he would like to be able to persuade himself, and somebody else if possible, that his *dolce far niente* in the sun is the beatific rapture—or to use his own later phrase, "making himself all permeable to a higher power."

This first effort at nature-rapture we may dismiss as a mere try-on. Rapture, indubitably, Coleridge did know; but it was an intellectual rapture—a curious, but certainly authentic perturbation of the whole being by the abstract idea of the

Whole, the One. He gives a very truthful account of its origin in a letter to Poole.

> From my early reading of fairy tales and genii etc. my mind had been habituated *to the Vast*, and I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my *sight*, even at that age. Should children be permitted to read romances, and relations of giants and magicians and genii? I know all that had been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know no other way of giving the mind a love of the great and the Whole.

In the most literal sense of the word, Coleridge was metaphysically-minded from childhood. And that devouring bias of his is nowhere more charmingly evident than in his great scheme of Pantisocracy—"the *perfect* system of Pantisocracy", as he naively and seriously put it. No-one can ever really understand Coleridge who finds that perfect system merely comic; somehow, when I read his letter to Southey reproaching him for having deviated from self-evident and axiomatic perfection of the scheme, I don't know whether to laugh or to cry. "The leading idea of pantisocracy", said Coleridge superbly, "is to make men *necessarily* virtuous by removing all motives to evil". It is sublime; and it is a contradiction in terms. "I have told you, Southey, that I will accompany you on an *imperfect* system. But must our system be thus necessarily imperfect?" This could only come from a young man with no sense of reality at all—absolutely none. And that is rare and wonderful. Whenever I want really to love Coleridge—and sometimes I do very badly—I have only to think of him as the Pantisocrat, who even married a wife in accordance with the dictates of perfect Pantisocracy.

Suddenly, in Wordsworth, Coleridge met a man for whom the vastness and the unity of the world were a real *experience of the world.* The distinction was tremendous. Coleridge could think the One, dream the One, but the only sensation of unity (so far as I can see) that he ever had was precisely the dreamy oblivion of the world which came to him (as to more ordinary people) when he lay in the sun. Before he met Wordsworth, he tried, as we have seen, to delude himself into believing that this was an experience of the Unity of which he

had learned from mystical theology; but he could not succeed. His wife would not let him get away with that.

But now came Wordsworth into his life: Wordsworth who really had experienced the unity of which Coleridge thought and dreamed, Wordsworth to whom the experience had been so real that his whole life-pattern derived from it. It was, for Coleridge, amazing: suddenly, his thoughts and his dreams were real, more than real, they were incarnate—in Wordsworth as man and poet. Wordsworth was the link with life, of which he knew in himself the need and for which he instinctively sought: his own completion. Nor is it to be wondered at that he should have tried to make Wordsworth's experience his own.

Perhaps the most remarkable of Coleridge's poems in this regard is *Fears in Solitude*. It was written in April 1798, the second of the years of creative association with Wordsworth; and it was written two months after *Frost at Midnight*, wherein (as we have seen) Coleridge recognises the sensational meagreness of his childhood, and promises his baby a different life.

> 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 rear'd
> In the great city, pent mid cloisters dim
> And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.

Is it not passing strange that, only two months after this, Coleridge should have written in *Fears in Solitude*, lines which contradict this true and beautiful statement entirely?

> O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
> How should'st thou prove aught else but dear and holy
> To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
> Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
> Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
> All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
> All adoration of the God in nature,
> All lovely and all honourable things,
> Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
> The joy and greatness of its future being.

This is an extraordinary self-deception; but so obvious and so palpable that it can be explained, I believe, only by supposing that for the moment Coleridge did verily believe that he *was*

Wordsworth, or that Wordsworth and he were one being. Such a condition of mind would be incredible, were it not that the man was Coleridge. Because it was Coleridge, I really do incline to believe that he desired this identity of being with Wordsworth so ardently, that he *almost* came to experience it as fact. The truth is that Coleridge was a very queer person indeed. Few people—and no other man of genius that I know of—have had so little sense of their own personal identity as he. He seems to have experienced himself chiefly as a negation; and he was continually groping after some means of communicating to others the strangeness of his own experience of himself. Thus, he tried in 1802, to explain himself to his wife. "I seem to exist, as it were, almost wholly within myself, in *thoughts* rather than *things*, in a particular warmth felt *all* over me, but chiefly is felt about my head and breast." The explanation is strange, almost incomprehensible. Or he gives a memorable description to Southey, in 1803, of

> A sense of weakness, a haunting sense that I was an herbaceous plant, as large as a large tree, with a trunk of the same girth, and branches as large and shadowing, but with pith within the trunk not heart of wood—that I had power, not strength, an involuntary impostor, that I had no real Genius, no real depth.

Sometimes, he was terribly severe upon himself, as when he described himself to De Quincey as "a moral *marasmus* of negatives." But beneath it all, we cannot fail to sense something quite extraordinary, some altogether amazing hiatus at the core of his being.

I do not profess to understand it; but I do dimly glimpse the possibility of such a man adopting the central identity of another. We have seen how, in *Christabel*, Coleridge adopted the sense-perceptions of Dorothy Wordsworth—really incorporated them into the motion of his own mind. It seems to me that, in the case of Wordsworth, Coleridge tried to adopt his very nature, and momentarily succeeded in believing that he had done so. Wordsworth's childhood became his childhood. And, significantly enough, in the same poem, *Fears in Solitude*, we find Coleridge making an effort (doubtless unconscious) to identify his *dolce far niente* sensation with

Wordsworth's mystical experience of Nature. This is a repetition, at a different level, of the attempt we found him making before. Then, at Clevedon, the mystical experience with which he tried, in vain, to identify his noon-day lethargy was neo-Platonic. Now that Wordsworth has so potently entered his life, Wordsworth's mystical nature-experience is become the absolute.

> Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
> Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
> The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
> Knew just so much of folly, as had made
> His early manhood more securely wise!

That, I make no doubt, is Coleridge speaking of himself. He goes on:

> Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,
> While from the singing lark (that sings unseen
> The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
> And from the sun and from the breezy air,
> Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
> And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
> Made up a meditative joy, and found
> Religious meanings in the forms of nature!
> And so, his senses gradually wrapt
> In a half-sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
> And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark,
> That singest like an angel in the clouds!

Intrinsically, that is precisely the same condition as was described in *The Aeolian Harp*. The talk of discovering "religious meanings in the forms of Nature" is self-deception. He is lying down, and soon to fall into a half-sleep. The "religious meanings" and the "meditative joy" he has simply adopted from Wordsworth. But this more subtle legerdemain is beyond Sara's power to detect. For the moment not religious orthodoxy, but Wordsworth's experience, is the absolute for Coleridge; and Sara would have been out of her depth, if she was consulted at all: which is very improbable. With the Wordsworths to lean on, Coleridge had no need of her.

Now let us move forward a year, to May 1799. And let us remember precisely what had happened between. The Wordsworths' year's lease of Alfoxden had expired in July

1798, and they had gone to Germany, taking Coleridge with them. Speaking humanly, this was a selfish and irresponsible thing for the Wordsworths to have done: they should have made Coleridge stay at Nether Stowey with his wife and children. The Wordsworths returned from Germany at the end of April 1799. And, I think, Coleridge's feeling of guilt towards his wife played no small part in keeping him from returning. At any rate he stayed on, after the Wordsworths had returned. Within a month of their parting, he is writing these *Lines in the album at Elbingerode* (May 17, 1799). After describing his view from the Brocken, and his descent—

> I moved on
> In low and languid mood: for I had found
> That outward forms, the loftiest, still receive
> Their finer influence from the life within;—
> Fair cyphers else; fair, but of import vague
> Or unconcerning, where the heart not finds
> History or prophecy of friend, or child . . .

It is a manifest anticipation of the *Ode to Dejection*. But apart from that, what strikes one about that last line is that it is a precise description of what Coleridge had *really* found in the outward forms of Nature. He had found the history of his friend, Wordsworth (which he tried to take to himself) and the prophecy of his child, David Hartley. That was the only reality they had had for him; and now, at the moment when he is separated from both, he realises the truth. The lines continue:—

> Or gentle maid, our first and earliest love,
> Or father, or the venerable name
> Of our adored country! O thou Queen,
> Thou delegated Deity of Earth,
> O dear, dear England! how my longing eye
> Turned westward, shaping in the steady clouds
> Thy sands and high white cliffs!

We are reminded of the apostrophe to England in *Fears in Solitude*. But this time, instead of imputing to himself a fictitious Wordsworthian derivation from the lakes and mountain-hills of England, it takes a quite different turn.

My native Land!
Filled with the thought of thee this heart was proud,
Yea, mine eye swam with tears: that all the view
From sovran Brocken, woods and woody hills,
Floated away like a departing dream,
Feeble and dim! Stranger, these impulses
Blame thou not lightly; nor will I profane
With hasty judgment and injurious doubt,
That man's sublimer spirit, who can feel
That God is everywhere! the God who framed
Mankind to be one mighty family,
Himself our Father, and the world our Home.

I do not suggest that Coleridge was consciously thinking of Wordsworth here, or that Wordsworth is "the sublimer spirit"; but I am quite certain that the whole poem is shot with a doubt of Wordsworth's experience and his faith. While he was with the Wordsworths, Coleridge could believe in Wordsworth's experience and persuade himself that he participated in it; as soon as they were gone, he feels the exaltation no longer and begins to suspect that Wordsworth's experience is illusory. At any rate, he knows that his own pretended participation in it is illusion; and he universalizes his own disillusion. He says he will not "profane with hasty judgment and injurious doubt" the larger faith; but he cannot help it. He has already done so.

§

Apparently, from the beginning of Coleridge's association with Wordsworth, Wordsworth had been unresponsive to his Christian theologizing. "On one subject", Coleridge wrote to his Unitarian friend Estlin, as early as May 1798, "we are habitually silent; we found our data dissimilar and never renewed the subject. It is his practice and almost his nature to convey all the truth he knows without any attack on what he supposes to be falsehood, if that falsehood be interwoven with virtues or happiness. He loves and venerates Christ and Christianity. I wish he did more . . ." What more, one cannot help asking, did Coleridge himself do? That he wanted to do more, there is no doubt. He had done more, as we have seen, in the sense that he had saturated himself in the mystical theology of Neo-Platonism, which was to become (through

"Dionysius the Areopagite") the theology of Christian mysticism. And in December 1796—before the intimacy with Wordsworth—he wrote:—

> I have been myself sorely afflicted, and have rolled my dreary eye from earth to heaven and found no comfort, till it pleased the Unimaginable High and Lofty One to make my heart more tender in regard of religious feelings. My philosophical refinements, and metaphysical theories, lay by me in the hour of anguish, as toys by the bedside of a sick child. May God continue his visitations to my soul, till the pride and Laodicean self-confidence of human Reason be utterly done away; and I cry with deeper and yet deeper feelings, O my Soul! thou art wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked!

Here, I think, is the desire—not untinged with a certain complacency—for religious experience, but not the experience. And, just as his philosophical mysticism was merely intellectual, so did his Christianity become. He called Christianity "his passion"; but "it is too much my *intellectual* passion, and therefore will do me but little good in the hour of temptation and calamity".

Precisely here his intimacy with Wordsworth did him no good at all. Wordsworth had real mystical experience: in him it was something quite apart from Christianity or Christian theology. His experience was independent of them; and he did not need them. He could stand alone. And Coleridge knew it. "Of all the men I ever knew", he wrote afterwards, "Wordsworth has the least femineity in his character. He is all man. He is a man of whom—It is good for him to be alone".

It certainly was not good for Coleridge to be alone. He needed something or someone to cling to. He did not like to be alone with the universe, which (I believe) is the condition which leads to the authentic mystical passing from isolation to communion. What Coleridge liked, as we have seen, was to lose the sense of the implacable otherness of the universe by dreaming with half-closed eyes; or he loved to surrender himself to the motions of his own brain, and lose himself in a realm of thought, "existing" (as he said) "almost wholly within himself, in thoughts rather than things". The confrontation of his own limited self with that which was intrinsically not himself, whether in the world or in persons,

was what he instinctively and desperately sought to avoid. He felt that he could not exist except in an atmosphere of affection, wherein the bounds between his own personality and that of his friends was dissolved.

> To be beloved is all I need
> And those I love, I love indeed.

That was his cry, and there is no doubt it came from the depths. Coleridge did love, where he loved, very intensely. But it was, for all its intensity, a diffused love which spread a kind of circumambience, or veil, over the thing or person loved. It was a love which shrank from seeing the object as it was and loving that.

These may be subtle psychological distinctions; but they are of cardinal importance for understanding Coleridge. This love of his was an immensely powerful sensation. "*My whole being*", he wrote to Thomas Poole from Germany, on May 6, 1799 "yearns after you. Methinks my hand would swell if the whole force of my feeling were crowded there". He was writing at the moment that his second child had died, Berkeley Coleridge, just one year old. He went on:—

> I thought of my own verses on the Nightingale, only because I thought of Hartley, my *only* child. Dear lamb! I hope he won't be dead before I get home. There are moments in which I have such a power of life within me, such a conceit of it, I mean, that I lay the blame of my child's death to my absence. *Not intellectually*; but I have a strange sort of sensation, as if, while I was present, none could die whom I entirely loved . . .

I do not doubt, for one moment, the reality of this sensation; and it is not in the least with the idea of jeering at Coleridge that I recall that this entire love for his children had not prevented him from leaving his wife alone with two little babies in order to accompany the Wordsworths to Germany. Some people would conclude from that that Coleridge was a sentimental humbug. They would be wrong. The fact is that love, for Coleridge, was not an activity at all; it was a passivity. It was a sense of warm and affectionate security in which he could expand, and as it were flow out into a sort of homogeneity with his surroundings. He felt, when he could yield himself up to this sensation, that the irksome barrier of his own personal

identity was gone. But that love was a relation, as distinct from a sensation; that it imposed obligations, and involved a resolution to take care for certain definite identities distinct from his own—this was an idea that was profoundly unnatural to Coleridge. In order for him to acquire it, in the only way he could have acquired it, he would have needed, I think, to pass through that experience of utter isolation in face of an alien universe from which he shrank.

However that may be, his desire to retain the circumambience of Wordsworth and Dorothy triumphed over what little sense of responsibility to his wife and children he possessed. He professed to consult Poole before he went off to Germany.

> With regard to Germany (he wrote on August 3, 1790) these are my intentions, if not contravened by superior arguments. I still think the realization of the scheme of high importance to my intellectual utility; and of course to my moral happiness. But if I go with Mrs. C and the little ones, I must borrow—an imprudent, perhaps an immoral thing.

It is characteristic Coleridgean equivocation with himself. The whole magnificent moral argument would have collapsed at the question "Why not stay at home?" As was inevitable, Coleridge felt guilty. He was not acting out of his own being; he had none. He was in instinctive pursuit of the sensation he called love. And this sensation, whether it was love of Nature or of persons, was always intrinsically the same: warm security and oblivion of the outward world. When he was with the Wordsworths, he convinced himself intellectually that it was the same as Wordsworth's experience: the moment he parted from them he sank back into his own subjectivity, with a consciousness of intellectual equivocation, and moral insufficiency.

Then he must cling to Christianity. But his Christianity was not authentic experience. It was a metaphysical system to which he clung,—a metaphysical system which had somewhere, and incongruously (as Coleridge well knew), the assurance of security and salvation attached to it. Hence the years after his return from Germany were crucial. Not unnaturally, his wife felt rather bitter towards him for his dereliction; he took refuge from his domestic unhappiness in illness, which was, I believe, half real—in that he really did

suffer physically from this unhappiness—and half invented. His hyper-sensitive and guilty conscience produced night-terrors of the kind so vividly recorded in *The Pains of Sleep*.

> Deeds to be hid that were not hid,
> Which all confused I could not know
> Whether I suffered or I did:
> For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe,
> My own or others' still the same
> Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

Why, Coleridge asks at the end of that poem, do such terrors visit *him*? They are the due punishment of "natures deepliest stained with sin."

> Such griefs with such men well agree,
> But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
> To be beloved is all I need
> And where I love, I love indeed.

It sounds pathetic; nor do I doubt that the note of injured innocence was perfectly sincere. But, in fact, by this time, 1803, Coleridge was incapable of real sincerity. He had lost his own integrity. He knew, quite well, that his night-hauntings were only a grimmer repetition of his hauntings by day. He was gnawed at by a sense of sin; he was wasting his life, he had, in shrinking from reality, fled into a morass of intellectual and moral duplicity, from which his means of release were but two—the indulgence of metaphysical speculation, and laudanum.

The crucial years after Coleridge's return from Germany were at once the years of abandonment to metaphysical speculation, of increasing domestic unhappiness, of larger doses of laudanum, and of a deepening sense of sin: and these are merely distinct manifestations of a single process of inward disintegration. Its theological manifestation is a return to orthodox Christianity. He writes to his clergyman brother on June 3, 1802, to tell him that the French Concordat has caused him "to think accurately and with consecutive logic on the force and meaning of the word *Established* Church, and the result of my reflections was very greatly in favour of the Church of England maintained as it at present is". His brother, not unnaturally, expressed surprise at this revolutionary change in the staunch Unitarian of four years ago. And

Coleridge very characteristically denied that he meant "in any way to refer to its peculiar doctrines, or to the Church of England in particular". He was, as he was to explain more copiously in after years, merely referring to the "idea" of an Established Church, as a necessary component part of a healthy society. Since this "idea", shorn of its ecclesiastical trappings, simply reduces to the desirability of having an endowed and independent "clerisy", or "intellectual élite" (as we should probably call it to-day), it has no necessary connection whatever with the defence of the Church of England. But, when it was combined with Coleridge's new "faith", it served the turn. That his faith was new, Coleridge denied; but we have only to read his *Religious Musings* of 1794 to see that the change was striking. He declares to his brother (July 1, 1802)

> My Faith is simply this—that there is an original corruption in our nature, from which and from the consequences of which, we may be redeemed by Christ—not, as the Socinians say, by his pure morals, or excellent example merely—but in a mysterious manner as an effect of his Crucifixion. And this I believe, not because I *understand* it; but because I *feel* that it is not only suitable to, but needful for my nature. . . .

That is entirely different from the Neo-Platonic mysticism of *Religious Musings*; entirely different from the attempted Nature Pantheism of *The Aeolian Harp*; entirely different from the natural religion which he tried in vain to absorb from Wordsworth: it is the Christian faith of Coleridge the beaten man—the man haunted by a sense of sin. How far it ever became in Coleridge a genuine faith, I do not presume to decide. But I am quite certain it was not a genuine faith when he professed it to his brother. It was something which he desired to believe, but could not. It was, indeed, a faith "not only suitable to, but needful for, his nature"; but that very fact made it almost impossible for Coleridge to believe it. It was, he knew, too *easy*. It was a feather-bed religion, whose function it was to receive him at the end of an unending series of moral cowardices. And, for very good reasons, Coleridge had great difficulty in believing in the truth of such a religion.

Christianity, of this particular type, which finally absolved him from all moral effort, was a last refuge. And, of course,

he felt terribly guilty about that. He had got himself into the truly appalling condition of feeling a sense of sin about his religion itself. The inevitable outcome of this condition, in which disintegration touched the core of his being, was such "viper thoughts" as raised their ugly heads in the *Ode to Dejection.* That was written on April 4, 1802; and he managed to beat them down. A year and a half later, on October 26, 1803, he could not conquer them. On that date he records a "very unpleasant dispute with Wordsworth and Hazlitt."

> I spoke, I fear, too contemptuously; but they spoke so irreverently, so malignantly of the Divine Wisdom that it overset me. Hazlitt how easily raised to rage and hatred self-projected! But *thou,* dearest Wordsworth,—and what if Ray, Durham, Paley have carried the observation of the aptitude of things too far, too habitually into pedantry? O how many worse pedantries! how few so harmless, with so much efficient good! Dear William, pardon pedantry in others and avoid it in yourself, instead of scoffing and reviling at pedantry in good men and a good cause and *becoming* a pedant yourself in a bad cause—even by that very act becoming one. But, surely, always to look at the superficies of objects for the purpose of taking delight in their beauty, and sympathy with their real or imagined life, is as deleterious to the health and manhood of intellect as always to be peering and unravelling contrivance may be to the simplicity of the affection and the grandeur and unity of the imagination. O dearest William! would Ray or Durham have spoken of God as you spoke of Nature?

Here we have Coleridge at his most contemptible; there, indeed, he is in a moral marasmus. The equivocation is palpable; the assumption of moral and imaginative superiority offensive. Coleridge, now fairly in the grip of laudanum, and craving a refuge from his refuge, and seeking it in Christianity, is compelled to defend the complacent and barren mechanical theology of the argument from design. And he is so conscious of his moral weakness and his intellectual cowardice, that he turns, with the vicious malevolence of weakness, on the delighted observation of Nature which it had once been his supreme happiness to share with Dorothy and William Wordsworth. In Coleridge's now diseased mind it is become "to look at the superficies of objects for the purpose of taking delight in their beauty, and sympathy with their real or imagined life"; and it is as "deleterious to the health and

manhood and intellect" as the sophistries of Ray and Paley are to "the grandeur and unity of the Imagination".

Coleridge himself, of course, is superior to either. His unctuous assumption is that he possesses both "health and manhood of intellect" and "grandeur and unity of imagination." It is a familiar piece of psychological compensation: when Coleridge is at his lowest, he claims to be at the highest. Implicitly he sets up his own metaphysical dreaming, which could no longer bear any real contact with the objective world at all, as the perfect unity of "manhood of intellect" and "grandeur of imagination". It is a nadir of self-deception; and unpleasant to contemplate.

It is generally supposed that Coleridge did not get into this condition until five years later, on his return from Malta, in 1808. Then, it is admitted, that "over-indulgence in alcohol or narcotics not only had weakened a will already weak by nature, but had begun to undermine his affections and play havoc with his moral sense. At times, indeed, he still felt his old self-effacing admiration for his friend, but he was subject to moods in which love and gratitude were crossed with resentment, even with jealousy." (De Selincourt: "Dorothy Wordsworth", p. 211). But that is to recognise Coleridge's condition only when it had become palpable: when he had become the poor creature who "dared not go home", and whom the Wordsworths met at last at Kendal.

> "Never, never did I feel such a shock as at first sight of him. We all felt exactly in the same way—as if he were a different person from what we have expected to see; almost as much as a person of whom we have thought much, and of whom we had formed an image in our minds, without having any personal knowledge of him."

Thus Dorothy Wordsworth in her letter of November 6, 1806; but the inward change that was the cause of that outward metamorphosis had happened long before. The Wordsworths had not seen it, because Coleridge was still the old Coleridge with them: but in himself he was no longer that man, because he never had *been* that man.

The collapse of Coleridge is one of the most fascinating and pathetic stories in the history of literature; and I do not think that justice has ever been done to Sara Coleridge in this matter.

She was not a woman of genius; she could not put her case in a form in which posterity would read it. But I find in her words on the final rupture between Coleridge and the Wordsworths, a substantial human justice which is not easy to find in the judgments of the three more famous protagonists:

> "He has" (wrote Mrs. Coleridge) "been taught one very useful lesson—that even his dearest and most indulgent friends, even those very persons *who have been the great means of his self-indulgence*, when he comes to live *wholly* with them, are as clear-sighted to his failings, and much less delicate in speaking of them than his wife".

That the Wordsworths were "the great means of Coleridge's self-indulgence" is not a familiar way of looking at the situation; but I think it is very nearly the true one. The trouble was that they were unconscious of it.

§

We look at the product and say that to Coleridge's intimacy with the Wordsworths we owe one uniquely beautiful poem and the fragments of two others. It may be so; but I find it hard to believe that Coleridge would have done nothing without the Wordsworths, impossible to believe that Wordsworth would have done nothing without Coleridge. And I am convinced that it was fatal to Coleridge to deceive himself into believing that there was an identity between Wordsworth's experience and his own; for that, I think, finally confirmed Coleridge in an unconscious habit of intellectual and moral duplicity in a matter of all things most vital to his own true life. He plunged into a condition of religious self-intoxication; and he emerged from it like a revivalist after a debauch of religiosity, having lost contact with his own integrity of being. After that first period of intimacy with the Wordsworths at Racedown and Alfoxden, I think it is true to say of Coleridge that he never afterwards knew what the Truth was; he had entered on a fatal path which can be described as the opposite of that instinctively chosen by Keats—"An axiom is no axiom to me until I have *proved it on my pulses.*" Coleridge no longer knew *how* to prove things on his pulses; he lost the thread of his own being. He had, involuntarily no doubt, committed

the mortal sin of creative genius: he had connived at his own conviction.

There is to me no more grievous history than this of Coleridge. It leaves me sad and miserable, for truly I love the man. The story of Keats, far more harrowing, nay, almost intolerable in its final anguish, leaves me at peace with Destiny, or with God. It is an authentic revelation of the unutterable mystery of life. But the story of Coleridge is depressing. It fascinates me; and I wish it did not. I lean over him to read his heart, and I find myself for ever discovering things that I do not want to discover.

And so it is that for me the young Coleridge is the true Coleridge—the Coleridge whom I can love unreservedly is the Coleridge *before* he met the Wordsworths, and the Coleridge just at the first moment of blissful happiness when he had met them: the fleeting moment when he knew himself and was glad at his own self-knowledge. Of this moment, thank Heaven, one imperishable record survives, in *Frost at Midnight*, written in February 1798. It is, as I think any lover of Coleridge's poetry would admit, certainly the most beautiful of all his poems outside the enchanted three: to me it is as beautiful as any of them. It has the beauty which is truth, the truth which is beauty.

We have already analysed the poem; but we may analyse it briefly once more, in the light of what further knowledge of Coleridge this inquiry has brought to us. It is midnight, and Coleridge sits alone by the fire in the cottage at Stowey. The silence of the frosty night is intense—"strange and extreme". Coleridge listens to the breathing of his baby sleeping by his side, and watches the fluttering film of soot on the bar of the grate.

Then he thinks of his schooldays, when he watched the same fluttering soot-film, and really believed that it promised the visit of a stranger,—a visitor from home. He tells how, with unclosed eyes, he would dream of home, in far away Ottery; and when he slept, the dream of home would prolong itself: and next morning in school his eyes would be "fixed in mock study on his swimming book" while he waited, in vain, for the promised visit of his friend from home.

Then he turns to the sleeping baby, and his heart is thrilled

with tender gladness to think that his childhood shall not be starved and lonely like his own. He shall not be imprisoned in a great city; he shall be nature's playmate, and his spirit shall be shaped by the God who utters himself in Nature. He shall be, for ever, at home in the universe of Nature.

> 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.

That is, I have no doubt, the most beautiful and unstrained description of Nature in all Coleridge. It has Nature's own calm. But how perfect is the harmony of the poem which it crowns. The frosty midnight calm, "that vexes meditation with its strange and extreme silentness"—in this hush of nature, one visible motion; the soot-film; one audible sound; his baby's breathing. One after the other, they flower, become the theme of a tender and beautiful meditation; and the meditation is one meditation, bound together by an indissoluble and natural imaginative unity. His own childhood; his child's childhood. Life shall not be for him as it was for me; he shall not be cheated of his birthright as I was; he shall not be cut off from the world as I am.

At this moment Coleridge understands and accepts the past which has made the present, and utters his acceptance in a beautiful movement of the Imagination. In this moment, he touches the peace which passeth all understanding. I do not believe he was often to know it again. But for this moment, he was veritably the voice of Nature—not Wordsworth's Nature, but the Nature of his own experience: a starved and lonely childhood, a passionate longing for affection, but all bitterness resolved in an utterly unselfish desire that his babe so beautiful shall be rich where he is poor. And all this is also Nature. And there is something in Coleridge's experience at this moment that Wordsworth himself can never know. Wordsworth, who has made him

realize what he has lost, can never know the happiness of promising it to a loved one. Wordsworth, who is so rich, will never have the riches of knowing what it is to be poor. All this, it seems to me, is in that beautiful poem; and because all this is there, it seems to me no wonder that, for this one moment, when all thought of challenging, or identifying himself with Wordsworth is remote from Coleridge's mind, he should describe Nature with a simple imaginative power at least as great as Wordsworth's own. "He is he; and I am I."

Why Coleridge could not be loyal to that moment of illumination and self-knowledge, I do not know. But by the summer of this year 1798 Coleridge had taken the fatal decision—if so strong a phrase has meaning in his history—to leave his baby, and his baby's mother, and the baby's new born brother, by themselves in Stowey, while he voyaged with the Wordsworths to Germany. The second baby died while he was away. I wonder whether his young wife ever forgave him or them: I do not think she did; and, had I been she, I could never have forgiven him or them. Or, if I could have forgiven him, I would never have trusted him again. Still more, I wonder whether he ever forgave himself. I do not think he did. Anyway, I am sure that Life never forgave him. His inward decay began; he began to be eaten away by his sense of sin: and within five years he was a broken man, and the fire of his genius glowed seldom through the ashes.

"The deep, deep tragedies of infancy, as when the child's hands were unlinked for ever from his mother's neck, or his lips for ever from his sister's kisses, these remain lurking below all, and these lurk to the last." So De Quincey wrote in *Suspiria*, and it sticks in one's memory. There is a touch of floridity in the expression, which awakens the misgiving that the writer is luxuriating a little in his sentiment; but there is also an impressiveness about it, which convinces. Moreover, it is almost, though not quite, faithful to the facts of De Quincey's actual experience. His beloved sister did die during his childhood; but his mother did not. Nevertheless, it is more than possible that he did endure a moment when his "hands were unlinked for ever from his mother's neck"; and that he was carefully using a phrase which may have been literally true of his own experience, while suggesting to the reader that the severance happened through his mother's death. The truth was worse. The severance was due to his mother's principle. Mrs. Quincey the elder was a remarkable woman; but, unfortunately, she was persuaded by her particular brand of evangelical Christianity that demonstrative affection between parent and child was dangerous to the child.

Of this lack of human warmth between the fatherless De Quincey and his mother his life betrayed the consequences. So did his brother Pink's. The entire difference between the careers of Thomas and Pink shows that we must not attempt to explain everything by their childish conditioning. But Pink's reckless embrace of reality, and De Quincey's feckless evasion of it, seem to spring from the same source. And Pink's behaviour, when at last he returned from his Odyssey, in refusing to see any of his family; his mysterious illness, in which "every feeling is dulled except a sense of pain and sorrow, which retain their first strength;" and finally Mrs. De Quincey's notion that Pink was not really Pink at all, but an impostor seeking to obtain his patrimony, seem all to belong to the same order of experience as Thomas De Quincey's own. Apparently Mrs. De Quincey found, in Pink's shrinking from meeting her, evidence that he must be unreal. Her sensitive

children must have felt something the same about her. "You have urged your misery," she wrote to Thomas, when he besought her to take him away from Manchester Grammar School, "and you still urge it again; but cannot you tell me what it is?" It was simple enough: she had taken him away from Bath Grammar School where he was happy, and sent him to Manchester where he was not. But Mrs. Quincey was one to whom happiness was not an argument for prolonging a condition, but for ending it. Happiness was wrong; it was unregenerate.

This was not the whole story. Thomas had been mixing, since he had left Bath, in an aristocratic society which he found congenial. With a sort of snobbery which may be reprehensible, but is very intelligible, he had ennobled his own name. From plain Quincey he became De Quincey. His mother's severity on this aberration was salutary enough. "If you ever arrive at higher distinction, your birth and your future can have no share in your elevation; but were you to stir up doubtful and remote pretensions to a line of ancestry, you would become truly ridiculous." This one of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world we can all agree with her in condemning; but it is inconceivable that she understood or cared to understand its motive, which was to create a kind of sanctuary for himself, and to interpose a barrier between his sensitiveness and the rude reality of life. It is rather comforting than otherwise to think that in this matter Thomas eventually triumphed. He is become De Quincey, for good and all; and no-one would grudge him now his self-inflicted accolade.

Opium, in this perspective, was only another of his refuges. It was more deplorable than a home-made nobility. But it is easy for us to be virtuous. A juster attitude might reflect that if we had had to endure his chilly childhood, we should expect to be forgiven our consolations. And there was, in spite of all, a kind of tenacity in the man which enabled him to turn his indulgence to account. It is true that we do not find so much in *Levana and our Ladies of Sorrow* as did the critics of sixty years ago, when David Masson called it "the most perfect specimen he has left us of his peculiar art of prose-poetry, and certainly also one of the most magnificent pieces

of prose in the English or in any other language." To us it is too *voulu*; too implicated in the elaborate assumption of the singing-robe. But there is a quality in some of his more enduring work which is unique and precious, and for which opium is probably in part responsible. Perhaps the best example is the three parts of *The English Mail Coach*, where the narration of the substantive event has all the clarity and palsied immobility of a nightmare. Whether it was true, as he asserted, that he actually dreamed the past happening over and over again, may be doubted; but he certainly succeeded in infusing the peculiar emotional tension of a dream into his story. In his valuable book on De Quincey Horace Eaton very pertinently notes that it was during the period when he was struggling to escape from his slavery to the drug that he conspicuously succeeded in communicating the dream-quality to his work: as in 1819, when he wrote the original *Confessions*, and in 1844 and 1845, when he wrote the "dream-fugues." At those periods of struggle against the drug his dreaming itself seems to have become more terrifying (as did Coleridge's); but this was compensated by an added power of making his experience the material of his art. That art could easily become too deliberate; but at its best, it is horribly impressive.

Another, and far less reprehensible, refuge of De Quincey was the society of children. If it is, at all times and in all forms, a weakness to take refuge from reality, then De Quincey's predilection for the company of little children was a sign of weakness. But it seems unduly severe to speak, as a recent critic of De Quincey has done, of his unrestrained grief at the death of Catherine Wordsworth as a "wallowing in artificially heightened luxury of woe." It is difficult to dispute about matters of sheer and immediate taste; we can only record our complete agreement with Mr. Eaton's finding that De Quincey's letters to the Wordsworth's are eloquent of a deep and genuine grief.

> "What tender, what happy hours we passed together! Many a time when we were alone, she would put her sweet arms about me and kiss me with a transport that was even then quite affecting to me. Nobody can judge from her manner to me before others what love she shewed to me when

> we were playing or talking alone. On the night when she slept with me in the winter, we lay awake all the middle of the night—and talked oh, how tenderly together: when we fell asleep, she was lying in my arms; once or twice I awoke from the presence of her dear body: but I could not find in my heart to disturb her. Many times on that night—when she was murmuring out tender sounds of endearment, she would lock her little arms with such passionateness round my neck—as if she had known that it was to be the last night we were ever to pass together. Ah pretty, pretty love, would God I might have seen thy face and kissed thy dear lips again!"

Perhaps we should not write in exactly that way to-day; but the emotion is surely authentic, and it is the particular emotion of a grown man who has known what it is to lose his heart in disinterested love of a child. And this interpretation, which seems natural and unstrained, fits exactly with his later confession in a letter to Lushington:

> "All children become objects of deeper tenderness when it is remembered that a certain portion of them are always marked down in the unseen register as consecrated from their birth to an early death . . . It is therefore of vast importance to one's own peace of mind, that an existence so brief from a station of after-review should have been altogether happy."

That is the attitude of the true lover of children; and no fact concerning the inwardness of De Quincey's life is better established than his delight in the society of children, or their delight in his. With them, as Mr. Eaton says, he felt "no need of defences" such as he instinctively interposed between himself and the adult world: such for example, as his studied and stylized politeness in correspondence and in address, which so confused the servants who waited on him, when there were any to wait. It is perfectly true that this love of children did not make him an exemplary father to his own. The necessities of his years of hiding from his creditors in Edinburgh forced him to use them as his messengers; and there is a tinge of justified bitterness in his daughter's memory of her fears and the dangers to which she was exposed. It would have been more satisfying if De Quincey had been able altogether to conform his conduct to his love; but that the love was real, it is impossible to doubt.

We must not confuse his intense feeling of anguish at Catherine Wordsworth's death, as expressed in letters to the

Wordsworth family which we cannot read without a pang, with his retrospective account of his feelings in his *Reminiscences* of 1840. In retrospection, De Quincey like most people was seldom quite reliable; and he was there engaged in stressing the strangeness of his recovery from his prolonged paroxysm of grief. He himself speaks of the months during which he flung himself nightly on the little girl's grave as "a senseless self-surrender to passion; far, in fact, so far from making an effort to resist it, I clung to it as a luxury." It passed into a curious physical malady from which he was suddenly released; and after the physical revolution, he candidly avows that he entered a condition of emotional indifference towards Catherine's memory.

But that the total experience had been really shattering is revealed not only by his letters at the time, but with almost equal clarity, by the utterly unexpected sequel of his falling in love with Peggy Simpson of the Nab. Nothing in De Quincey's past had prepared us for this. His chief escape from the harshness of reality appeared to be fixed: it was to be opium, not the tenderness of a woman. But his grief over little Kate had hit him too hard and too deep. He needed something more real than opium; and, considering his intimacy with the Wordsworths, and his deference to their opinion, he acted with surprising courage and independence towards Peggy Simpson. One cannot help admiring him for it. De Quincey's complete indifference to respectability in this crucial matter makes, to our thinking, a better human showing than either Coleridge's marriage, or Wordsworth's behaviour to Annette Vallon; and it is very possible that De Quincey's resentment at what he felt to be an element of moral humbug in their attitude was at the bottom of the feeling of prejudice against them which he afterwards displayed in his *Reminiscences*. Anyhow, his marriage was, in substance, a good one. It justified itself, pretty completely, in life. Not that Mrs. De Quincey had an easy or a happy time. Her cry of sorrow at her loneliness during De Quincey's long absences pierces the heart; and there is nothing more touching in the record of his life than the gentle and humble plea which De Quincey quotes from one of her letters, when urging Dorothy Wordsworth to visit her. She had asked him "not to take her grief amiss." At least, in

spite of all the hardship, she had, and enjoyed, the consolation that he loved her, and that, when he spoke of "the overwhelming suffering of separation from my wife's society," he was speaking from his heart.

The great merit of Mr. Eaton's biography of De Quincey is that, without malice or extenuation, it puts before us a strange, yet simple and lovable human being. Mr. Eaton conceals nothing that many years of patient research have revealed to him; he makes no excuses for the little man; he uses no art, save that of a loving fidelity to his subject; and he leaves us fully satisfied. With critical estimate Mr. Eaton is only incidentally concerned. Evidently, he began his work with the primary conviction that De Quincey was worth all the pains that a faithful biographer could bestow on him. Whether or not it is true, as Mr. Sackville West has maintained, that "the spectacle of De Quincey's living his life is an unedifying one, look at it how we will," seems to depend upon what we mean by edification. That it was a model of living to be copied, no one would dream of saying; but it is certainly not a depressing life to contemplate. We do not leave it with the feeling that De Quincey's great gifts were vilely cast away; but rather that he managed, sometimes clumsily and sometimes wastefully, to do all that he had it in him to do. If he lived long—and 74 is a remarkable age for a man who consumed so much opium as he—it was because he deserved to live long. Somewhere within him was a spring of indomitable energy which triumphed over drugs and bailiffs and the rest of his miseries. That he entertained grandiose dreams of what he might have done, if the sordid necessity of making a living had not been imposed upon him, was but natural. He wrote in a draft of a letter to his mother in 1818:

> I hoped and have every year hoped with better grounds that (if I should be blessed with life sufficient) I should accomplish a great revolution in the intellectual condition of the world; that I should both as one cause and as one effect of that revolution place education upon a new footing throughout all civilized nations, was but one part of this evolution: it was also but a part (though it may seem singly more than enough for a whole) to be the first founder of True Philosophy: and it was no more than a part that—I hoped to be the re-establisher in England (with great accessions) of Mathematics.

This is truly Coleridgean in its vastness; and some might say that De Quincey did not get even so far as Coleridge on the road towards achieving his panphilosophy. Instead, he did a great many other things; and he left a very substantial body of work behind him. It was under the compulsion of earning a living that he took to actual writing. Without that, he would probably have been quite content to go on dreaming of a *maximum opus*; but once he had begun, he worked hard, even if he worked erratically, and, what is more, he did not keep up a continual moan about the sordid necessities of his craft. He became a journalist, and he was not far from being proud of it. The opening of his masterly essay on *Toryism, Whiggism & Radicalism* which appeared in *Tait's Magazine* in 1836, contains this knowledgeable praise of the journalism of the time:—

> The newspapers, and other political journals of this country are conducted with extraordinary talent—with more, in fact, than was ever before applied in any nation to the same function of public teaching. Indeed, without talent of a high order, and without a variety of talent, it would be a mere impossibility, that an English journal should sustain its existence. Perhaps it would be impossible to show any exception to the rule; unless in the rare cases where a provincial newspaper has inherited from a past generation a sort of monopoly, or privilege of precedency, as a depository of advertisements. Advertisers go where they have been used to go, on a certain knowledge that readers, interested in advertisements, will by a reciprocal necessity, go where advertisements are sure to be found; and, therefore, a monopoly of this nature is most secure where it is most intense. But allowing for this single exception, the political press of England has so much more than its fair proportion of natural talent that, for thirty years and upwards, it has even acted injuriously upon the literature of the country, by impressing too exclusive direction upon the marketable talent of the young and the aspiring.

De Quincey, in fact, deserves the honour—and, as the passage shows, he would have regarded it as a high honour—of being called one of the greatest English journalists, in a period when journalism was at its zenith: as indeed it was. Looked at soberly, it was an extraordinary achievement for one who had been brought up to enjoy and expect a life of ease and contemplative detachment. If we say he was making

a virtue of necessity, that only proves him the better man. In what else does a life of achievement consist, save in making virtues of our necessities?

There are many dull, verbose patches in his journalistic production. It could not have been otherwise, considering the conditions under which he wrote. But the general level of attainment is astonishingly high, though not quite so high as Hazlitt's. Nor was De Quincey's quasi-omniscience superficial: he had read in, and thought about, innumerable subjects. His obvious blind spots were only two. Of one, he himself was conscious. "My hatred of all science, excepting mathematics, is exquisite." For the other—his complete unawareness of the splendid development of English prose-fiction—perhaps his almost total immersion in the practice of journalism was partly responsible. Obviously, he did not see that at the very moment he was remarking that journalism swallowed up all the marketable literary talent, the novel was expanding to meet the needs of an expanding society. For him, Mother Radcliffe remained the genius of the novel, partly because he had himself a taste for naive horrors, partly because the novel was for him chiefly a feminine relaxation. One would like to know how he would have reacted to such a book as Mrs. Gaskell's *North and South*, particularly seeing he too was a Manchester man. It would surely have been, both by content and authorship, a puzzling portent to him. He was the very antipodes of a feminist.

> This room is her pretty boudoir, in which, till to-night—poor thing!—she has been glad and happy. There stands her miniature conservatory, and there expands her miniature library; as we circumnavigators of literature are apt (you know) to regard all female libraries in the light of miniatures.

His exquisite hatred of science was, in fact, confined to the sciences of observation. "I am not an Ornithologist, nor an Icthyologist: I am no Botanist, no Mineralogist: as a Naturalist, in short, I am shamefully ignorant." He had one of the best excuses for ignorance; as he woke up to discover at the age of twenty-four, he was very short-sighted: and nothing shuts one out so effectively from the study of the book of Nature as not being able to see the letters. But, in other provinces, his interests were eminently scientific. He was an enthusiast for

economics, and Ricardo's doctrines came to him with the force of a revelation, in very much the same way as the doctrines of Marx struck men a century later. Yet with this he combined a rare faculty of insight into the concrete process of history. His essay on *Toryism, Whiggism & Radicalism* contains the firm outline of as impressive an English political history as has ever been written. He had some excuse for the dream of "the History of England, in twelve volumes" of which he used, at the age of 70, to speak to his last and most successful publisher, James Hogg. Hogg regarded it as the amiable fantasy of a rather childish old man. The reader of that essay will at least understand why De Quincey believed that he could have done better than Macaulay or Froude.

Underlying this natural aptitude of De Quincey for history was a sense of the process of life as a conflict of opposites. The English Party system was a manifestation of the tension of *Yin* and *Yang* (De Quincey would have rejoiced alike in the fundamental conception and the learned superstructure of Mr. Toynbee's book). This vision of life arose in De Quincey as a child, if we are to believe his own report in a famous fragment of *Suspiria*.

> "Upon me, as upon others scattered thinly by tens & twenties over every thousand years, fell too powerfully and too early the vision of life. The horror of life mixed itself already in earliest youth with the heavenly sweetness of life . . . I saw from afar and from before what I was to see from behind. Is this the description of an early youth passed in the shades of gloom? No; but of a youth passed in the divinest happiness. And, if the reader has (which so few have) the passion without which there is no reading of the legend and superscription upon man's brow . . . he will know that the rapture of life . . . does not arise, unless as perfect music arises, music of Mozart or Beethoven, by the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtil concords. Not by contrast, or as reciprocal foils, do these elements act,—which is the feeble conception of many—but by union. They are the sexual forces in music: "male and female created he them;" and these mighty antagonists do not put forth their hostilities by repulsion but by deepest attraction.

De Quincey was an unusual child, and it is quite possible that the substance of that vision came to him early, though the interpretation of his sensation was the work of the man. The

attitude was imaginative and profound, and it was a magnificent equipment for the critic or the historian. From it derived his little essay, *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth*, which begins with an exhortation to the reader "never to pay any attention to his understanding when it stands in opposition to any other faculty of his mind"; from it, equally, his view of the "bursting into life" of the English constitution in the Parliamentary War: and it also supplies the pattern of his "dream-fugues". The simplicity of sensation passes beyond the understanding into the simplicity of imagination.

The De Quincey whom Mr. Eaton portrays is a man in whom this achievement seems natural. "Eccovi," said Carlyle, "that child has been in Hell!" And that too is the word of a truly imaginative criticism. A child who had been in Hell—that was De Quincey; and that is the De Quincey who appears to us in Professor Eaton's biography. Since it may well be that the Hells of vision and experience through which the sensitive man must pass are for the purpose of making him as a child once more, possibly Carlyle's phrase is true in some degree of all imaginative men. But it is pre-eminently true of De Quincey: for he went into his Hell as a child.

After a period of comparative oblivion. Matthew Arnold has become contemporary again. The elegant and melancholy Oxonian who abandoned the pursuit of poetry for what we might call—had not the phrase been rather cheapened—a life of service to the society of the future, the outlines of which no one so clearly discerned as he, is a kindred spirit to-day.

Rightly, I think, the authors of a recent commentary have read *Obermann Once More* as the final chapter of Arnold's life as a poet: the record of his passing from poetry to prose, from aimlessness to purpose, from passion to peace. Not that these transitions are always identical. It was Arnold's peculiarity and distinction that they were not merely concomitant, but involved in one another. In *Obermann Once More* Arnold reviewed his life in relation to the life of the great world. Between the first *Obermann* and the second, twenty crucial years had elapsed. The revolutionary uncertainty of 1848 had given place to the democratic confidence of 1867—the year of the Household Franchise Act. And the spiritual difference between those two historical moments, as Arnold now saw them, was that whereas, twenty years before, the old "Christian" social and political order was still in possession of Europe, though the faith on which it was based was dead, now the order itself had disintegrated. The moment had come when it was possible and necessary to try to build.

To the effort to build on the ruins Arnold's life was thenceforward devoted. From the beginning he realised, with a clarity shared by few of his contemporaries, that the universal democratic society of the future could have no solid foundation except in a religious faith. Mechanical progress gave no assurance of moral advance; the mere apparatus of political democracy was no safeguard against moral anarchy. Unless the masses who were now entering on political power were educated into an entirely new conception of civic responsibility, and at the same time into a development of themselves as moral persons so secure that they could use the new State as an instrument of true civilisation, they would become its

slaves. The only means to such a development of the moral personality was religious education. But nobody, in the society of Arnold's day, meant by religious education what he meant by it—an education into a new religious catholicity. For everybody else it was a sectarian affair. Indeed, the phrase "religious education" was then what it has remained ever since in this country: the terror of all responsible politicians, who knew by grim experience what anarchical fanaticisms were aroused by that fiery Cross for narrow minds.

Arnold's precarious hopes have been disappointed, his substantial fears all realised, in the anarchy of mass-society to-day. Yet there are those who, half admitting his prophetic insight, smile in superior scorn at his effort to restate the fundamentals of Christianity in a form which might serve as the basis of the new universal society. Arnold, they say, was superficial; he did not understand the depths of man's tragic situation, or the reality of human sinfulness. For him sin was no more than "the something which infects the world." The criticism might be well, if those who make it showed signs of acting in accord with their own pessimism. But to denounce Arnold for "liberalism" in politics and religion comes awkwardly from those who respect no oecumenical religious authority. The rigours of a private orthodoxy are no remedy for the social disease which Arnold strove to prevent. The truth is that Arnold was more radical in his criticism of human nature and human society than those who denounce him for not being radical enough.

I at least firmly believe that Arnold diagnosed, while it was yet in germ, the condition of moral anarchy in which Europe is involved to-day. The problem which he prophetically confronted in the eighteen-sixties—how to moralise the coming mass-State—is the actual problem of the nineteen-forties. It is the more unmanageable, because his warnings and his remedies were disregarded. And, although his poems belong to the period before he accepted the mission of being at once the servant and the prophet of the society in which we live, they are essential to an understanding of the spirit and the conviction in which he dedicated himself to the cause of civilisation. The loveliness of the best of them is a measure of his sacrifice at the call of duty.

In a letter of 1867, he was at pains to repudiate the suggestion that he had used Empedocles and Obermann merely as "mouthpieces through which to vent my own opinions." He had still, he admitted, a sympathy with "the figure Empedocles presents to the imagination"; and no doubt, he added, the sympathy had been greater at the time the poem was written, some twenty years before.

> "But neither then nor now would my creed, if I wished or were able to draw it out in black and white, be by any means identical with that contained in the preachment of Empedocles. No critic appears to remark that if Empedocles throws himself into Etna his creed can hardly be one to live by. If the creed of Empedocles were, as exhibited in my poem, a satisfying one, he ought to have lived after delivering himself of it, not died."

The final argument is only half-convincing; it is invalid at one level, and valid at another. Moreover, the fact is that not merely "the religious newspapers" of 1867—some of which *were* very justly reckoned among Arnold's abominations—but some of his intimate friends of eighteen years before had believed that he was using Empedocles as the vehicle for his own thoughts. Shairp wrote as much to Clough in 1849.

The discrepancy was real. As far as Arnold's conscious thinking went, Empedocles's thoughts were pretty faithful to Arnold's thoughts in 1849. But Empedocles threw himself into Etna (though perhaps it was not so necessary that he should as Arnold's argument assumed) while Arnold lived on. And Arnold was right to insist on the difference. It was not a mere debating point; for he had always had a Wordsworthian awareness of man's oneness with the persistent, instinctive, animal life of the world. He had always acknowledged the presence and potency in himself of what Spinoza called the *vis existendi*. He had described it well in *Resignation*, which was written at much the same time as *Empedocles*.

> That general life which does not cease,
> Whose secret is not joy, but peace;
> That life whose dumb wish is not miss'd
> If birth proceeds, if things subsist;
> The life of plants, and stones, and rain
> The life he craves—if not in vain
> Fate gave, which chance shall not control,
> His sad lucidity of soul.

It was indeed to bring his conscious thinking into harmony with the unconscious persistence of life that Arnold strove. Coleridge, though Arnold seems not to have known it, had formulated the goal and the endeavour in almost exactly the same terms. More pertinently, Arnold-Empedocles utters the same thought at the end of the poem, when the philosopher-poet imagines a succession of rebirths of the soul, in which the thinking part of man seeking rest will be called to

> Go through the sad probation all again,
> To see if we will poise out life at last,
> To see if we will now at last be true
> To our own only true deep-buried selves,
> Being one with which we are one with the whole world.

But the deep-buried self, the search after which is the chief motif of Arnold's reflective poetry, and the discovery of it the *summum bonum* in his scale of values, is not simply identical with the enduring impulse to mere existence which man shares with "plants and stones and rain." It is rather the product of harmony achieved between the conscious self and the unconscious life: between what Freud (in this matter less original than his disciples suppose) has called the Ego and the Id. At this crucial point of his spiritual development man ceases to be a divided being. He is unified in obedience to the law of his own being, which is part of the universal law which governs the working of the famous "power in ourselves, not ourselves, making for righteousness." Only by this achievement does a man come to the knowledge of his own true purpose in life, the mission which it is appointed him to accomplish. Lacking it, he falls away—to quote *Empedocles* again—

> Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
> Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze,
> Forged by the imperious lonely thinking power.

The bondage of the flesh ensues upon following the urge to rejoin the general life at the level of mere animal existence, in disregard of the special differentia of man—*le roseau pensant*; the bondage of the mind is the outcome of the refusal to acknowledge man's fundamental community with Nature. Freedom consists in, or follows from, a recognition of both allegiances, which leads to the gradual emergence—part

discovery, part creation—of the hidden self. During this process, which is hardly to be distinguished from Keats's "soul-making," the intermittent and fleeting intimations of our own "line"—to use Arnold's favourite word—become more solid and abiding. Till then, as he put it in *The Buried Life*

> 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.

Freedom, the discovery of one's own "line", truth in act and utterance—these were for Arnold, aspects, or alternative descriptions of the same condition, whose initiates he called "children of the second birth". By what paths he came to associate, and finally, to identify this spiritual renascence with the rebirth which is at the heart of Christian doctrine is hardly a matter for consideration in connection with his poetry, for his poetry came to an end before he had made the identification. But in the same unpublished letter which we quoted above are these significant words.

> That Christ is alive is language far truer to my own feeling and observation of what is passing in the world, than that Christ is dead.

That may not satisfy—indeed it was not intended to satisfy—the demands of orthodoxy; but it may satisfy other demands. The importance of Arnold's contribution to the reinterpretation of the Christian religion has been largely neglected, not, we believe, because it is superficial, but because it is profound. It is based on a deep experience of life; but the weight of its findings is concealed by the truly deceptive simplicity of statement which Arnold cultivated no less as a spiritual than as a literary virtue.

But the relevance of this, for our present purpose, is that when Arnold found his "line" he abandoned poetry. That is, of course, no judgment on poetry in general; but it does imply a judgment of Arnold upon his own. Pushed to a false extremity, that judgment might read: " Tis eloquent, 'tis well, but 'tis not true." But truth in the sense in which Arnold might, and probably would, have denied it to his own poetry, is the outcome of an inward harmony and a sense of obedience to the mysterious purpose appointed to the individual by Life or the divine Providence. Greater poets than he, he would

have been the first to insist, were privileged to express the truth (which was also their truth) in poetry. They were, in the full sense of the word, "called" to be poets. Of these, he believed, there had been few: Homer, the Greek tragedians, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Goethe he reckoned the chief. But the collocation of Wordsworth and Goethe, which was frequent with him, was always qualified by a significant comparison.

> But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
> From half of human fate;

whereas the truly great poet "sees life steadily and sees it whole." The phrase, like others of Arnold's, is so familiar that its place in the context of his thought is seldom remembered. But such a vision is the privilege of those whose "line" is poetry. Their conquest of their buried selves is not accompanied by the realisation that their poetic gift is inadequate to the new truth. On the contrary, their second birth lifts them to the condition of being authentic voices of Nature —the Nature that includes man. They are instruments through which are uttered the self-evident oracles of a hidden wisdom. Their activity is passivity.

> The happiness divine
> They feel runs o'er in every line.

It is the same as Wordsworth's "deep power of joy"; but Arnold had thought more about its genesis.

Precisely this deep power of joy he felt to be lacking in his own poetry even at its best. It was deficient in the joy which comes partly from complete self-fulfilment in the creation of poetry, partly from fulfilment of the completed, and therefore largely impersonal self, whereby the most terrible tragedy becomes a pæan of praise. This truth he expressed, a little baldly, in an epigram which some are surprised to find included in his poetical works. But it is, as he said to Clough, "an oracular quatrain"; and certainly it touched the heart of his theory, or rather his religious conception, of poetry.

> What poets feel not when they make
> A pleasure in creating,
> The world, in its turn, will not take
> Pleasure in contemplating.

That the joy in the act of poetic creation should persist during the period when the poet's mind, from facing "the burden of the mystery," passes onward to the power of "mirroring life's majestic whole" was the crucial test of the few who are called and chosen to be poets. The word he used for the effect was "animating," probably with a reminiscence of Wordsworth's tribute to Milton's "soul-animating strains." By this test he himself had failed.

> "I am glad you like the Gipsy Scholar (he wrote to Clough) —but what does it *do* for you? Homer *animates*—Shakespeare *animates*—in its own poor way I think Sohrab and Rustum *animates*—the Gipsy Scholar at best awakens a pleasing melancholy. But this is not what we want.
>
> The complaining millions of men
> Darken in labour and pain.
>
> What they want is something to *animate* and *ennoble* them—not merely to add zest to their melancholy or grace to their dreams.

It is to misinterpret Arnold completely—as the appeal to Homer and Shakespeare shows—to imagine that he is demanding of the poet that he should be a moralist with a message. True, Arnold himself was to become a moralist with a message; but that metamorphosis was due precisely to the fact that, judging himself by his own severe standards, he found himself wanting as a poet. He had the spiritual development of a great poet, but not the faculty divine to carry it as a poet. He had to proclaim his message by precept, since he could not impart it by revelation. Possibly he himself did not always keep entirely clear in his own practice of criticism the distinction between animation and uplift: between the heightened sense of life that is communicated even by the verbal texture of the great poet and the indoctrination that is imparted by the expression of some profound truth about life. But there is no room for doubt in the minds of those who study Arnold's poetics in their full context that the distinction is basic to his belief in the significance of poetry in general and his judgment of his own in particular. The riches of English poetry, though incomparable, are not so great that we can afford to be so severe to the beauty of *The Scholar Gipsy* as he was; but we can appreciate the austerity of his perspective.

Perhaps the poem which most fully reflects the controlled turmoil of Arnold's nature while he was working his way to his mature philosophy of life and poetry is *Resignation.* In it are combined, in a blend which has made it the favourite of many, his lyrical-pastoral gift and his reflective power. Arnold packed a great deal in that seemingly simple poem, which he probably worked over and over again. In it he tentatively suggests a hierarchy of human natures. The Gipsies represent the aimless instinctive, who live in the moment; the Pilgrims and the Warriors are the purposeful but narrow-visioned; then there are those emancipated from the life of passion—in Spinoza's sense of the word—in whom the Gipsies' instinctive submission to life is raised to level of consciousness. The prince of these is the poet.

> Action and suffering though he know,
> He hath not lived, if he lives so.

The poet contemplates, is identified with yet detached from, "the eternal mundane spectacle"; he is moved by it and the working of Nature within himself to creation. "To his mighty heart, Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart." But to neither Arnold nor Fausta has this great gift been given: they belong to the tribe indeed, but not to the blood royal.

> And though fate grudge to thee and me
> The poet's rapt security,
> Yet they, believe me, who wait
> No gifts from chance, have conquered fate.

The hierarchy is not absolutely clear in the poem itself; and the cause of the obscurity is illuminating. It is that Arnold hesitates at one moment whether to reckon himself among the poets. At one point the poet is indubitably merged with himself, and is represented as craving the general life and as burdened with "a sad lucidity of soul." That may have been true enough of Arnold at that time; but it is in flat contradiction to the "rapt security" which is attributed to the ideal poet in the next movement of the poem, where Arnold definitely disclaims for himself the true poetic endowment. The indecision is more than curious if the poem was indeed much revised; it is as though we watched him in the very process of forming the judgment upon himself as poet to which he was finally to adhere. An aptitude for pleasing

melancholy, he wrote to Clough, "is the basis of my nature—and of my poetics."

It was not enough for him. To be a life-long minor poet was no destiny for such a man; indeed, it was a spiritual impossibility. A poet of Arnold's gift, having achieved the kind of awareness he had achieved, must (it seems) either become a poet of the first rank, or abandon his semi-vocation. Since he could not be the kind of poet he revered, he became a prophet instead—surely the most far-seeing of his time. How far this was a matter of deliberate election must remain obscure; but the inherent probability is that he had to feel his way towards his "line," towards the utterance in act and word of his own truth. One can find little substance in the ultra-romantic theory that Arnold was ruined as a poet and unfulfilled as a man because he did not plunge headlong into his affair with Marguerite. Arnold developed as a poet for years after that episode was over; and the regrets he felt, keen as they were, were certainly not such as to cripple his powers. There seems to be no solid evidence, other than the fact that he ceased to write poetry, that Arnold's poetic powers failed. He had the lucidity and resolution of soul to abandon what was, by his own standard of self-judgment, something less than a vocation. Some speak of Arnold's "inevitable transition from poetry to prose". Inevitable is, I believe, in Arnold's case, the strictly correct word; and part of the lasting fascination of his small corpus of poetic work is that it derives much of its subtler meaning from the inevitability by which he relinquished it.

It is, probably, a not uncommon experience with those who have long practised the art of literary criticism to find themselves, when they return to the work of A. C. Bradley, satisfied with their own past performance precisely to the degree in which their judgments and conclusions have accorded with his. Those of their appraisals which he anticipated, and perhaps even suggested (though the suggestion had been forgotten for many years), are those which have commended themselves, after long probation, to their developed experience. And the critic recognises, with a mixture of rueful and happy surprise, that in so far as he agrees with Bradley he is mature; and where he disagrees he has still a long road to travel. But he makes no doubt that the road will lead him to Bradley again, and bring him under that sign to the thrill of critical certitude and the bliss of critical peace.

This surmise may be mistaken, and the experience more uncommon than we imagine. If so, it remains for the present writer to bear his witness unequivocally, and to declare that there is no other critic of English literature—not Coleridge, nor Hazlitt nor Lamb nor Arnold, nor Bagehot, nor Pater, nor Bridges—in agreeing with whom he feels the same sense of relief. It may be that this is not the highest praise that can be given to a critic. Possibly that critic serves the cause no less effectively who stimulates the eager mind to explorations from which it must draw back, and to judgments which it must finally relinquish. Nor does the praise necessarily imply that the critic to whom it is given is the greatest of his kind: for comprehensiveness in range may well be reckoned more important than intensity of appreciation, and a fair (though not a strong) case would be made for judging that Bradley's scope was too narrow, and his output too small. His works are contained in four volumes, of which two alone are really substantial. The commentary on *In Memoriam* is too specialised to strengthen his title to critical pre-eminence: it *is* commentary, rather than criticism. And some of the papers collected into *A Miscellany* are slight. Yet again, it may be held that it is an essential part of the function of the greatest

critic to have applied himself at some time to the judgment of contemporary production. Bradley never did.

All these things may be admitted; and yet it remains true that for one quality at least—and that quality the rarest and most essential in literary criticism—Bradley was indeed pre-eminent. That quality is the capacity for a total experience of the work criticised, and for retaining that experience throughout the subsequent work of analysis and comparison. In this respect, all other English critics without exception appear in comparison with Bradley fragmentary, or partial, or casual, or capricious. Probably it was because Bradley had no creative temptations; he was content to be a critic and nothing more. And more than content. He conceived it almost as his mission to enter fully into the experience of English poetry, and then to communicate that experience as richly and completely as he had received it. One feels behind the astonishing concentration of Bradley's critical work a mind of unusual gifts which had, at the moment of its own maturity, reached the deliberate conclusion that the interpretation of English poetry was a work worthy of the unremitting application of all its powers. About the conclusion there may seem to be nothing remarkable. After all, it is obvious that such a task is worthy of the powers of any man. But to resolve to perform that task, and to refuse to be deflected with any other—this is singular.

In a lecture on "English Poetry and German Philosophy" (included in *A Miscellany*) Bradley sets forth the position on which his critical work was based.

> It is in poetry that the English mind expresses most fully its deepest insight and feelings. This cannot be done by natural science, simply because that confines itself to a single aspect of the world. It may be done by religion, by philosophy, by poetry and the other arts, because they are not thus confined. The English mind does its best in poetry, and not in the shape of religious or philosophical ideas. We have been, and are, much in earnest about religion; but we have produced very few, if any, men of the final order of genius in that sphere —men like St. Francis, Thomas à Kempis, Luther or Pascal, mystics like Jacob Böhme, theologians like Schleiermacher. In philosophy we have some great names, but none of the greatest, none to rank with Plato or Aristotle, Spinoza or Kant. And then there is this further fact. When the English

> mind is in flood and approaching or reaching its high-tide . . . it breaks into poetry; and its greatest poetry appears at such times. And its most famous philosophy does not . . .
>
> Philosophy never speaks the same language as poetry, or presents exactly the same view of things. If it did, why should it exist? But still, if we read first Pindar and the Greek Dramatists, and then Plato and Aristotle, we feel no incongruity or want of kinship in the poetry and the philosophy, and no inadequacy of either to the other. Neither do we feel this after reading German poetry from Goethe to Heine, and German philosophy from Kant to Hegel. But this is just what we do feel when we pass from the poetry of Shakespeare's or Wordsworth's age to Locke or Hume or any of our most purely native philosophers. We find ourselves in the presence, not merely of an inferior degree of genius, but of a view of the world incongruous with the substance of poetry.

In devoting himself, therefore, to the experience and interpretation of the poetry of Shakespeare and the English Romantics—and his published criticism was almost rigorously confined to them—Bradley conceived that he was devoting himself to the understanding and illumination of the completest utterance of the English spirit. In one constituent realm of the triple kingdom of religion and philosophy and art England was supreme. To reveal her supremacy and its significance, to enable Englishmen to enter completely into a heritage which they knew vaguely and instinctively to be unique, to make them intellectually and imaginatively conscious that they possessed a tradition of spiritual expression to correspond with their more obvious, though perhaps not less mysterious, tradition of politics and government—this was Bradley's purpose.

To its accomplishment he brought a unique capacity for the experience of poetry. Other critics may have experienced poetry as intensely as he, but none (we think) was so richly endowed with the faculty of retaining the experience in its pristine integrity throughout the arduous process of intellectual analysis, so that he seems never to have even felt the temptation, to which so many even of our greatest critics have succumbed, to substitute the concept for the experience. That impression of complete and constant immunity is no doubt illusory, and is derived from the fact that he published relatively so little. He was not compelled, as most other

critics have been, to give hostages to fortune while he was still immature. If he also learned his art by practising it (as surely he did) he made his practice essays and his journeyman pieces alms for oblivion. Even the commentary on *In Memoriam* is the work of a master of criticism, although it is not a work of the first importance, because it handled Tennyson—whom Bradley never ceased to esteem as the greatest of the English poets since the Romantics—from an aspect in which he was not pre-eminent. Tennyson's indisputable excellence may be described in Bradley's own later words:

> I believe he is unsurpassed, and I suspect he is unequalled, among English poets in two things—one, the accuracy and delicacy of his perceptions; and the other, the felicity of his translation into language of that which he perceives. The first of these things is not specially distinctive of a poet; the second, though not by itself enough to make a poet great, is *the* distinction of a poet from other artists. Poetry is an art of language; and the born poet, of whatever size, is a person who has a peculiar gift for translating his experiences—whatever he sees, hears, feels, imagines, thinks—into metrical language, a special necessity in his nature to do this, and a unique joy in doing it well.

That is not to imply that Bradley thought meanly of Tennyson as a poetic thinker, or what Coleridge meant by a philosophic poet. After all, his commentary was concerned with the thought of *In Memoriam*, and Bradley was incapable of displaying his powers of analysis for their own sake. He believed to the end that *In Memoriam* was a great poem, and one worthy of being totally experienced; but there is no sign that he felt that sense of passionate self-identification with the poetic mind of Tennyson which he experienced with Wordsworth and Keats and Coleridge and Shelley, and supremely with Shakespeare.

In this special sense the commentary on *In Memoriam* was an exercise in method. When poetry really achieved the condition of poetry, Bradley believed, then it demanded a complete, though temporary surrender. The critic must begin like the poet as described by Keats in words of which Bradley himself was the first to seize the significance. "A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence. He is

continually in, for, and filling some other body." So, Bradley might have said, the critic is the most uncritical of anything in existence, except that the poetic achievement is the condition of this surrender or transmigration. It is the poetic fact which makes possible the experience of poetry. So that the recognition of this fact is at once the preliminary and the fundamental critical act. From this aspect, it might almost be said that other critics left off where Bradley began. That would be extravagant; it would commit the critical solecism against which Bradley was always on his guard—that of exaggerating distinctions into antitheses. But it is certainly true that Bradley was more fully conscious of the nature of his own activity than any critic before or since.

What he sought was the opportunity of what we may call a permanent surrender. All surrender to poetry must be as complete as the poetry itself could compel from a mental and emotional nature prepared to offer no resistance, or at least to oppose no prejudice. The world of poetry was a world of life, smaller in extent, greater in intensity; and the critic must approach it in the spirit of Shakespeare, which, Bradley believed, was expressed in the words of Keats we have quoted. But the critic, no more than Shakespeare, could prevent the natural identification of himself with one "character" rather than another. So, the experience of one poetic achievement is acknowledged to be more completely satisfying to the total nature of a fully conscious man than any other. That pinnacle was occupied, as everyone knows, in Bradley's critical universe by Shakespeare. His great book on *Shakespearean Tragedy*—surely, the greatest single work of criticism in the English language—needs no particular commendation here: it is become an indispensable instrument in the education of an Englishman, and those who have once been touched by its influence are subtly influenced by it for ever.

But, although it would be impertinent to praise the book, it is well to remember precisely what it is. It is an account of an experience of Shakespeare which was found finally satisfying by a man of unusual capacity for profound thought and deep feeling. Bradley's passionate enthusiasm is tempered throughout, sometimes tempered almost to the point of apparent suppression, but it is there, thrilling and unmis-

takable, from beginning to end. And the beginning and the end are worth remembering. Bradley begins gently.

> "Our one object will be what . . . may be called dramatic appreciation; to increase our understanding and enjoyment of these works as dramas, to learn to apprehend the action of some of the personages with a somewhat greater truth and intensity, so that they may assume in our imaginations a shape a little less unlike the shape they were in the imagination of their creater."

After a rapid and masterly description of the world portrayed in Shakespeare's tragedies, in the first lecture Bradley advances to his tremendous question: "In this tragic world, where individuals, however great they may be and however decisive their actions may appear, are so evidently not the ultimate power, what is this power?" One is inclined, even now, to stare amazedly at the last four words. Then Bradley goes on:

> Any answer we give to the question proposed ought to correspond with or to represent in terms of the understanding, our imaginative and emotional experience in reading the tragedies. We have, of course, to do our best by study and effort to make this experience true to Shakespeare; but, that done to the best of our ability, the experience is the matter to be interpreted, and the act by which the interpretation must be tried. But it is extremely hard to make out exactly what this experience is, because, in the very effort to make it out, our reflecting mind, full of everyday ideas, is always tending to transform it by the application of these ideas, and so to elicit a result which, instead of representing the fact, conventionalises it. And the consequence is not only mistaken theories; it is that many a man will declare that he feels in reading a tragedy what he never really felt, while he fails to recognise what he actually did feel.

Here is made clear the uniqueness of Bradley's critical effort. Nothing in criticism had previously been attempted, and certainly nothing achieved, of a comparable integrity. This is not the place to follow Bradley in the detailed pursuit of his purpose. Our object is merely to recall, as vividly as may be, the nature of that purpose, and the quality of the method by which it was pursued. From the beginning we must hasten to the end. It comes before the actual conclusion of the book—towards the end of the eighth lecture, on *King Lear*.

> "Why does Cordelia die? I suppose no reader ever failed to ask that question, and to ask it with something more than pain,—to ask it, if only for a moment, in bewilderment or dismay, and even perhaps in tones of protest. These feelings are probably evoked more strongly here than at the death of any other notable character in Shakespeare; and it may sound a wilful paradox to assert that the slightest element of reconciliation is mingled with them or succeeds them. Yet it seems to me indubitable that such an element is present, though difficult to make out what it is with certainty or whence it proceeds."

He puts aside first the suggestion that it is due to the fact that Cordelia contributes something to the catastrophe; next, that it is due to our perception that Cordelia's death is true to life. Then he disengages it. It is distinguished as a feeling not confined to *King Lear*, but common to our experience of all the later tragedies of Shakespeare; but one which takes exceptional force in *King Lear* because of the strength with which our bewilderment or dismay is aroused.

> "The feeling I mean is the impression that the heroic being, though in one sense and outwardly he has failed, is yet in another sense superior to the world in which he appears; is, in some way which we do not seek to define, untouched by the doom which overtakes him, and is rather set free from life than deprived of it . . . Now, this feeling is evoked with a quite exceptional strength by the death of Cordelia . . . It simply is the feeling that what happened to such a being does not matter; all that matters is that she is. How this can be when, for anything the tragedy tells me, she has ceased to exist, we do not ask; but the tragedy itself makes us feel that it is so."

Perhaps it is excessive to draw the conclusion which Bradley himself did not expressly formulate: but it is impossible to avoid, and it indicates the real scope of Bradley's inquiry. Shakespearean tragedy and the foundation-story of the Christian religion belong to the same order.

Shakespeare was, for Bradley, the culmination or consummation of the experience of poetry. Below him were ranged the great poets of the Romantic period. In one of his rare outbreaks of personal avowal, which by their rarity are so impressive—who can forget the moment when he suddenly said: "It is for things like this, that I *worship* Shakespeare?" —Bradley declared of the Age of Wordsworth: "And yet,

if I may descend to personal opinions, I believe in that Age." What did he mean? First, he meant that he believed that in that period the imagination was at work in the English poets with sovereign strength and felicity. And Bradley, above all, believed in the imagination. But what was the imagination, for him? In describing Wordsworth's doctrine, he defined his own. "Wordsworth's doctrine, if we may use the word, is that imagination is the way to truth. By imagination he does not mean fancy, but a transference of the mind into the centre of the thing contemplated, and a construing of all its motions or actions from that centre outwards." Some would deny the possibility, or the reality of such an activity; and to-day the denial is frequent—most vehement, strangely enough, among those whose political doctrines are directly derived from such an act of the imagination. Hegel was the common ancestor of both Bradley and the Marxist materialists; and Spinoza was Hegel's ancestor. The imaginative penetration of the process of history, and belief in the possibility of conscious identification with it, on which Marxism is based, is an act of that imagination in which Bradley believed. But he did not believe that all its deliverances were literally valid. His doctrine was rather that the utterance of the creative imagination in the "artist" aroused in the responsive person an imaginative response, which could be described as the satisfaction of the demands —hitherto unconscious—of his imagination; and "wherever the imagination is satisfied" (as Bradley said at the end of his Oxford lectures) "there, *if we had a knowledge we have not*, we should discover no idle fancy, but the image of a truth."

The qualification is important. Bradley did not believe that even imagination could pluck out the heart of the mystery; he did not believe that mankind would ever come to possess the knowledge that would enable it to make the fateful transmutation of beauty into truth. In a sense, it was inherent in mortality that even those most highly gifted with the true imaginative power should feel themselves to be the incessant prey of

> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds unrealized.

And it is this quality of awefulness in Wordsworth's vision that Bradley drives home and home again to our flinching

attention, in his magnificent lecture on Wordsworth's poetry. Not even by imagination can we make the Universe our home —indeed, it is imagination that tells us that it cannot be; nevertheless, it is through imagination that we learn to take into our souls and accept the ultimate mystery. By imagination its nature, though not its secret, can be revealed to us.

The relation between Bradley's final statement concerning the validity of the imagination and the utterances of the Romantic poets is intimate and obvious. We are reminded immediately of Keats's "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be Truth," and of Blake's "Everything possible to be believed"—by which he meant everything that satisfies the imagination—"is an image of Truth." And probably Bradley would have accepted Keats' converse proposition: "I can never feel certain of any Truth but from a clear conception of its Beauty"—that superhuman and awful beauty which Keats and Bradley both found supremely exemplified in *King Lear.* Beauty, in this sublime sense, is best defined as that which satisfies the imagination. But what imagination itself may be, who can say? We cannot remember that Bradley anywhere addressed himself more directly to this question than in his sentence on the doctrine of Wordsworth. Its reality for him was both primary and ultimate. It is that in ourselves (he might say) which is satisfied by *King Lear.* And what is that but the reality of ourselves?—something which emerges and takes possession of the discrepant creatures that we are, something which unifies the conflicting elements within us and establishes a living peace between our hearts and minds, and establishes a like peace between our momentarily integrated being and the reality beyond us, something which, if it could find utterance in the action of our daily lives, would have the power to transform the world. "Doubtless it is the soul that matters; but the soul that remains interior is not the whole soul."

§

Some such belief, though Bradley never sought to formulate it, underlies all his work as a critic. And because he believed in the imagination after this fashion, he was the most genuinely

imaginative critic our country has produced. Not even Coleridge, for all his flashes, can compare with Bradley in this regard. What he said of the Romantic age can be aptly applied to himself. "Each of the poets and philosophers seems to have caught sight of something that startles and engrosses him . . . whether his mental life is tumultuous, as with Byron or Shelley or Schelling, or an inward and steady fire, as with Wordsworth and Hegel." In Bradley it was the inward and steady fire; but, as he believed in that age, so essentially he belonged to it. He, rather than Coleridge or Hazlitt, was the critical consciousness of that age. In his criticism of Shakespeare, Coleridge's is fulfilled: what Coleridge attempted in glimpses, Bradley patiently achieved. And he wrought into his critical attitude a knowledge of German philosophy such as Coleridge never came near to possessing. For Bradley indeed, English poetry and German philosophy were parallel manifestations of the same spirit—the universal imagination at work through the instrument of national genius. So that when he said that Oxford's best intellectual gift to him was "the conviction that what imagination loved as poetry, reason might love as philosophy; and that in the end these are two ways of saying the same thing," he was thinking less of philosophy in general than of the philosophy which was the counterpart and the contemporary of the poetry in which he believed. He slipped a tell-tale phrase into his lecture on "English Poetry and German Philosophy", when he spoke of "Wordsworth and Hegel, who happened, *as we say*, to be born in the same year."

Probably in the attempt to convey the broad significance of Bradley's work, we give the impression of one who troubled little over the minutiae of criticism. Certainly, if by the minutiae of criticism we understand the accumulations of faintly relevant and doubtfully profitable "research", Bradley had no dealing in them. "Research," he said, "though toilsome, is easy; imagination, though delightful, is difficult." For the critical exercise of imagination includes all that is relevant in research; it is the irrelevant part of research that is easy, and it is easy because it is irrelevant. It is automatic. Criticism, for Bradley, could never be automatic. On the contrary, it was, as he practised it, one of the severest conceivable exercises of the soul. First, to separate the pure

imaginative experience from the subtle usurpations of the intellect and the emotions—that is a work demanding a rare combination of intellectual subtlety and spiritual serenity; then to maintain that unique experience, undiminished, uncoarsened, unchanged, throughout the delicate work of analysing it and comparing it with other unique experiences, which must also remain undiminished, uncoarsened, unchanged—this required the steadiness of a master indeed. And no critic with whose work we are acquainted, whether in England or abroad, has displayed an equal power of control of his own processes. At his best, and his best is fully three-quarters of the work he published, Bradley is in the middle of the note all the time. He leaves nothing out, and he allows nothing in that is not essential. Consider his footnotes alone: they contain the themes of at least a dozen volumes of true criticism, work really worth doing, and suggestions for a dozen pieces of research which would have some real bearing on the essence of literature.

Bradley made no parade of the sheer work of scholarship he had done; and it may be said that it was done in order to be forgotten, in the sense that it was to him only a necessary means to the perfecting of his own capacity for the imaginative experience. But those who have carefully followed his criticism are aware how many separate paths of knowledge he has travelled in order to reach the point where the imaginative synthesis was possible, and how unerring was his discrimination between the intellectual and the imaginative. Such a discrimination is difficult to imitate. That is the reason why Bradley's influence on the actual practice of criticism has been so small. He offered no short-cuts to the acquisition of a method; he demanded of those who would follow him not only the primary endowment of the creative artist—the "experiencing nature" of which Bagehot spoke—but also the intellectual capacity to discriminate an experience to its elements, and the moral will be satisfied with nothing less than a complete interpretation of it. The return must always be to the imaginative experience, and the task of the critic is to complete his analysis so faithfully and to order it so harmoniously that the imaginative experience naturally supervenes in a new fullness.

This process Bradley was apt to describe as "feeling one's way into the poet's mind." His purpose is clearly stated in his commentary on *In Memoriam*. He warns the reader who desires to understand Tennyson's thought that he "must not expect system or definition; he must not press hardly on single phrases or sentences, but must use them in order to feel his way into the poet's mind." The connection between this and the Wordsworthian doctrine of imagination is manifest. Whereas the poet is he who exercises the power of imagination on objects and on life, the critic is he who exercises it on the work of the poet. And, in so far as he is a critic indeed, he will not be guilty of the major offence—"taking the road round Wordsworth's mind, not into it." One feels, on reaching the end of that lecture, that no critic of Wordsworth before Bradley had ever done anything other than "take the road round" Wordsworth's mind—not even Coleridge.

But to make amends—for it would grieve Bradley's shade that praise of him should involve speaking slightingly of Coleridge—we will choose for the final statement of Bradley's doctrine a passage based on one of Coleridge's own revealing phrases. It is taken from the lecture on *Shelley's View of Poetry*.

> "The chief moral effect claimed for poetry by Shelley is exerted, primarily, by imagination on the emotions; but there is another influence, exerted primarily through imagination on the understanding. Poetry is largely an interpretation of life; and, considering what life is, that must mean a moral interpretation. This, to have poetic value, must satisfy imagination; but we value it also because it gives us knowledge, a wider comprehension, a new insight into ourselves and the world. (*Bradley's note at this point is important*: And, I may add, the more it does this, so long as it does it imaginatively, the more does it satisfy imagination, and the greater is its poetic value). Now, it may be held . . . that the most deep and original moral interpretation is not likely to be that which most shows a moral purpose, or is most governed by reflective beliefs and opinions . . . And the reason I wish to suggest is this, that always we get most from the *genius* in a man of genius and not from the rest of him. Now, although poets often have unusual powers of reflective thought, the specific genius of a poet does not lie there, but in imagination. And the specific way of imagination is not to clothe in imagery consciously held ideas; it is to produce half-consciously a matter from which, when produced,

> the reader may, if he chooses, extract ideas. Poetry (I must exaggerate to be clear), psychologically considered, is not the *expression* of ideas, or of a view of life; it is their discovery or creation, or rather both discovery and creation in one. The interpretation in *Hamlet* or *King Lear* was not brought ready-made to the old stories. What was brought to them was the huge substance of Shakespeare's imagination, in which all his experience and thought was latent; and this, dwelling and working on the stories with nothing but a dramatic purpose, and kindling into heat and motion, gradually discovered or created in them a meaning and a mass of truth about life, which was brought to birth by the process of composition, but never preceded it in the shape of ideas, and probably never, even after it, took that shape in the poet's mind. And *this* is the interpretation which we find inexhaustibly instructive, because Shakespeare's *genius* is in it."

"It may be held. . . that the most deep and original moral interpretation is not likely to be that which most shows a moral purpose." Bradley held it, and he knew why he held it. He believed in the Imagination. We need the capacity and the courage for the same belief to-day.

RICHARD HILLARY

The late Richard Hillary's book, *The Last Enemy*, is the work of a writer born: it depicts with remarkable vividness and objectivity the experience of an Oxford undergraduate turned airman, who crashed, was terribly burned, was patched up into the semblance of a human being by plastic surgery, and could not rest till he was flying again to a death which he knew to be certain, and which he desired. Of this latter part of the story *The Last Enemy* tells nothing. To that extent the book is an artefact. Were we to trust it alone we might be persuaded into believing in the triumphant emergence of Hillary from a spiritual crisis, in which his radical scepticism was changed into a faith.

The book represents Hillary as converted to the creed of his friend Peter Pease—also killed as a fighting pilot—whose faith he had tried in vain to undermine by his own scepticism. Hillary's relation with Peter was so intimate that, in hospital under an anæsthetic, he had a vision of his friend's death, apparently more or less at the moment when it happened. The book ends with the spiritual triumph of Peter in Hillary's soul.

> So Peter has been right. It was impossible to look only to oneself, to take from life and not to give except by accident, deliberately to look at humanity and then pass by on the other side.

But what could he do? It comes to him suddenly. He would write of his dead friends. He was "the last of the long-haired boys"—a group of undergraduates who had gone, one by one, to their deaths in the Battle of Britain.

> If I could do this thing, could tell a little of the lives of these men, I would have justified, at least in some measure, my right to fellowship with my dead, and to the friendship of those with steadfastness and courage who were still living and who would go on fighting until the ideals for which their comrades had died were stamped for ever on the future of civilisation.

It is an ungrateful task to be sceptical about such a declaration. Nevertheless it must be said plainly that it does not convince. The speech betrays him. In these latter portions

of the book Hillary's style suddenly fails him. It becomes rhetorical, and almost commonplace. The spiritual thread is broken. No doubt he did desire to commemorate his friends, and he did so, most memorably. But when he was doing that, he did not present them crowned with this halo of idealism: and it will not work retrospectively. Hillary—it is no moral criticism—is faking something. Artistically, he is forcing the note in order to give his record a significance different from that which is really its own.

He was a born writer, and now he had something to write about, and time in which to do it. It would be a long while before that patched-up body would again be fit to seek its Nirvana in an aeroplane. He had crashed on September 3, 1940. It was more than two years later that he wrote (in a letter of December 1, 1942):

> It's curious psychologically that I have only to step into an aeroplane—that monstrous thing of iron and steel just waiting to down me—and all fear goes. I am at peace again.

Meanwhile, a subaltern peace of self-forgetfulness was to be had in the act of writing. That would do for an explanation; and it would be a truer one than Hillary gave.

Why did Hillary fake the record? Here is ground that angels fear to tread. That the record is faked admits of no doubt whatever. The internal evidence of the writing and the evidence of his own subsequent letters is at one and incontrovertible. Hillary did not go up into the air again, to a death which he knew to be certain, in order to help to stamp certain ideals for ever on the future of civilisation. Neither did he write his book to commemorate men who believed that that was why they fought and died.

> Finally, I got so sick of the sop about our "Island Fortress" and "The Knights of the Air" that I determined to write it anyway in the hope that the next generation might realise that while stupid, we were not that stupid, that we could remember only too well that all this had been seen in the last war, and that in spite of that and not because of it, we still thought this one worth fighting.

The Last Enemy took the shape it has because Hillary, for some reason, wanted to present himself as a man who had changed—been indeed converted—into one who "still thought

this war worth fighting." It was not true. Why did he do it?

It is not entirely impossible that there was a tinge almost of cynicism in his resolve: a momentary assumption of the rôle of the hard-boiled writer who knows what is expected of him. That would not conflict with what I feel to have been his deeper motive—a fear of coming truly to grips with the unknown power that impelled him to find his peace in death. He was, after all, only filling in the time of waiting while writing his book. He had done his best to make it popular; he had succeeded. But as the price of such a success he had given himself a part to sustain. After writing *The Last Enemy* it would hardly have been possible, hardly spiritually decent, to have relapsed into the arm-chair of a professional author.

Had he not given that twist to his story the sequel might have been different. It would have been possible for Hillary to have survived (one feels) if he had not published *The Last Enemy*, or if he had written it differently. Had the story been carried through to the bitter end on the same plane of sheer veracity on which the greater part was written, it would have imposed upon him no obligation to so bleak a destiny. He had forced the note as artist; now he was doomed to force it as man. There was no earthly, and not much heavenly, good to be gained by his going back to the R.A.F. He knew, perfectly well, that the chances of his being an effective fighter again were negligible. *Mais quoi faire?* As Arthur Koestler, who was his friend, put it in a penetrating essay, "The myth was devouring the man."

But what would it have been—the book which Hillary did not write: the book which he half-wrote, then screwed to a heroic pitch, which belied his own experience; the book which would have dealt with his own inward change—for change there surely was—as honestly as it had dealt with what had come to him before the change? To conjecture that were to conjecture what song the sirens sang. For the change itself was now to be conditioned irrevocably by his adoption of a rôle—"the last of the long-haired boys" who stays awhile only to commemorate his dead friends, and to be converted to the creed which the public is made happy to believe they professed; then hastes to join them.

That rôle, indeed, Hillary could not play. His integrity

was much too real for that. But the end was appointed. There was no escape from death. One cannot, at twenty-three, look forward to a life that is one long anti-climax. The penalty for dramatizing your own life, when you have a Hillary's sense of decorum, was the inexorable necessity of the fifth act. The horror, the pathos, the new and terrible beauty, is that the fifth act had not to be written, but lived.

Hillary's letters, which I have read only in the excerpts which Arthur Koestler has given, are the record of the man facing the inevitability of death to which he has condemned himself as tragic hero. They are terrifying letters, in which we watch him groping after his own motive. Why is he being impelled to die? Is it vanity, he once asks himself: hesitates, and answers "No." That was true: it was not vanity. But the reason he gives why it was not vanity is untrue. "Because implicit in my decision was the acceptance of the fact that I shall not come through." One can seek death through vanity. But the sense of decorum is not vanity. Cleopatra's

> And then what's brave, what's noble,
> Let's do it after the high Roman fashion
> And make death proud to take us.

is not vanity. But Hillary was not a character in a tragedy. And yet he was. He had made a tragic hero of himself: but it was Richard Hillary who had to fill the bill—and pay it.

The sense of decorum, in Hillary, was now complicated. Nothing so simple as Hillary living, or dying, up to his part. The man of exquisite integrity, entangled in a necessity imposed upon him by his art. That would be complex enough. But it was not so simple even as that. The necessity was imposed upon him by a failure of integrity in his art. Too simple still. That failure of integrity, that forcing of the note, was in the last analysis only the desperate grasp at a faith which did not involve, for him, intellectual or moral suicide.

But he had to snatch at it, all the same. It had seemed to be there. There had been a moment of vision—of some kind. But he had magnified it, interpreted it, connected it, used it to pattern his book, and thence himself. And then the pattern did not fit, after all. He had connived at his own conviction; adopted a meaning for himself, when deep down

he knew his only meaning was himself. And now, by snatching at a meaning, he had lost himself.

Was it indeed any essential part of his own pattern that he now had to die? How could he say? How can we say? That he had to die was certain. He had lured himself into a position in which it was no longer possible for him to live. By snatching at a meaning, he had projected himself into a world which was governed by the laws of tragedy: but tragedy as conceived by the disillusioned and reticent youth of the ruling class of the Munich age—a tragedy of understatement, of the minor rôle; of the man who has his faith as it were at second-hand, in the form of love and admiration and envy for those who have a faith he cannot share; of the man who puts meaning into his own life by insisting on a meaning in the deaths of his friends.

But the real tragedy, that which awakens in us thoughts beyond the reach of our soul, is that of the Hillary who shrinks not so much from death as from his submission to the necessity imposed upon him by his own self-deception, who has no name and no love for the power which drives him on. It is, he says sometimes, instinct. But it is not instinct. It may be instinct which drives the singed moth back into the bright incandescence. But Hillary was not a moth. He was a finely conscious contemporary human being.

What compelled him to death? We have said a sense of decorum. That comes nearer to the mark. But the phrase is ancient now. The decorum of 1942 is a very different thing from the decorum of a century ago. Hillary's is the decorum of an age of total war. The English obverse of the medal whose German reverse carries the picture of the young Nazis in April, 1940, flinging themselves deliberately to death in the advance upon Rethel. That was a portent; so was its counterpart, Hillary's death.

What is this new sense of the decorum of total war, as manifest in Richard Hillary? We may find the roots of it in his picture of his generation.

> We were disillusioned and spoiled . . . Superficially we were selfish and egocentric without any Holy Grail in which we could lose ourselves. The war provided it, and in a delightfully palatable form. It demanded no heroics but gave us the

> opportunity to demonstrate in action our dislike of organised emotion and patriotism, the opportunity to prove to ourselves and to the world that our effete veneer was not so deep as our dislike of interference, the opportunity to prove that, undisciplined though we might be, we were a match for Hitler's dogma-fed youth.

Good, one feels. There is decorum here. And had the battle of Britain ended there: fighter pilot against fighter pilot, and the free man triumphant by virtue of his freedom, the decorum might have been manifest at the level of nations.

But the battle of Britain was not the end. This last, consummate achievement of the British genius for improvisation and *désinvolture*, perfect had it stood alone, was but a link in a chain, a cog in a mechanism. The glory of fighter-pilot grinds slowly and inexorably down to the shame of Bomber Command. The respite won by the fighter pilots was used to inflict with calculated purpose upon the simple families through the length and breadth of Germany the same obscenity—the blasting of simple families to death in their London homes—which gave Hillary his moment of vision and faith.

The wheel had turned full circle. Truly, there was nothing for a Hillary to do, but die, if he was to remain significant. The necessity was cosmic. In the total story of Hillary the veil is lifted for moments and we glimpse the purposes of God. Hence its power upon us. Hillary did not consciously flee into death from the futile horror to come, for which he and his friends had unwittingly prepared. But he had to be saved from it.

Turn back to the sequence which brought him as an individual under the law of tragedy. The vision which brought him the momentary faith at which he snatched was simply that of a woman killed with her baby in the London blitz. That gave him meaning, and he built the pattern of his book upon it. His dead friends were justified, and so was he. The unworthy element in him and them was burned away, for redemptive action cannot be "delightfully palatable." And his integrity was such that not even his terrible experiences in hospital could absolve him from levity at the bar of his own conscience.

The vision of the dead woman did absolve him. To make that thing for ever impossible—that was the Holy Grail. He and his friends were crusaders after all, and he their chronicler.

And yet, and yet. Somehow he could not quite believe it; he could not go on believing it. And it was not true. It might have been true, had the Battle of Britain been the end. Then he might truly have believed what he desired to believe. But the Battle of Britain was not the end, and *The Last Enemy* was written in the growing awareness that it would not be. The terrible event would dissolve the very foundation of his half-won faith.

He had presented himself to the world as a man who had won through to a knowledge of obligation which set his doubting heart at peace. He was henceforward dedicated to the cause. He knew what he fought for and loved what he knew.

That was the Hillary he gave to the world. But the living, growing, experiencing Hillary came to know different. He had half-known it already. When he returned to the R.A.F. he neither knew what he fought for nor loved what he knew. The real Hillary was doing to the outward eye what the legendary Hillary was pledged to do. But it was no enemy he was seeking, no crusade on which he was flying. He was seeking Death. That which found his friends, he sought. Death was for him the barrier of finality between him and a life of growing and irreparable division, an end to his "posthumous existence," a surcease from consciousness which would fix him, as it were a fly in amber, outside the stream of time and experience, incorruptible by the future event.

Eric Linklater, in his preface to *The Last Enemy* bears witness to Hillary's austere clarity of purpose, with which (Linklater knew) all dissuasion was incommensurable. The creature had a purpose and his eye was bright with it. The purpose was to be a symbol. Had that become conscious, it could not have been accomplished. Hillary sought to discover why he was impelled towards death—always in vain. We may be wiser than he, but if we are, that is because we are not perfect, as he was. His was the knowledge that all was torment, and the power to act on the knowledge.

He could not live; he could not have lived. In Hillary's experienced impossibility of living, his profound sense that it was unfitting and wrong to live, because by living he must inevitably become less than he was, is the epitaph of our society. Here was a man who participated in Britain's "finest hour"; perhaps the most fully conscious of all those who were the occasion of Churchill's phrase-making, the objects of his eloquence: "Never was so much owed by so many to so few." He was plucked, like a brand from the burning: saved to survive and to be the *vates sacer*. Yet he could not live. He, in whom this society was justified, by whom it was defended, willed not victory, but death: and willed it, impersonally, as one who submits to a meaning, and becomes its vehicle.

In Hillary, the deep urge of contemporary society towards death is made visible. He is the dazzling white of the foam on the great wave of death which D. H. Lawrence prophesied, if it were not forestalled by a wave of generosity. In him generosity itself seeks Death. The irony of his title becomes intolerable. Death was not the last enemy, but the last and only friend.

In Hillary is visible the nature of defeat of life in the world to-day. Embody the virtues of the Englishman in one man, endow him with awareness, give him a perfect part to sustain in the massive drama of total war, put him at the very hinge on which history turns, let him escape death by a miracle, and be restored to life by magic of modern surgery: and he goes bad on you. "We are fighting for survival," said Churchill in 1940. Is Hillary the essence of what survives—the impossibility of living?

MAX PLOWMAN

Max Plowman—or, to give him his right English baptismal name, Mark Plowman—was a singularly distinctive figure in the British scene: distinctive but not conspicuous. For he sedulously avoided the spotlight. I have known no one of comparable gifts who was comparable with him in self-effacement. He took a positive delight in playing second fiddle. He wrote but few books, and the most successful of these—the unvarnished account of his experiences in the last war: *A Subaltern on the Somme*—was published anonymously. The same self-effacement was characteristic of his attitude to his friends. *They* were the marvels, the nonpareils. *His* function was to lavish himself upon them in entire self-forgetfulness. Few men have loved their friends so well; and few have been so quick to discover and to make friends. Naturally, for few experiences are more delightful than to be discovered as a nonpareil.

So his literary works are largely posthumous: in the essays he did not trouble to collect, and now in his letters to those friends of his whom he patiently coaxed into achievement or caressed into self-acceptance, perhaps into self-satisfaction. He was not (I think) one of the great letter-writers in the accepted sense: one who pours forth magic felicities of style, and dips a flowing pen into an inkwell which is a pool of vision. He had not that incessant instantaneous sensitiveness to what Coleridge called "the goings-on" of the letter-writer's world, or the accompanying gift of sheer natural style, which lifts letter-writing into a high and peculiar art of literature. There is, of course, a high degree of self-forgetfulness necessary to that art; but it is the self-forgetfulness of the pure artist. No one has ever excelled in this kind of letter-writing who had not the true literary genius—"the vision and the faculty divine"—whether it be Mme. de Sévigné, Charles Lamb, Keats, R. L. Stevenson or Katherine Mansfield. Max Plowman's self-forgetfulness was not of the literary artist, but of the self-forgetful friend, intent upon his unending task of appreciating, encouraging, inspiring those he loved, or sharing his discoveries with them.

But a gift of friendship is the greatest of all spiritual achievements. Its implications are profound. And in Max Plowman's letters we can watch it growing to its perfection, through the three phases which he knew so well: the rapture of Innocence, the suffering of Experience and the joy of the Imagination. Max Plowman became a master of imaginative friendship. I can conceive of no nobler title. Neither could he. The most faithful service a friend can do his memory is to try to explain from the substance of his own letters something of what imaginative friendship meant for him.

For him friendship was all-important, all-embracing. That is manifest. At the very end of his life he said, in final explanation of the faith to which he had completely devoted his last laborious years, "Pacifism is friendship." The volume of his letters is a unique record of a life lived as a manifestation of friendship, in the spontaneous service of friendship—an immortal witness to what friendship can be: a demonstration of its power and beauty (and perhaps also of its limitations) in act.

"In act" is the operative phrase. It links Max Plowman's friendship immediately with his conception of the Imagination, from which it is inseparable. "Imagination," he wrote, "is dynamic disinterestedness." Dynamic disinterestedness is friendship, he would equally have said. And that activity is the purpose of life. In so far as we have learned that this is the purpose of life, and are obedient to it, have we learned to live. "Life is life," he wrote, "just in so far as human beings are the means to the enfranchisement of one another in love and friendship." In what sense are human beings enfranchised by one another in love and friendship? "Service to those who have real meaning for us is delight. Friendship exists only when we know a friend beyond the realm where approval and disapproval have meaning." Friendship is thus a relation in which the participants are beyond each other's judgment. Each delights in the other's being, and so they are mutually liberated from the muddy vesture of decay which the censure, whether for good or ill, of an abstract morality puts upon them. Just in so far as this mutual liberation takes place, human life becomes truly human, and is the vehicle of a power which regenerates the world.

For this is the means by which the divine love becomes operative.

> It is impossible truly to love anybody without loving God. Then this love should be the opportunity for the recognition of God and the worship of Him in them. Only as we do so can friendship be really sustained in all its essential holiness. Only so is marriage sanctified. And there must not be—to my mind—any otherness about love for Christ and love for our fellows. Christ and God in every man are one—the Divine Humanity—the essential person. And it is that recognition, and that alone, it seems to me, which has power to save the world.

Saving the world is regenerating the world, as this mutual recognition of the essential person—God manifest in His creatures—passes like a subtle, consuming, refining and revealing flame through the mass of humanity. Again he writes: "How can people expect to be good friends if they don't love God? They simply must eat one another. And broken friendships are records of people who didn't like being eaten, or get tired of eating." In those vivid words he expresses his abhorrence of the false friendship which is merely an indulgence or a gratification of the Ego. Friendship can endure only if it is completely purged of possessiveness: its activity is to allow and assist the essential person to unfold itself in the beloved—to be a medium for the radiance of the spiritual sunlight of affection, trust and faith, whereby the other grows into the grace of his own identity.

Obviously, in all this the word love could be substituted for the word friendship. There is no difference between them. William Blake, whose doctrine was second nature to Max Plowman, spoke again and again of "love and friendship." The difference, in ordinary language, is that love is more often used of the relation between a man and a woman who are bodily united, or between parents and children; friendship, of the relation in which there is no physical bond. But Max Plowman was perfectly clear that the essence of the relation is the same. Marriage, he said, is sanctified only if man and wife worship the God manifest in one another. He puts the same truth more forcibly: "The fact of mating, unillumined by the Imagination, is, *rightly*, positively repulsive. Seen in the Imagination it is the consummation of joy—the birthplace

of the Lamb of God." Clearly, the physical union of a man and a woman, who worship the visible God in one another, is a spiritual communion of the highest. But it is not clear whether he meant more than this—whether he meant that the physical mating of a man and a women who have not reached this loving awareness of each other's identity, and may never reach it can nevertheless be regenerated by the Imagination of others. This seems to be implied in his frequent insistence on the significance of the fact that "all life begins in love." He dwells on this. He speaks of the necessity of "a dying into life and *rising again* to walk in newness of life—a faith based on the knowledge that as love only could have set the wheels in motion, so at the end all will be resolved in that which gave it birth." For "you cannot have a unique and individual soul born into the world without a couple of loving parents concerned only with one another. Animals may be bred of pure sex-hunger, but individual consciousness is requisite for the production of human beings —and works of art." Again,

> Love alone gives cloud and flower beauty, worthwhileness or truth. How then shall the life of man be regarded apart from love? It's just silly. . . . Though the whole human (and more than human) race is propagated and lives by desire, when you come to the consideration of truth, this, if you please, this desire, is the one thing to be discarded as negligible. It's just fantastically stupid.

Now, is there or is there not an element of confusion here? Desire and love are not the same. Between them is a difference of kind, not of degree. For desire is essentially possessive; and it is transmuted into love only when the possessive essence is purged away. Then only the act of mating becomes an act of worship of the visible God in the man and woman. "Only so is marriage sanctified." That corresponds exactly with his later words: "Animals may be bred of pure sex-hunger, but a sexual act makes me physically sick; and it's because the sex-hygienists use the word in the same sense that they revolt me." But the fact remains that the word is thus used and the act thus performed. In this sense sexual love was conceived by many Fathers of the Christian Church—and even by St. Augustine; and in this sense the marriage

service of the English Prayer Book speaks of marriage as "ordained to avoid fornication." Are we to conclude that from such unsanctified matings "unique and individual souls" are not born? There is a real ambiguity here, such that we cannot tell whether in the words: "Animals may be bred of pure sex-hunger, but individual consciousness is requisite for the production of human beings—and works of art," some human beings are being relegated from birth to the class of animals.

One may be sure that was not Max Plowman's intention. It is alien to the true quality of his thought. Probably he used the word Desire in the comprehensive sense of the all-prevading urge towards life—Spinoza's *vis existendi*, or Lucretius' benign Venus: *hominum divumque voluptas*. But, even so, the ambiguity remains. Max Plowman certainly could not have accepted the materialism of Lucretius or the pantheism of Spinoza. The love that is at the beginning of all life is not the same as the love which is the consummation of human living. Sometimes it is; but far more often it is not. What is the connection between the universal desire and the love into which it has to be transmuted?

Historically, a connection was made by the romantic conception of "falling in love," whereby human mating is conceived as a mutual act of spiritual recognition which is consummated in physical union. The distinction between the love-marriage and other kinds is established in language. But, if the love-marriage is recognised as the ideal, it is certainly not the norm. The marriage of convenience, or interest, for sexual possession or for the procreation of children is much more prevalent. Max Plowman would no doubt have said that the love-marriage, in which there is an interpenetration of spiritual and physical in the act of falling in love, ought to be universal, and that it should gradually flower into a complete physical-spiritual union. But the fact was otherwise. The obstacle to this permeation and transmutation of desire by love was "the rigidity of insensibility."

> Blake is always talking about "fibres of love." Life is tenderness with those fibres. They stretch from the lightest smile to the depths of procreation. . . . The rigidity of insensibility—that's what we're up against.

> I think our sex-relations are under a curse of rigidity. We don't know practically all the gradations of love. Most people know nothing. The rest know the rules of the game. There aren't any rules ultimately: and we ought to know everything by experience. Sex is a long slow process of initiation—a voyage of discovery between two people, and absolutely the only chart for the journey is mutual feeling.

Truly and beautifully said. But what of the millions of marriages under the curse of rigidity—where generation has not been regenerated by Imagination? By some sleight of mind they are left out. And this omission is not merely, as it might be, an appearance created by the casual expression of letter-writing. It hovers like an unlaid ghost over such a considered expression of his faith as *The Right to Live*:

> Henceforward test life in light of your own birth. . . . You were born of love. Love is your birthright. Know then, that except by love you cannot truly live at all, and that life with one insistent cry from the cradle to the grave, ay and beyond, does but call for that active co-operation of your spirit which is the conscious manifestation of love. There is no other life.

That was written in 1917, part of an essay which, twenty-two years later, in 1939, he considered as "at least worth more than all I have written before or since." And at the same time he reaffirmed the central thesis.

> Does birth confer the right to live?
>
> No, there is no such right inherent in birth: birth is merely the means that provides the opportunity for life. Life is a gift which we receive at the hands of. . . . Of whom? Whole philosophies hang upon the answer to it.
>
> At the hands of our parents is the most obvious answer. True enough; but in their separate individualities they have no power to transmit life. So back we come to the basic truth that life is the offspring of love, and to the corollary, no love, no life. And thus it becomes simple and rational to say that God is love.

But *is* it either simple or rational to say on those grounds that God is love? On those grounds it is equally simple and rational to say that God is desire, or the urge to existence, or the life-force. It is the *kind* of love that makes all the difference. The love that is the mutual worship of the God manifest in the essential person is one thing; the love that is manifest in

the animal desire of mating is another. Which of these loves is God?

To say, "Both", is to say nothing. To say that the former is human, the latter animal is to say hardly more. To come nearer to the truth we must call in aid Blake's words: "God only acts and is in existing beings or men," and his profound distinction between the Sexual Threefold and the Human Fourfold. Man is, for this thought, as it were the means by which animal desire is—that is, can be and ought to be—transmuted into Human Love, by the power of Imagination. For that purpose, or with that potentiality, Man came into the world: to be the vehicle of the Imagination whereby the fact of mating is seen—to use Max Plowman's words—as "the consummation of joy, the birthplace of the Lamb of God."

It is this Imagination which redeems the birth of a child who is born of sheer animal desire. It is not the Imagination of its parents, who have none. It is the Imagination of those who see that it makes essentially no difference to the child's potentiality of becoming itself a vehicle of Imagination. At birth he is, as Keats says, "an atom of perception, which knows and sees and is pure." Twice blessed, no doubt, are those children who are born of the commingling of imaginative love: of conscious Imagination in act in the consummation of joy. But the Imagination redeems all birth.

These two forms of Imagination—the Imagination which is active in fully conscious human beings, shaping their acts and lives, and the Imagination which is active only in man's thought, comprehending and redeeming all creation as it were from without, are not separate; they are one. The unity of the active and the contemplative Imagination is the unity of the fulfilled human being in whom they abide. He both enacts the life of Imagination in his own human relations, and is the living point whence the Imagination, as consciousness—understanding, forgiveness, and joy—is radiated through creation. In the Christian idiom, the Imagination is Christ "reconciling the world to Himself", by act and thought. The contemplative Imagination could not comprehend and redeem all creation if creation itself were not the work of Imagination: the beauty and truth are veritably there. But in the works of

the active Imagination, the work of creation is carried on: Imagination re-enters, as it were in a second act of creation, the world of Generation and the growth of Time. The implicit harmony which the contemplative Imagination discerns in the universe becomes explicit, by the active Imagination, in the lives of its servants. They co-operate with God, they are His fellow co-workers, not His subjects: "no longer servants, but friends."

Such a friend of God, such a vehicle of the Imagination in act, Max Plowman pre-eminently was. The implicit harmony became explicit in his life. Yet for a time in one crucial point he mis-esteemed the powers of the active Imagination; or, as he would have said, put his power of active Imagination to a test at which it failed through his own insufficiency. I do not believe that the active Imagination was ever deficient in him. If it failed at the test, it was because success was impossible; profoundly impossible, because success would have destroyed the Imagination itself.

Just as there is ambiguity in his conception of Birth, so there is ambiguity in his conception of Death. The actual birth of children is not always the fruit of disinterested love. It ought to be, but it is not. If the birth of every child is a manifestation of the Divine Love, as it is, it is often of the Divine Love operative through mortal instruments which ignore or deny it. Moreover, if birth is a manifestation of the Divine Love, so equally is Death. The life that comes between is simply the opportunity for the Divine Love to be recognised and obeyed: the opportunity for man to know it and co-operate with it. Can he co-operate with it by seeking to overcome physical death?

Why should he attempt it? When the Divine Love becomes conscious of itself in a human Imagination, it is self-evident that what comes between Birth and Death is only an episode: a descent from and a return to Eternity "which is ever-present to the wise." What is important is not that mortals should cease to die, but that they should cease to fear Death: and that the fear of Death will be cast out if they achieve Imagination.

The spiritual conquest of Death is probably the highest good attainable by man; the physical conquest of Death is unimaginable, and (I believe) contrary to Imagination. But

between these two is a debatable realm, wherein the power of Love may be invoked to help in overcoming bodily disease. I know little about it, but I believe it is accepted that where disease is mainly psychological in origin and has not proceeded far in the organic derangement of the body, the removal of psychological conflict does conduce to physical recovery. In such a case it is evident that the attainment of Imagination by the patient himself will have a curative effect. But whether the Imagination of another, in the form of Love, can directly mediate health to a sick person, it is impossible to say. To deny it categorically would be to go beyond the evidence: to assert it categorically is equally to go beyond the evidence. And a very important part of the evidence is contained in Max Plowman's letters. He came to believe, with an extraordinary intensity of conviction, that through the power of the active Imagination, he could directly mediate health to sick persons whom he loved. He made the attempt three times, and failed in all.

At first, and bitterly, he believed that the cause of failure lay in the fault of others; gradually he came to believe that the fault lay in himself. "The essential redeeming love in me wasn't enough—as ever, it seems." But no sympathetic reader of his letters will accept that verdict. There was no deficiency of love in Max Plowman. Where he failed, none could hope to succeed; and, I am convinced, none have really succeeded. Love is spiritually, not physically, regenerative. Its triumph is to conquer not Death—which would be to annihilate Life—but the fear of Death.

For a period of his life Max Plowman desired that Love should, and believed that Love could, do more than this. He was disappointed. It was necessary that he should be disappointed. Yet it was at this period of his life that he wrote one of the noblest and truest justifications of death that have ever been written. Anyhow, it belongs to the world where there are no comparatives: the world of Eternity.

> The one who contained the whole meaning and expression of life, died. And we died too—died in an agony of despair —died fighting all the way, from support to support, pleading with fate for pity and with life for a single concession. Till there was nothing to defend: not a recess that pain had not

ravaged, not a cranny of possession that death had not ransacked.

And still there is nothing.

And yet there is everything. For out of the whirlwind came a still small voice, and it said: "For the possession of one thing you would gladly have lost the world. You have lost the treasure of your heart. You held it in fear, and your love was bound. See, I have taken away the fear and freed the love." And then we saw what death had power over and what he could not touch.

All that is of self death takes away. All that would bind another to its delight, even by the finest cords of love, death snaps. Death rolls up the whole world of our existence and bowls it into vacancy. And we are left stark.

But gradually, and right out of the heart of pain, another world opens, a very still, very silent world, without time and space, but a world of such intense reality that it makes the old world look like a bubble floating in the sunshine, mirroring everything in beauty, but having the impermanence of a bubble and being as fragile to the touch. On that day we know that the new world contains the old, and is to the old as the earth to the bubble. We discover that it is a world of being where all things exist eternally without shadow of doubt, or need of substance. It is a world where merely to think is to be full of action; where merely to desire is to fulfil the heart; where to remember is to return, and to anticipate is to realise.

§

"The War—Blake—Tim," Max Plowman wrote in 1934, "these are the peaks of experience for me. And they are all parts of one experience, which Destiny seems determined I shall understand."

The name Max Plowman would have given to the one experience is Imagination, which, according to Blake, "is not a State, but the Human Existence itself." In Blake the word Human (always with a capital H) has a much deeper meaning than the word "human" in ordinary language. The Human is Fourfold, as distinct from the Sexual which is Threefold. The "fall" of the Human Fourfold into the Sexual Threefold, the struggle of man in that condition, and the return from the Sexual Threefold to the Human Fourfold is the theme of all Blake's prophetic books from *The Book of Urizen* onwards. The Sexual Threefold is the condition of man when Intellect,

Emotion and Desire have broken away from their harmonious subordination to the Imagination: or the Spirit, which is Love. This is the Fall of Man: his downward plunge into the Sexual Threefold, wherein the three elements are at incessant war with each other—a war which does not cease, nor cease to cause wars, until Imagination is restored to his peaceful throne.

That is a very crude outline of Blake's central doctrine; but it will suffice to give the clue to the sense in which the War and Blake were parts of one experience. Achieve Imagination (as Max Plowman did in 1917) and war becomes impossible for the individual who has achieved it. That is the simple reason why pacifism for Max Plowman was essentially an individual affair; and a pacifist movement was doomed to sterility and negation unless is was a gathering of individuals who had achieved Imagination.

Let me try to deal with the third element in Max Plowman's one experience, which Fate seemed determined he should understand. This was Tim. Tim was his elder boy. He died in hospital at the age of 12, on April 16, 1928. The manner of his death was the crucial experience of Max Plowman's later life. Three-and-a-half years later, he wrote:

> Piers has just brought me a pencil-box that has been left at school forgotten, for 3½ years—Tim's. An object of contemplation: all the pencils still there inscribed, bitten, cut, worn. And I am sure that if I can see that pencil-box with spiritual clarity I shall see the very face of God.

Max Plowman's love of the living Tim was exquisite: an example of the loving awareness of Imagination in act: a continuous but unoppressive concern that the loved one should *be*, should express with complete spontaneity in his own childish life the love which had given him birth. Suddenly he was stricken with cerebro-spinal meningitis, and taken to one of London's great hospitals. What happened then? There are many descriptions of the happening in the letters, and all are memorable. No one of them, I think, tallies exactly with any other. That is inevitable, because a happening of this kind is such that a description of it must be an interpretation; and it admits of different interpretations as experience increases.

I copy two accounts of it. The first was written three months after the experience itself.

> Soon after Tim fell ill, he became as a great light to me. Overwhelming every kind of weakness and bodily distress, there shone out from him to me a light of love that seemed to bear us both into a world of pure happiness. It was a world of triumph over death and hell; and then I *knew* that whatever there was of life that was not love was delusion. . . . Then came all the wonder of my discovery that the physical body is actually and literally dependent on the spirit for its sustenance—that, in short, loving old Tim, I could actually mediate physical life to him by feeding and sustaining his spirit. And when I found this out, not theoretically but actually, in repeated instance, then I began to walk on air: for it was as if a new heaven and a new earth were in process of creation. Then the powers of this world broke my heart, and I had to learn what Jesus meant when He said "Fear not them which kill the body." I learnt that, knowing that if Christ Himself could be stuck up on a wooden cross, ignorance and human heartlessness could kill a small boy. But the wonder of the vision did not fade.

The fact behind what Max Plowman, in the fierce injustice of bereavement, called "ignorance and human heartlessness" was that Tim, having apparently recovered from cerebro-spinal meningitis, actually died a few days later of broncho-pneumonia. Max Plowman believed that in the case of the former disease, which is so often fatal, he had been able so to mediate physical life to the boy that the disease itself was cured; but that another, generically different, disease had taken his life. This strong persuasion was of such decisive importance for Max Plowman's later life that it must be examined; if possible with equal tenderness and fidelity to truth.

I do not doubt for one moment that Max Plowman's love, attaining a final purity through his passing beyond all "selfish" concern for his little son, breaking clear of all the agony of anxiety, by its own fine excess did truly mediate an immortal strength to the little boy's spirit. But I am not convinced that this mediation of spiritual strength enabled the boy's body to conquer the disease. If that were indeed so, why did he die? Was not the same strength still being mediated to him to the end? It is truly conceivable, or imaginable, that selfless love at its pinnacle can prevail against meningitis, but not

against bronchitis—whether or not it was complicated by the ignorance and heartlessness of a hospital?

Scrutinising the happening with all the imagination I possess, and with the firm determination to set aside all personal considerations (for I was intimately involved in the outcome of Max Plowman's interpretation of it) I find that at this point he was conniving at his own conviction. On the facts as he himself repeatedly describes them, his conclusion that "the passion of love in its sublime" could mediate physical life to another was unwarranted, or at least not proven. Yet on this conviction some of his most important subsequent judgments and acts were based.

Let us turn now to another account of the same happening written seven years later, in 1935:

> The crucial point seems to me to lie in what I can only call the experience of God objectively—I think I can only make that all clear by going back to my experience with Tim. I loved him, Heaven knows, when I was distracted out of thought by my concern for him. And yet, so long as I was so distracted, I didn't love him enough. For there was self-love in that distracted concern. The "I" of self was involved and was creating a fearful confusion between myself and the true object of my love. When suddenly, this wild concern realised its own helplessness, then the knowledge and love of the object of my love suddenly became clear and *detached. Tim was.*— All my thoughts and feelings about him went whistling down the wind. All my concern was my own affair, and nothing to do with that essential personality, which just to see in my mind's eye, and love with a pure heart fervently, was bliss. Suddenly I had *come unstuck*, and he existed in his own sovereign individuality, and that was enough. What *happened* to him was something else. Whether he lived or died was something else. To know and to have known him was the eternal truth, and at the thought of it one's heart just overflowed with joy.— And there lay the secret. He was the embodiment of love. Completely detached from me, there was Love—God manifest —the secret of creation revealed. To *be* this manifestation was our purpose in coming into the world. To discover it objectively in another, the way by which the recognition of God was achieved.

Notably, in this account (which contains a profundity of spiritual truth) there is no mention of the mediation of physical life. But later in the letter which contains it—to his dear

friend Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence—Max Plowman speaks of the matter again.

> The thought of you, ill, is a contradiction in terms. The you I know is never ill—never has been and never will be. Oh, of course I know that that "you" lives conditioned by the world it lives in, so that, from that angle, the wonder may be that it is not *always* ill. But when I remember the woman who greeted me with open arms upon a day in 1917 when I first saw her in her drawing room, then I remember an incarnate spirit of such love and heavenly radiance that I know true value from false. It is by the release of that heavenly spirit that the mortal human being can triumph over mortality; and whatever it may be which releases it, is ordained of God and to be accepted as his ordination.
>
> "To release the prisoner." That's what we all need, isn't it?—Three times I have tried to release the prisoner, and three times I have failed. It is a *terribly* subduing thought. And if I ask myself why, the answer is always the same: because I was not simple enough; not whole-hearted enough: not wise enough with that wisdom in which love and intelligence are wholly one, and action is pure obedience.

The three attempts "to release the prisoner" and so minister health to a body diseased—which failed, belong to the inmost pattern of Max Plowman's life. But, whereas, seven years before, he had attributed the failure to the heartlessness and ignorance of others, and in the case of the second attempt, five years before, to another's lack of faith, he now ascribed it to his own. After the second attempt had failed, he had again declared his conviction uncompromisingly. "Even if everybody I ever came near died as the result, I should not disbelieve what now I *know*—that the life of the body is in the Spirit, and if the body can be brought into harmony with the Spirit, health results." And at that time, categorically, he ascribed his failure to his having given "respect to error" in the sick woman's husband—"the error of believing that because *our* faith has failed to remove our mountains, therefore the truth that faith can remove mountains is a lie. With God all things are possible. Without God fatalism is absolute. Faith is always inoperative because of some weakness or error in us. Find the error and release the faith. But justify ourselves and we destroy the possibility of faith."

This is subtle indeed. Whose really was the error here?

Max Plowman says, his own, in that he gave respect to error in his friend. But what else could he have done? His friend, whose experience had been as searching and as valid as his own, did not believe that "with God *all* things are possible"; by virtue of past experience could not believe that by the intensity of spiritual love a diseased body could be made whole; felt indeed that such expectation was inordinate and wrong. Max Plowman either had to convert him to his own belief or, since he was his friend, give respect to his "error". That "error" was a conviction which his friend had paid for. The only way to convert him was by working a miracle. Max Plowman did not work a miracle. Was the blame justly to be attributed to his friend's lack of faith? Whose *was* the fault?

"My own fault," said Max Plowman five years later. "My own faith was imperfect. I was not simple enough, whole-hearted enough, wise enough." Was that really true? The whole tenor of the letters is against it. Max Plowman's faith that love in its sublime could be the means of healing a person in the extremity of disease was whole-hearted and simple enough. It was a faith, moreover, that could hardly be confuted by experience. "If everybody I came near died as the result, I should not disbelieve . . ." "Faith is inoperative because of some error or weakness in us." That is an almost invulnerable position. But to be convinced, we must demand to be shown the weakness. In Max Plowman's case, it is not visible. We look then for the error. That we can find only in the faith itself. Max Plowman did not really know what he claimed to know.

He had, in consequence of a moment of veritable illumination, confused the spiritual with the physical: the laws of Eternity with the laws of Time. Later he himself was to confess the distinction in his original experience. Writing in 1935 he explained how his selfish concern for the life of his little boy suddenly dissolved away. "He existed in his own sovereign individuality, and that was enough. What happened was something else. Whether he lived or died was something else." Yet, at the very moment of this statement, and in the same letter, he was again asserting that by the release of the spirit the mortal being can triumph over mortality—which in the spiritual sense is surely true—and wresting it to a physical

sense: whereby it meant that the release of the spirit is curative of bodily disease.

In consequence, he was at once inordinate in his faith, and unjust to his achievement. Three times, he said, he had tried to release the prisoner, and three times failed. That was untrue. He had indeed released the prisoner, but not in the sense he claimed. He had enabled the spirit in his sick friends to triumph over their bodily limitations. He had made simple, easeful and lovely their passing from Time to Eternity. It was a wonderful achievement; not in the least diminished because he failed to accomplish what he believed he could and would accomplish: the restoration of his dying friends to health. Suppose he had succeeded in his miracle-working. Would the world be wiser or better, because three persons had been raised whole from the bed of death? Why only these three? In order that the capricious works of God should be manifest? Max Plowman, the worker of physical miracles, would have had to make the entire human race immune from death in order that his miracles should be an epiphany of the love rather than the caprice of God. There seems to have been a strange moment when he felt that this was in his power. "I began to walk on air, for it was as if a new heaven and a new earth were in process of creation."

Considering the matter with the lucid sympathy of a loving and admiring friend, it seems plain to me that Max Plowman was on a false trail, when he came to hold the conviction that the perfection of self-transcending love could renew physical life. I cannot but feel that this particular corollary of his spiritual faith was not only an accidental excrescence on it, but perilously near a surrender to his own arch-enemy, materialism. It is one thing to have the power to help a friend sick unto death to a condition of joy and serenity, of spiritual confidence, of indifference to the fate of the body, of assurance that the sundering of earthly loves is not the end but the beginning of true felicity. To build up, by the power of love, this security of spirit within another, or rather (as Max Plowman himself understood so well) to enable it to break, like a February flower, through its tenement of clay, is the highest service one mortal can do for another. But it is quite another thing to build up the expectation of a physical recovery, and

to believe in and present it as the necessary consequence of the spiritual emancipation. The latter belief would war against the former faith; for an acceptance of death, I believe, is the necessary condition of true spiritual emancipation.

To accept Death, in this sense, is not the same as to resign oneself to death. The spiritual emancipation of a sick person certainly does not require that he should give up hope of recovery, even in the most desperate condition, but it does require a complete surrender of the sick person to the divine power, in the spirit of the words: "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." And that, it would seem, is possible only when the faith in the divine power—let us call it simply the certainty that All is well—is so strong that mortal life and mortal death are known to be only two conditions of the true Life, which is everlasting.

Angels might fear to tread in a matter so delicate. Inevitably, in criticising what seems to me an abberation in Max Plowman's faith, I have indicated my own. It is a strange discovery that I should find him tempted by the very materialism to which he believed that I had yielded. But the fact is that never, while he lived, had I the desire to think the issue between us out to the end. It would have stirred up memories too painful; and anyhow it was enough that he was alive: and it was certain that, whatever passing estrangement might come between us, we should be united again—as we were. The joy of reunion was not to be disturbed by memories of disagreement, or by investigation into its grounds. And it may be that this is an issue which cannot be thought out to the end, because it is one which falls under Goethe's sentence: "Then only do we truly think when the matter of our thinking is one which cannot be thought out." The Imagination must supervene: and thought, unless it is imaginative, is false.

Max Plowman, no doubt, in the felicity where his eternal identity abides, is chiding me for my own abberations. I think in retrospect that in our prolonged debate about Marxism, he had the best of the argument. On this matter of spirit and body, I think I held a straighter course than he. I think, moreover, that were we to accept his account of the matter, we must also accept the conclusion to which it drove him: that he failed. "Three times I have tried to release the

prisoner and three times I have failed." I think, as I have said, that he did "release the prisoner," but not in the way that he desired and dreamed. And that is why his letters do not make the impression of failure; far from it, they are an inspiring record of a continuous triumph of the spirit over bodily weakness—the authentic triumph of the spirit. Though his heroic will and his unwearying embodiment of the joy of love did not enable him to secure health to his own body, it did enable him largely to ignore his sickness. There is no temptation for an imaginative mind to say "Physician, heal thyself!" to the man who declared: "I want my faith in the human spirit's power to assist the body in recovery from disease to become effective."

In those terms it is a reasonable faith: but to hold that it is possible for the human spirit to assist the body in recovery from disease in all circumstances, at any stage of disease, and even *in articulo mortis*, is a belief which, if put to the test, is bound to fail. If it did not fail, the whole of human life would be transformed in the twinkling of an eye; for there would be no Death any more. But I entirely refuse to believe that it failed through some deficiency in Max Plowman: it failed because he was attempting the impossible. And it is no adequate reply to invoke, as he did, the words of Jesus: "With God all things are possible." That is poetic hyperbole, not argument. It is not possible for God to annihilate physical death. For to annihilate death is to annihilate life: and life is the condition of the manifestation of God. An abstractly conceived God, a God of theory, might annihilate the conditions of his own manifestation. But not the God whom man experiences; above all, not the God whom Max Plowman experienced, distinct and wonderful to the Imagination in the essential persons of those he loved.

In this matter, Max Plowman, who understood Blake so intimately, departed from the doctrine of his master. Blake and Tim were, together with his illumined repudiation of the last war, one whole of experience which he felt called to understand. The ascension and death of Tim are perfectly described in the *Little Black Boy*, in the lines which begin:

> And we are put on earth a little space
> That we may learn to bear the beams of love. . . .

Max Plowman's failure in his three attempts to prove that love is curative of what would ordinarily be reckoned mortal disease was part of the process of understanding his experience. After the letter of 1935, which I have quoted, the emphasis on the curative power of love seems gradually to fade away; or, when it flashes out again, it is only to sink into a kind of acceptance. In 1937 there was yet another encounter with a dying man, of which he says simply, "Of the essential redeeming love, there wasn't enough in me—as ever, it seems."

I have no right to suggest that Max Plowman consciously abandoned his faith in the physically regenerative power of love. As we have seen, he abandoned his belief that the insufficiencies of others were the cause of his own "failure"; it was the insufficiency of love within himself. Whether he verily and indeed believed to the end that if his faith had been flawless, he would have been able to conquer physical death, I do not know. I should be sorry to believe that he did. For surely the true spiritual doctrine is not that perfect love can cast out death from the body, but that it casts out fear from the soul. By casting out fear from the soul, it reveals with the simplicity of sunlight, that Death is but the gateway to Life.

Max Plowman would never—even in the period of his completest confidence in the physically regenerative power of love—have challenged this spiritual doctrine. The question is whether to the end he believed it to be incomplete, so long as it held back from the faith in bodily regeneration. I cannot answer that. In its most moderate form—that the spirit "can assist the body in recovery from disease"—the belief is perhaps true. In its less moderate form—that "the life of the body is in the spirit, and if the body can be brought into harmony with the spirit, health results"—it is questionable. For what does bringing the body into harmony with the spirit really mean? Spirit cannot spiritualise the body in the sense of a physical regeneration. The spirit-body harmony comes from the side of spirit, and is a spiritual attitude towards the body: the "dear Brother Ass" of St. Francis. That attitude does not necessarily produce bodily health; but it does prevent the disorder of the body from infecting the soul. In its extreme form, that the joy of the spirit, educed by Love, can overcome deep-seated organic disease, it is, I believe, definitely false.

But this is theory. In the living life of loving persons, where and how shall the line be drawn? At what point shall the lover say to the beloved, in the grip of disease: "Now your mortal death, as far as human science can foretell, is a matter only of days. Dear heart, accept it and rebel no more.

> Men must endure
> Their going hence even as their coming hither.
> Ripeness is all.

Let us live the little rest of your life in the radiance of eternity, in the joy of the knowledge that we are forever in the hands of God." How shall the lover take upon himself the awful responsibility of saying this, even though he believes it to be true? Yet how shall the lover shirk this responsibility, and not be faithless to love? Faced by this choice the human heart may well become a sensitive stone: for between those rival paths is a desert land where the soul wanders and is lost.

Shall the verdict on such a one be (as Max Plowman, at one time, would have pronounced it) that no true lover *can* believe that the death of the beloved is imminent, because to love indeed is to have faith? But faith in what? In the possibility of a miracle? Of God working a miracle, or of our working one? Or of our co-operating with God, by faith, in working one?

All these things, it seems to me, are something other than love: the love which is truly and purely spiritual. That love Max Plowman himself expressed when he said, of his experience with Tim, "He existed in his own sovereign individuality; and that was enough. What happened was *something else.* Whether he lived or died was *something else.*" But Max Plowman was not required to *say* that to a boy of twelve. But he would have been required to say it to a grown man or a grown woman. Would he have said it—or something different?

I do not know. What is certain from the letters is that Max Plowman moved steadily from imputing his failure to mediate the physically regenerative power of love to the fault of others towards ascribing it solely to the deficiency of love in himself. Yet I do not feel, either from the letters themselves or my memory of him in his last years that this sense of failure and deficiency oppressed him, as it surely would, if it had been deeply felt. What happened (I think) was that in course of

time and experience the issue lost its urgency: it ceased to be real. And when he said in 1937 that the essential redeeming love in him was insufficient—"as ever, it seems"—he was saying perfunctorily something that was hardly more than a matter of form. Perhaps the truth of the matter is contained in his own profound words:

> "Nothing is nobler than the power to close the mind when it is like to bleed to death. And nothing is more redemptive of the individual, and of the world, than the power to open it and lay it bare and show that the blind Fury itself can be accepted and surmounted by consciousness."

There was the time when Max Plowman had to close his mind; and to believe the impossible. With the years the need gradually departed. He felt himself urged in another direction; and did not stay for a final answer to his former question, or a final settlement of the account with himself. Whether or not Love should or could repel death from the individual person seemed of little moment beside the manifest truth that Love could and should overcome man's self-inflicted death by mechanised war. To accept death as it comes to the individual person might or might not be necessary—it might indeed be the will of God: but to accept the mechanism of deliberate mass-murder—this no man who had known the reality of Love could do for one moment without defacing the image and likeness of God in himself.

To this cause in its fullness the last years of Max Plowman's life were entirely dedicated. "A pattern of life," he said, "that is essentially exclusive of war is what we have got to create." In the service of that cause he and I were united, or reunited: and are united still.

KARL MANNHEIM

One thing was certain to those who had the privilege of direct contact with Karl Mannheim: that his was an eminent mind. It stood above others; it comprehended more; saw the great issues of our time in a wider perspective. More than this, he was pervaded with the sense of their urgency. The degree of his detachment was balanced by the degree of his identification. If he had stood aloof in order to understand, it was only in order that he might participate in the struggle with a full consciousness of what was, and was not possible: he was a master-strategist—the wisest I have known of the forces of light. And he was heroic. One felt that he was profoundly tired, his heart as it were soaked through with the weariness of bitter disappointment; yet he was indefatigable, determined to spend himself to the uttermost, in his mission of spreading awareness of the human predicament and creating the capacity of response to its demands.

It is beyond my competence to attempt an objective appraisal of his obviously great contribution to sociological thought. I can do no more than elucidate some of the constant stimulus he applied to my own mind. And here I must premise that I found myself, from the beginning of my contact with him, in instinctive sympathy with his mode of thinking. Though the range and resources of his knowledge were far superior to my own, from the outset he confirmed in me a conviction that the prevalent social and political thinking of today was too abstract or too rigid or too emotional. It was not engaging with the events themselves. The crying need was for minds which could think on many levels at once. In Mannheim I responded to one who had made himself a master of this flexibility of thought, and who encouraged me in my stumbling efforts to attain it. He had a rare genius for the Socratic midwifery appropriate to an age of sickeningly swift and radical change: for helping to bring to birth a new mode of thought that should be at once instrumental and directive in the process of our time.

The names he gave to this were not entirely happy. Neither "planned thinking", nor "thinking at the level of planning",

were calculated to ring a bell in the unprepared mind. He more nearly hit the mark with his slogan, "Planning for Freedom". That, at least, defined the main purpose of the new mode of thinking, in a phrase which contained the element of paradox necessary to distinguish it; and since it is of the essence of the new thinking that it should be purposeful in a new sense, the slogan comes near to fulfilling the function of a definition. Moreover, it indicates a relation which Mannheim's thinking certainly had to that of Marx. Marx's dictum: "The philosophers have interpreted history, it is our task to change it", was the first parent of the school of thought of which Mannheim was the brilliant exponent. But Mannheim had profited, as no orthodox Marxist could possibly do, by the subsequent experience of mankind. He was totally immune from the dogmatism of positing a single motivation of social change, though he allowed full weight to the economic. But he saw, very clearly, that Marx's thinking was conditioned by a particular social situation, which had passed away.

In substance his thesis, as compared to Marx's, was that the social revolution had occurred, in Russia and Germany, to the disastrous accompaniment of revolutionary violence, but it had taken place no less in other highly industrialized societies. The political and social problem was to avert dictatorship, which was a crude surgical operation on society —in itself a confession of failure—rather a rational and remedial adjustment. For such a rational adjustment the democracies were equipped. The problem was to induce them to make proper use of their equipment. To conceive of the situation, as the Communists do *de fide*, as one in which dictatorship must succeed, while the democracies must fail, in solving the problem, is to misconceive it entirely. The fact is that "the democracies have not yet found a formula to determine which aspects of the social process should be controlled by regulation, and the dictatorships cannot see that interfering with everything is not planning".

Thus, the concept of "revolution" is itself misleading and irrelevant. Revolution is a consequence and not a cause. It is the consequence of the sudden disintegration of socially established attitudes which results from collective insecurity:

it is the concomitant and index of the failure of a society to make a rational adjustment to the profound changes in its technical and structural foundations. Where such adjustment is not made, collective insecurity follows, and the irrationality of revolution and war erupts from the depths of a national or international society which has not discovered how to organize and integrate the impulses to violence. To Mannheim we may go for the deeper and disquieting obverse of Mr Churchill's world-famous epigram: "Never was so much owed by so many to so few"'

> "There has seldom been a generation which was less willing for petty sacrifice and more likely to pay the supreme one without even knowing why."

That was, I believe, written in 1935; and it was, alas, to be prophetic even of many of those who earned Mr. Churchill's famous eulogy.

Out of this context emerges the meaning of Mannheim's concept of "planning". It is the outcome and purpose of the thinking of rational beings who have achieved a higher level of consciousness. Higher than what? Than the unco-ordinated, unsynthesized thinking of the specialized sciences, or the dogmatic religious psychologies of the nature of Man, conceived in abstraction from society. No doubt, Mannheim himself could be charged with dogmatism when he asserts, pretty peremptorily, that man is transformable, and implies all human ideologies have a social origin. But the reply is that, self-evidently, Man is Man-in-Society; and conscious control of society is the form necessarily taken by any realistic effort towards human self-control. There is no danger, provided we understand clearly that control of society is essentially a means—the only means—to secure and enlarge the freedom of man, by preventing him from remaining the slave of blind social forces, which seem to him impersonal precisely because they are generated by his own "free" activities. "Planning" is the activity of consciousness whereby man escapes from the bondage of false freedom, which is the freedom to destroy himself by defect of consciousness, into authentic freedom: the condition established for him by a society which is consciously and conscientiously self-regulated.

"Planning" is thus—to use one of Mannheim's own definitions —"foresight deliberately applied to human affairs so that the social process is no longer merely the product of conflict and competition". Not, of course, a Utopia in which conflict and competition are totally eliminated from the social process, but where they are regulated and confined to spheres in which they are socially beneficent.

At this point it becomes evident that Mannheim's primary objective was to educate his contemporaries into a new conception of freedom. Not to reconcile them to the misleading notion that planning, in the current sense of the word, was compatible with freedom (that is to say, some planning with some freedom, both of the old and familiar style) but to persuade them to a radical change of both concepts, so that planning and freedom were understood to be complementary and interdependent. In a kind of primitive and elemental way men do understand this. They appreciate the necessity of government, in order to secure any real freedom at all; they appreciate the necessity of self-government, or democracy, in order that their freedom may be enlarged, and made more rational, by their willing consent to their own government. But at this point there is, or there threatens to be, a hiatus. Men continue to demand and to exercise freedoms of a type that are obsolete and anachronistic, because they set in motion impersonal social forces which undermine the collective security and open the gates to the irruption of mass-irrationality. Contemporary examples of such insistence on anachronistic freedoms are the self-contradictory demand of Russia for entire national sovereignty, or the demand of the English coal-miners for a yet further increase in wages unrelated to any increase in output. The one directly diminishes the collective security of the world-society; the other, by intensifying the pressure towards domestic inflation, diminishes the collective security of the country.

Against dangers of this kind, Mannheim saw but one prophylactic: an increase in human rationality expressed in a new understanding of freedom. Of the way to achieve these he was certain: it was by a more comprehensive science of society based on a more objective analysis and a new synthesis. By that effort, the new and necessary type of thinking would

be evolved, which would be essentially dynamic, comporting a change in the thinker himself and setting him the task of changing others. Primarily, he envisaged the task as the education of an élite—the aristocracy within democracy without which it is an unworkable system—into a new understanding of modern society, and of the nature of the contemporary social process.

> "If anything creative emerges from the general disillusionment of an age which has witnessed the practical deterioration of the ideals of Liberalism, Communism and Fascism, it can only be a new experimental attitude in social affairs, a readiness to learn from all the lessons of history. But one can only learn if one has belief in the power of reason. For a time it was healthy to see the limitations of the ratio, especially in social affairs. It was healthy to realize that thinking is not powerful if it is severed from the social context and ideas are only strong if they have their social backing, that it is useless to spread ideas which have no real function and are not woven into the social fabric. But this sociological interpretation of ideas may also lead to complete despair, discouraging the individual from thinking about issues which will definitely become the concern of the day. This discouragement of the intelligentsia, which may lead them to too quick a resignation of their proper function as the thinkers and forerunners of a new society, may become even more disastrous in a social setting where more depends on what the leading élites have in mind than in other periods of history. The theory that thought is socially conditioned and changes at different periods in history is only instructive if its implications are fully realized and applied to our own age."

This suggests the one radical criticism which can be made of Mannheim's thought: that it ends in a universal relativism. I am sure the criticism cannot be sustained, though I could wish that Mannheim himself had more explicitly formulated the assumptions which he accepted as self-evident. He rebuts the criticism in this passage by saying that the theory that thought is socially conditioned is only instructive if its implications are realized and applied to our own age: which must mean that we are called upon consciously to submit our own thought to a social conditioning, to apply it to the actual social reality *in statu nascendi* and thereby to compel it to transcend itself, or pass beyond the limitations imposed by a

habit of abstraction and specialization. That, no doubt, in itself involves a moral choice; it is, as von Hügel would have said, a *costing* emancipation of thought. But that alone does not appear to guarantee that it will help the cat to jump the right way. What *is* the right way? Is there, on Mannheim's principles, any means of determining that? I am sure there is, although (as I say) I would prefer that he himself should have been more explicit about it. It is indicated in his declaration that one can only learn from all the lessons of history "if one has belief in the power of reason". The emphasis is on *power*. Another more direct indication is contained in a passage which is more fully quoted below. "Freedom of thought will not be established"—in a society planned for freedom—"because it is a virtue in itself, but because the unhampered exchange of opinion is the only guarantee of social progress".

Thus, the condition of rationality is the unhampered exchange of opinion. That alone is a rational society in which this condition is deliberately secured, by means appropriate to the real condition of the society, and only a rational society is capable of progress. From those propositions it seems to follow that progress is an advance in rationality. And rationality —the reason in the power of which one must believe—requires for its manifestation freedom of thought and expression. To maintain this, a rational society must proscribe those who would abolish or diminish this freedom.

Still, it may be said, we are not given a clear definition either of rationality or its power. Probably, no further definition is really possible. The *power* of reason will consist, mainly, in the power of such a society to appeal to the human reason as a manifest good, and to elicit the moral action of men in support and defence of it, as the sole guarantee of a continuous advance in truth and justice. In regard to this normative ideal—of the society "planned for freedom"—Mannheim's relativism amounts to no more than the recognition that "the chances of achieving this new society are, to be sure, limited. It is not absolutely predetermined. But this is where our new freedom begins." Man is free to reject or achieve it; to reject it through ignorance, or to achieve it through fuller consciousness. But he has only to understand

the human predicament, and the social situation, to devote himself to the task of achieving it. That is the effect of the "power of reason" in himself, and he must believe that it has the like power in others.

The purpose of sociology as Mannheim understood and practised it is to defend and strengthen the rational society. To that end the historical consciousness must be contemporary and dynamic. Marx expressed that truth in terms which are now crude and treacherous because they derived from a social situation which is past. The need is now for a dynamism that is truly contemporary, which takes account both of the fundamentally changed situation since the Communist Manifesto and of the processes which have caused that change. It is one of the tragedies of our time—perhaps the greatest—that the Communists of the West have been unwilling to make the adjustment to reality. They have clung to an outmoded orthodoxy which has led them to an absurdly partial interpretation of events, and a complete failure in rational anticipation: for which they have striven to compensate by an opportunism so outrageously cynical that it has corroded the very foundations of rationality. The degeneration of the profound insight of Marx into the fanatical religious doctrine that Stalinist Russia can do no wrong is one of the most astonishing phenomena of an astonishing age.

Of course, that phenomenon also needs to be understood, not merely condemned. The moral vacuum which this preposterous orthodoxy has come to occupy arises from the lack of a faith adequate to the real social situation; and that lack is largely due to the persistence of the ideology of a purely negative Liberalism which left fundamental doctrines to be decided by individual caprice, and deplored even a conscious affirmation of the principles of the social consensus on which it was founded. The distinctive economic doctrines of Liberalism have been entirely discarded, but the negative ideology persists at a time when the changed social structure imperatively demands a doctrine that is, if not more positive than itself, at least in sufficient harmony with it to give it relevant and effective guidance. This failure of the British intelligentsia, deeply infected by the anarchy of Liberalism, to produce a positive ethic (and metaphysic) of co-operation,

has helped to create the situation in which the sinister combination of fanaticism and cynicism, which goes by the name of Communism, not merely corrupts the young but, by its influence on men who hold key-positions among the workers, does much to hamper the incoherent effort of the nation to assert its own will to live.

It was, I think, no accident that Karl Mannheim, the central European, by birth a Hungarian, a German by choice in the pregnant days of the Weimar Republic, was driven to take refuge in this country, and became one of its most devoted citizens, and gave himself unsparingly to the work of making it conscious of its opportunity and its danger. I should describe his life-work, unhesitatingly, as an effort to give his adopted country a doctrine at once worthy of its best traditions, and moulded exactly on its real condition. Obviously, such a description is teleological. When his own decisive thinking was done, Mannheim was still a German, whose self-imposed duty it was to give the nascent democracy of the Weimar Republic a conscious philosophy. But the necessity which drove him to England was implicit in his own activity. England had become the only possible home for the peculiar synthesis of rationality and freedom for which he stood: the only country where it might be achieved. And it says something for England that shortly before his death he had been appointed to one of the "key-positions" by which he rightly set such store.

To educate the educators was his mission: to carry men's minds beyond the barren and unprofitable antithesis between planning and freedom, to make them aware at once that the rational control of society was necessary—in order that man, the really existent man, and not the atomistic figment of nostalgic fantasy, might control himself and his destiny—and that this control was the indispensable condition of freedom —real freedom and not the specious substitute for it that still fascinates so many backward-looking imaginations.

> "There are certain basic virtues which are essential to the maintenance of a planned society, and it is necessary that we should use all the resources of our education to create them. These basic virtues are not very different from those which the ethics of all world-religions, among others Christianity,

have held to be vital: co-operation, brotherly help and decency. This education is primarily needed to destroy the psychological anarchy of liberal capitalism, which is based on the artificial cultivation of certain exaggerated attitudes. One of these is the mania for competition, which springs not from the desire for objective achievement and community service, but from sheer self-centredness or very often from neurotic anxiety. A democratically planned society must thoroughly develop the new forms of freedom, but once developed it must defend them with the same zeal that any society shows in defence of its fundamental principles. Democracy ought to instruct its citizens in its own values instead of feebly waiting until its system is wrecked by private armies from within. Tolerance does not mean tolerating the intolerant. Once integration and equilibrium have been achieved in the sphere of elementary human relationships, there must be very far-reaching liberty on the higher planes of our spiritual life, especially freedom for intellectual discussion. But freedom of thought will not be established merely because it is a virtue in itself but because the unhampered exchange of opinion is the only guarantee of social progress."

Democracy, too, has its orthodoxy: but it is an orthodoxy which at the simple level of the essential social consensus is but workaday epitome of the ethical teaching of all high-religions, and at a higher level of consciousness is understood to be the indispensable condition of the continuance of man's search for truth and freedom. If social progress is to be progress indeed, and not mere biological process, freedom must be understood as the willing consent to establish the social conditions of freedom. The obstinate endeavour to perpetuate forms of freedom which were appropriate only to a past condition of society—such for example as the freedom to do altogether as one likes with one's own, or the much vaunted consumer's choice—coming, as they do, into direct conflict with the organization necessary to keep society alive, only makes for confusion and inefficiency and a lowering of the standard of life which vastly diminishes the total freedom of society. What is true of the capitalist is equally true of the working-class, which adheres to the equally obsolete principle of selling its labour for the highest price it can extract from a seller's market. That price-control without wages-control is irrational, as we are now learning, is only one of the many exemplifications of one of Mannheim's basic axioms: that

partial planning is worse than no planning at all. The "freedoms" which the partial planner treats as sacrosanct, through ignorance or timidity, then become self-destructive.

The vital freedoms of democracy can be preserved and extended in modern society. Of that Mannheim was convinced. But he was equally convinced that there is only one way to do it: that is, consciously to organize society in such a fashion that these freedoms are guaranteed. The question for him, was whether existing democracy was capable of the effort—the small conscious sacrifice that would avert the great unconscious one. That depended primarily on the capacity of the democratic élites for a radical change in their modes of thought. It is at this point that Mannheim, though a Jew, came into intimate harmony with the most responsible Christian thinking of our day, which regards as the *note* of Christianity the willingness to suffer such a radical change in those habitual postulates of social thought which Mannheim distinguished as *principia media*: the principles which are of an age and not for all time, as they almost invariably are imagined to be.

The future is open. The impassioned objectivity of Mannheim's study of the social mechanism served merely to reinforce his convictions of this basic freedom of social man to choose and create his own destiny. But this freedom could not be exercised by abstract idealism: it was realized only in relevant and responsible action, that is to say, action which proceeded from a clear knowledge of those points and structures in society where positive influence was possible, and applied itself to some one of them. Herein lay at once the likeness and the extreme difference between Mannheim's thought and Marx's. All that Marx had—in unconscious deference to the *principia media* of his age—taken for granted as permanent in the structure of capitalist society, Mannheim had submitted to a searching analysis based upon bitter experience. He turned the tables on Marx by demonstrating the Utopianism of his "scientific socialism". Yet he was the first to acknowledge the profound genius of his predecessor, of whom—in the positive and creative sense—he was one of the greatest disciples. A comparison and a contrast between the fate and fortune of these two German-Jewish refugees, with almost a century

between them, imposes itself: one fled from the collapse of German liberalism in the 1840's, the other from the collapse of German Social Democracy (of which Marx was the deity) in the 1930's. I would like to think that, in making Mannheim Professor of Education at London, England instinctively showed its recognition of what is necessary at this time of revolutionary change. It gave Marx freedom; it gave Mannheim the freedom and the task of teaching it how to preserve the freedom that it gave. None was better fitted to fulfil it. *Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit.*

"I have sometimes wondered, in the reading", wrote Dryden in the dedication to *The Spanish Friar*, "what was become of those glaring colours which amazed me in *Bussy d'Ambois* on the theatre; but when I had taken up what I supposed a fallen star, I found I had been cozened with a jelly; nothing but a cold, dull mass, which glittered no longer than it was shooting; a dwarfish thought, dressed up in gigantic words, repetition in abundance, looseness of expression, and gross hyperboles; the sense of one line expanded prodigiously into ten; and, to sum up all, uncorrect English, and a hideous mingle of false poetry and true nonsense; or, at best, a scantling of wit, which lay gasping for life, and groaning beneath a heap of rubbish. A famous modern poet used to sacrifice every year a Statius to Virgil's manes; and I have indignation enough to burn a *D'Ambois* annually to the memory of Jonson."

The judgment of George Chapman's most famous play could hardly be more severe; yet, sentence by sentence, it could be amply justified. Nevertheless, it is unjust. Whatever *Bussy d'Ambois* may be, it is not what Dryden's total verdict suggests it is, namely, a mass of empty rant once made endurable or enchanting by some great and popular actor, who tore a passion to tatters. We who read it now, and never had the opportunity of being amazed by it on the boards, feel none of the asperity of disillusion which Dryden felt. On the contrary, our difficulty is to imagine it a popular success: for assuredly those "grotesque and grandiose" tirades, when hurled at them by the actors, could never have been understood by any audience. They might almost as well have been uttered in another language than our own. All we can conceive is that the language seemed like a continuous roar of sullen thunder, sometimes gathering into a lightning flash.

But, with all deference to Dryden's great authority, the lightning is authentic; and, what is more, wholly Chapman's own. His crashes of magnificence, rare and shortlived though they are, are like nothing else in the Elizabethan drama. They are strange, with a strangeness of their own; and we are

utterly unprepared for them when they come. Consider Bussy's dying speech:

> O my heart is broken!
> Fate nor these murtherers, Monsieur nor the Guise,
> Have any glory in my death, but this,
> This killing spectacle, this prodigy:
> My sun is turn'd to blood, in whose red beams
> Pindus and Ossa (hid in drifts of snow
> Laid on my heart and liver) from their veins
> Melt like two hungry torrents, eating rocks,
> *Into the ocean of all human life*
> *And make it bitter, only with my blood.*
> O frail condition of strength, valour, virtue,
> In me (like warning fire upon the top
> Of some steep beacon, on a steeper hill)
> Made to express it: like a falling star
> Silently glanc'd that like a thunderbolt
> Look'd to have stuck and shook the firmament.

The four lines which lead to those two great ones are darkness palpable; what follows is commonplace and so anticlimax; but the stream of Bussy's blood has such potency of bitterness that it compels the whole into some strange, writhing and tortuous life. As again and again with Chapman, one feels he does not know what he is doing; but that even in the kind of his unconsciousness, there is a strangeness. Once more, it is his own; quite unlike anybody else's unconsciousness.

Consider, too, Monsieur's description of Bussy when he is bent on provoking the Guise to combat.

> His great heart will not down, 'tis like the sea,
> That partly by his own internal heat,
> Partly the stars' daily and nightly motion,
> Their heat and light, and partly of the place
> The divers frames, but chiefly by the moon,
> Bristled with surges, never will be won,
> (No, not when th' hearts of all those powers are burst)
> *To make retreat into his settled home*
> *Till he be crown'd with his own quiet foam.*

It is almost impossible to believe that Chapman was deliberately working for an effect which largely depends on the contrast with the pedantic detail of the natural philosophy which has gone before. His method of employing his commonplace book into the drama is too habitual to allow us to suppose that it was calculated here. But equally it is almost

impossible to suppose that he was unaware of the lovely calm he had captured in his final lines. And it becomes quite impossible when we compare them with Tamyra's invocation:

> Now all ye peaceful regents of the night,
> Silently-gliding exhalations,
> Languishing winds, and murmuring falls of waters,
> Sadness of heart and ominous secureness,
> Enchantments, dead sleeps, all the friends of rest,
> That ever wrought upon the life of man,
> Extend your utmost strengths, and this charmed hour
> Fix like the Centre! Make the violent wheels
> Of Time and Fortune stand, and great Existence
> (The Maker's treasury) now not seem to be
> To all but my approaching friends and me!

There, without a doubt, is the work of a conscious poet, and, still more interesting in the case of Chapman, in whose work such evidences are very rare, there we have (or may guess that we have) the expression of a recognisable and profound emotional experience. We would hazard the assertion that the man who wrote those lines had *felt* Night, and felt it deeply, and in no common way.

Now Chapman had commenced author some ten years before the writing of *Bussy*, and his first poem (to the publication of which he was urged by Marlowe) was *The Shadow of Night*. The theme, or the thesis, of that curious poem is that Night, which brings man freedom from his day-time slavery to the sense of sight, is the opportunity of Philosophy and the realm of Truth. At first, when we read the poem, it is difficult to persuade ourselves that Chapman is wholly serious. The mixture of the grotesque and grandiose is as disturbing in his earliest as in his latest work. But, apart from the simple consideration that Chapman must have been driven by some compelling motive to make his début with a poem on a theme that was bound to be unpopular, one is finally forced by the quality of the poem itself to the conclusion that Chapman was in deadly earnest. He did, so to speak, "really believe in" Night; and though nowhere in the "hymns" which compose the poem did he approach the convincing beauty of Tamyra's invocation to Night, he was completely serious in his strange enthusiasm. At one moment he seems almost to succeed in uttering his complex emotion.

Rich-taper'd sanctuary of the blest,
Palace of ruth, made all of tears and rest,
To thy black shades and desolation
I consecrate my life.

Night was evidently for him in some sort the presence of God, in which his soul, freed from the urgent solicitations of sense, was like the pool of Bethesda troubled only by angelic visitations. Then "the sadness of heart and ominous secureness" of which Tamyra speaks welled up like a dark fountain within him. He felt himself to be in communion.

If we translate his evident experience in such terms as these, we moderns feel an instinctive motion of sympathy with Chapman. But Chapman had inherited an old and severe philosophic tradition, with a vocabulary that is unfamiliar to us; and what is more, he had inherited the impulse to render to himself a philosophic account of his experience. Thus he would have said that in the presence of Night "the chaos of the world was worked into digestion"; and likewise the inward chaos which continually threatened man through the siege of the senses. Or he would have said that by the aid of Night he achieved that victory over himself which the wounded Strozza achieves and expounds in *The Gentleman Usher*:

Yet the judicial patience I embrace
(In which my mind spreads her impassive powers
Through all my suff'ring parts) expels their frailty;
And rendering up their whole life to my soul
Leaves me naught else but soul . . .
Humility hath raised me to the stars
In which (as in a sort of crystal globe)
I sit and see things hid from human sight.

The philosophy is a kind of semi-Christian Stoicism: by the operation of the ethical will the natural is free to be transformed into the supernatural. The effect of Night, to use the same analogy, is like the effect of divine Grace. It is a boon granted to suffering and disordered man, clean apart from his own efforts.

His reverence for Night—and it would be unfair to Chapman to use a lesser word—was thus philosophical and religious. To be more precise, it is by virtue of his reverence for Night that his philosophy, which is a kind of Stoicism, becomes

religious: for we may say that the conception or experience of divine Grace (in some one of its manifestations) is necessary to distinguish a religion from a philosophy. Chapman appears to have had both the conception and the experience of Grace in his religion of Night. Then, and then alone, he seems to have been touched with the peace which passeth all understanding. It was, for him, the moment of vision: " Day of deep students, most contentful Night!"

We suggest that this religion of Chapman's deserves to be taken seriously, not in the sense that it is an adequate religion, but that it was the serious effort of a serious mind, at a moment when the traditional religious framework of human experience had been shattered for the bolder spirits, to create for himself at least a religious substitute for religion, which should do justice to the certain values of his own experience and be worthy of acceptance by his intellect. It was, in intention at least, an effort to make Stoicism a religion. It may seem a strange effort, but the close reader of Chapman will be eager to contend that it was a genuine one. Nor should it be forgotten that he was the intimate friend of Marlowe, whose atheism was of the tough and serious sort, and that it was at Marlowe's instigation that *The Shadow of Night* was published. Marlowe seems to have recognised at least the seriousness and the strangeness of Chapman's endeavour.

However that may be, the endeavour itself can only have been based on an unusual idiosyncrasy of temperament and experience. Chapman appears to have been aware of this.

> Ye living spirits then, *if any live*
> *Whom like extremes do like affections give*,
> Shun, shun this cruel light, and end your thrall . . .

That is a strong statement, which betrays Chapman's consciousness that he was a queer fellow. And, indubitably, *The Shadow of Night* is a queer poem. There is something strange about it; it strikes us as at once extravagant and earnest. It puts forward a claim to private revelation in terms so unfamiliar that we are at first bewildered. We are loth to admit that Chapman can be serious, and we are forced to that hypothesis rather by the ultimate absurdity that awaits any other assumption than by the immediate power of the poem itself. But once we have accepted, as a real hypothesis, that

Chapman may be entirely serious, not only do the evidences crowd upon us that it is the true one, but we seem to have a clue to the solution of another problem besides that of Chapman himself.

Ever since Professor Minto, sixty years ago, put forward the theory that Chapman was "the rival poet" of Shakespeare's sonnets, it has commended itself to a steadily increasing number of students of Shakespeare and Chapman; and they have felt that Minto was not exaggerating when he claimed to be innocent of presumption in saying "that he is so obvious that his escape from notice is little short of miraculous." Indeed the theory that Chapman was the rival poet seems to belong to an altogether different order from any other theory whatsoever concerning Shakespeare's sonnets. It is a necessary instrument of Elizabethan literary criticism. The more one reads, both of Shakespeare and Chapman, the more self-evident it is: and it would be true to say that the critic who, after submitting himself to the considerable volume of Chapman's works, seeks to give an exact impression of his enigmatic poetic personality, has the unique experience of knowing that it has been done already, with a perfection of good humour and generosity, by no less a hand than Shakespeare's own. The answer to the question: what *was* Chapman? is Shakespeare's 86th Sonnet.

> Was it the proud full sail of his great verse
> Bound for the prize of all too precious you
> That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
> Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?
> Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
> Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
> No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
> Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
> He, nor that affable familiar ghost
> Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
> As victors of my silence cannot boast;
> I was not sick of any fear from thence:
> But when your countenance fill'd up his line,
> Then lack'd I matter: that enfeebled mine.

That astonishing sonnet—for its harmony of dignity and persiflage in verse of incomparable diction and melody is astonishing—is an achievement of a kind for ever beyond

Chapman's scope. In a way, it is more than generous to Chapman. Chapman's verse never wholly merited the splendid tribute of the first line; neither was Chapman's bitterness towards Shakespeare adequately punished by so smiling and so royal a gesture. But there is something of importance to be said on Chapman's side. Uncouth and grotesque though he was in *The Shadow of Night*, he was philosophical in a way Shakespeare was not philosophical. Shakespeare had no need to be philosophical in this way. He was one of those prodigies of Nature to whom the expression of life came as easily as life itself. He was not tormented by the desire to find an intellectual answer to the riddle of existence; to experience existence as he could experience it sufficed him. Like his successor Keats, he could and must wait "to feel it on his pulses." But Chapman was different. The world of sense, of immediate experience, was a world from which he was debarred. One might search through all his works for the incontrovertible evidence of the thing *seen*, almost in vain. In the outward and visible world he was a peering exile. No possibility of communion was there for him; and, on the grim economic level, no patron either. But he had, as we believe and have tried to show, his authentic consolation; his moment

> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened.

It was the moment of Night, when "the cruel light" was withdrawn and the kingdom of sense in which he was a stranger was blotted out. If his nature was such that he must needs make of this deliverance a mystery revealed to him alone, he was not the first mystic to have sinned through pride. It was his misfortune, too, to be compelled to manifest his knowledge in the medium of poetry, where the supremacy of the simple and the sensuous and the passionate is such that the non-sensual is as close as the word itself to the nonsensical. None the less, if principles may be considered in themselves, apart from the mastery of their expression, Chapman represented a principle which was in itself not unworthy to be

counterposed to Shakespeare's: the metaphysical against the physical, the supra-sensuous against the sensuous.

> Since day or light, in any quality,
> For earthly uses do but serve the eye;
> And since the eye's most quick and dangerous use
> Enflames the heart, and learns the soul abuse . . .
> Since night brings terror to our frailty still
> And shameless day doth marble us in ill, . . .
> Come consecrate with me to sacred Night
> Your whole endeavours, and detest the light.
> No pen can anything eternal write
> That is not steep'd of humour of the Night.

It seems beyond all reasonable doubt that Shakespeare riposted genially to this (as Mr. Acheson was the first to show) with Biron's tender and fanciful encomium of Love, that "adds a precious seeing to the eye", in *Love's Labour's Lost*: of Love that is

> Subtle as Sphinx; as sweet and musical
> As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair;
> And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
> Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.
> Never durst poet touch a pen to write
> Unless his ink were temper'd with Love's sighs.

To Shakespeare, no doubt, it was a mere contest of wit in which he knew himself to be carelessly certain of victory. The evidence is that Chapman was the aggressor, for as I have pointed out elsewhere,* it is hardly possible to understand four lines from the second part of *The Shadow of Night*—

> Presume not then ye flesh-confounded souls
> That cannot bear the full castalian bowls
> Which sever mounting spirits from the senses
> To look in this deep fount for thy pretences—

save as a direct onslaught on *Venus and Adonis* and its motto:

> Vilia miretur vulgus: mihi flavus Apollo
> Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.

But this is not the occasion to enter into the details of an unequal literary quarrel between supreme natural genius and a turgid, self-conscious but sincere metaphysical mystic, save to remark that the manner of Chapman's discomfiture must have been bitter indeed to him. Shakespeare seems simply to have smiled at him, never to have taken him seriously either

* Shakespeare. By John Middleton Murry, pp. 50-51.

as a rival in poetry or to the favour of his patron, and in the very act of daffing aside his claim to special inspiration, vouchsafed "with invocation, fasting, watching yea, not without having drops of their souls like an heavenly familiar," written verse more obviously inspired than any Chapman was to compass in the whole of his long and laborious life.

There is indeed no comparison between the men, either as persons or poets; nor any point in comparing them, save as representing opposed principles. The opposition between them was that long afterwards defined by Keats as the opposition between the man of Character and the man of Genius; and, in fact, Chapman appears to have cut a sorrier figure than Mr. Benjamin Bailey when his character was put to the test. After pouring abuse on *Venus and Adonis* as the work of "a flesh-confounded soul", he stooped immediately afterwards to write *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* which, as Swinburne said, is foul "with the dry-rot of pedantic obscenity." From a certain height of judgment *Venus and Adonis* can be condemned as the work of "a flesh-confounded soul"; it is brimmed with the lust of the eye and the pride of life. But that the man who presumed to this height of judgement should immediately descend to a cold-blooded attempt to outdo it in sensuality in order to win the favour of a patron, puts him beyond the pale. Inevitably he achieved not the sensuous, but the obscene, and apparently, all for nothing.

In this respect Chapman is, indeed, an unedifying figure. One feels behind his work envy, and hatred and all manner of uncharitableness. But we cannot tell under what compulsions of poverty he may have suffered. He may have had more cause even than Shakespeare to wince at the recollection of having gored his own thoughts. At any rate, if we hold in check our own instinctive reactions to his deficient humanity, we can piece together the pattern of a peculiar and considerable nature. He was one for whom the opposition between sense and soul was never resolved. The experience of love appears to be totally absent from his work. Bussy's passion for Tamyra, for instance, is quite without humanity or reality; as such, no doubt, it is true to Bussy's "character", but it is completely unconvincing. And Bussy's 'comic' counterpart is to be found in Tharsalio, of *A Widow's Tears*. Like Bussy, he is

impressive. Whereas Bussy's overweening confidence is tragic, Tharsalio's, which being 'comic' has to be successful, is completed by an absolute cynicism. His vicarious wooing of Eudora, through Arsace, for cold pruriency anticipates the very worst of Wycherley. Yet, when we have said this, we must make an absolute distinction. There is no smell of corruption in *A Widow's Tears*. This is the cynicism not of a roué, but of a philosopher, or at least of a mediaeval monastic, towards the world and the flesh. And we may suppose that the convictions to which Clermont gives utterance in *The Revenge* are indistinguishable from Chapman's own:

> But I deny that any man doth love,
> Affecting wives, maid, widows, and women . . .
> So when humanity rules men and women
> 'Tis for society confind in reason.
> But what excites the bed's desire in blood
> By no means justly can be constru'd love;
> For when love kindles any knowing spirit
> It ends in virtue and effects Divine
> And is in friendship chaste and masculine.

Certainly, there is nothing in Chapman's writings which forbids us to take that profession at its face value. Neither in his tragedy or his comedy is there any trace of the familiar sentiment or passion of love. And even where, as in *An Humourous Day's Mirth*, his subject compels him to contemplate the possibility of a man falling in love with a woman, he treats it with a precise formality, and notably in accordance with Clermont's formula. Thus Dowsecer, having looked upon the picture, speaks in Chapman's familiar philosophic idiom:

> What have I seen? How am I burnt to dust
> With a new sun and made a novel phoenix!
> Is she a woman that objects the sight,
> Able to work the chaos of the word
> Into digestion? O divine aspect!
> The excellent disposer of the mind
> Shines in thy beauty, and thou hast not changed
> My soul to sense, but sense unto my soul;
> And I desire thy pure society
> But even as angels unto angels fly.

That is merely to show that Chapman's attitude is entirely consistent in the matter of human love. It is only in *Eastward Ho*, where in all probability neither the drafting nor the

plotting of the characters was his, that he comes remotely near depicting a credible human relation between a man and a woman.

If therefore we are to say that Chapman's mind was metaphysical, we must use the word in a more precise meaning than that in which it is applied to Donne. For Chapman, the world of sense seems always to have been a chaos. He was a stranger in it, and he could make nothing of it. The only conduct in it that he could approve was that of "the Senecal man", who, secure of his own contact with the divine reason, was completely unperturbed by sense or circumstance. But one feels, with Chapman, that his positive stoicism is more of a velleity than a conviction. He does not make at all the impression of having been a successfully Senecal man himself. But it is an ideal which he understands and approves. His other "ideas" of human nature are strangely limited. Besides the Senecal man, he portrays two other types: the natural man, and the "politician", the Machiavellian. All three are in reality very simple, and by their simplicity almost superhuman. The natural man is a prodigy of strength; the "politician" is a miracle-worker, a "medicine-man".

> A politician must like lightning melt
> The very marrow and not taint the skin

It is an effective description, though Chapman spoils it by a characteristic and extravagant elaboration; but it is naive.

These three simple types are Chapman's main clues to the human chaos. They are not on the same level. The natural man and the "politician"—the Lion and the Fox of Mr. Wyndham Lewis's interesting essay—are the thesis and the anti-thesis: the Senecal man, in some sort, the synthesis. But to describe them thus is to exaggerate the clarity of Chapman's thought. They rather represent a pattern to which he instinctively reverted, tendencies within the tumult of his own experience, than a clear scheme. But the pattern is sufficiently marked to be significant; and the curious inconsistencies of character between *Bussy* and *The Revenge* seem to show that this intellectual bias of Chapman's mind was powerful. The Guise, who is "politician" in the earlier, becomes "Senecal" in the later play; while the King makes precisely the opposite change—both in defiance of history. And the conclusion

seems fairly plain, when we remember that the same three-fold pattern reappears in *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*—"politician" and "natural" man respectively, with Cato for the "Senecal" hero,—that this was the way in which Chapman was impelled to think history.

In spite of this fairly persistent pattern, one feels that there was a curious discontinuity in Chapman's thinking. Its clarities are momentary and episodic, just as are (on the smaller scale) the intermittent clarities of his verse. But against this we must set the fact that he, unlike any other Elizabethan, had the determination to grapple with history which was really contemporary. Was there anything more to be made of it than he made in *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Biron*? Is not the vision of that drama the vision with which we see the period even to-day—the great noble pitted against the King, no longer a feudal superior but a national sovereign? Turbulence against the new order, individualism against universality, the part against the whole. One cannot challenge the main values of Chapman's picture, nor easily think of any contemporary who could have marshalled them so well. It is the details which confound us. Thus Biron's arguments, in his various great speeches, are in naked conflict with one another, and Chapman gives not the faintest indication that they are not on each occasion to be taken at their face-value. To interpret them psychologically as successive efforts in self-deception would be an anachronism. Of psychology, in this sense, Chapman is completely innocent.

At one moment, Biron, the man of war, maintains quite seriously that peace is unnatural.

> The world is quite inverted, virtue thrown
> At Vice's feet, and sensual Peace confounds
> Valour and cowardice, fame and infamy.

War is thus an end in itself, the only condition in which the true human values are manifest. He goes on:

> We must reform and have a new creation
> Of state and government, and on our Chaos
> Will I sit brooding up another world.
> I, who through all the dangers that can siege
> The life of man have forc'd my glorious way
> To the repairing of my country's ruins,
> Will ruin it again to re-advance it.

There is no lack of clarity here. Since in war someone must win, war is necessarily interrupted by intervals of peace and order. But these, though necessary, are unnatural. The only purpose of peace is to beget the means and opportunity of further war. The attitude may appear strange to the point of fantasy; but to the contemplative mind, viewing the Europe of the sixteenth century, and the behaviour of its famous soldiers, what other interpretation of their conduct was possible? In the next act, however, Biron opens a quite different argument: "We must not be more true to Kings than Kings are to their subjects." The doctrines of Machiavelli have been embraced by rulers, in treason against the true source of their authority, which is Religion. Because of this treason, "two abhorred twins . . . stern War and Liberty enter'd the world." With the decline of Religion,

> The lamp of all authority goes out
> And all the blaze of princes is extinct.
> Thus, as a poet sends a messenger
> Out to the stage to show the sum of all
> That follows after, so are kings' revolts
> And playing both ways with religion
> Fore-runners of afflictions imminent.

This is, indeed, no mean argument. But what is it doing in Biron's mouth? Some might attempt to find the answer to that question in Biron's next argument. He has at last obeyed the summons to court, and is playing cards in the King's presence. The king leaves the room, and Biron breaks into a bold eulogy of Philip II of Spain, who "with his divine philosophy" extirpated idolatry throughout the world, employed the gold of America only to propagate his empire

> and his empire
> Desired t' extend so that he might
> Extend religion through it, and all nations
> Reduce to one firm constitution
> Of piety, justice, and one public weal
> To which end he made all his matchless subjects
> Make tents their castles and their garrisons;
> True Catholics, countrymen and their allies;
> Heretics, strangers and their enemies.
> There was in him a magnaminity—
> *Mont.* To temper your extreme applause, my lord,

Shorten and answer all things in a word,
The greatest commendation we can give
To the remembrance of that king deceas'd
Is that he spar'd not his own eldest son
But put him justly to a violent death
Because he sought to trouble his estate.
Bir. Is't so?

Biron is taken utterly aback, and at that moment "the King suddenly *enters*, having *determined what to do*". It is a splendid *coup de théâtre*, though it is not of Chapman's own invention; and it would be possible to hold that the previous argument on the decay of religion was merely to lead up to it. But so sustained an effort of psychological construction, which would pass unremarked on the stage, would be unparalleled in Chapman. Nor, for the same reason, is it possible to consider it as irony. What seems to be the simple fact is that Chapman had to make Biron say something. He was neither wholly conscious, nor wholly unconscious of its incongruity (for D'Auvergne's half-bantering remark on "deep discourses" suggests that the unconsciousness was not entire), but in a kind of half-lucid confusion.

Some such condition it is necessary to suppose behind most of Chapman's writing. He did not live in and through his characters at all; yet some compulsion drew him towards the high drama of the contemporary world. Where the problem of the world of existence was most baffling, there he must needs grapple with it. It is a queer paradox that the poet who, of all the Elizabethans, appears to have been the most withdrawn, the most solitary, the deepest wrapped in the toils of his own speculations, should have been the one pre-eminently allured to picture the tangled drama of contemporary policy and intrigue. Yet, in the judgment of a modern psychology of "compensation", the phenomenon may be natural enough. What is palpable is that Chapman did not understand the figures that fascinated him. We cannot blame him for that, for we are ourselves in no better case. These Renaissance super-men are beyond us, much more than they were beyond Chapman. The famous conclusion of Biron's outburst to La Brosse, the astrologer, gives us at any rate an authentic *sensation.*

Give me a spirit that on this life's rough sea
Loves t' have his sails fill'd with a lusty wind,
Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,
And his rapt ship run on her side so low
That she drinks water, and her keel plows air.
There is no danger to a man that knows
What life and death is; there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.

They may have actually felt like that; but it is rather a picture of how they appeared to Chapman. But of what really passed within their minds he gives us no credible account. The thought which he lends them is essentially the thought of the outside and amazed observer. We have only to compare them with figures like Shakespeare's Faulconbridge and Hotspur to see the difference. Shakespeare's figures are human characters, spontaneous physical men whom we instinctively understand; Chapman's are confused and portentous, and the more portentous because of their confusion. But the confusion is not theirs, it is Chapman's. He cannot identify himself with them, neither can he anatomise them. They are creatures of another kind, at whose nature he can only grope, and fill out their design with his own gropings, as when Biron compares himself with the animals:

Amongst them the lion
Serves not the lion, nor the horse the horse,
As man serves man: when men most show their spirits
In valour, and their utmost dare to do,
They are compared to lions, wolves and boars;
But, by conversion, none will say a lion
Fights as he had the spirit of a man.
Let me then in my danger now give cause
For all men to begin that simile.

The superman, or super-animal, which Chapman's thought there reaches after; the man, whose manly part, or divine reason, is merely the means to a fuller indulgence of the lion part, not to control it, is the creature who fascinates Chapman's gaze. Against him, on a lower level, is ranged "the politician", whose reason is the tool of his advantage. In the conflict between the lion-man and the politician, the lion-man has Chapman's sympathy and ours. But beyond them both is the Senecal man, whose lion-part is active only at the call of

reason and in defence of right and justice—like the "absolute Clermont", and like Biron's King. By such men alone, the chaos of the world is "brought into digestion". The justice they uphold derives from reason, which is the divine element within them. By obeying it, they are "one with the All"; by extending its dominion they cause the whole to triumph over the unruly part.

That was the substance of Chapman's philosophy: a Stoicism, coloured by personal experience, and prepared at any moment to ally itself with Christianity. The main outlines are clear; but the applications are confused, as though the material which he sought to pattern by its means were fluid and elusive. And indeed it was. How far were the new national monarchs disciples of Reason, or the order they enforced the order of Justice? A little later the chaos of the world would drag from even an Oliver Cromwell the admission that any order was better than none. And the politician was as often the chosen instrument of the new national monarchy as he was the servant of mere princely tyranny. It was not easy for the philosopher to find the clue to it all. But Chapman, with all his confusions and his pedantry, makes upon us the impression of a man more conscious than others of the strangeness of the age in which he lived. He may not have been wholly deliberate, but his choice of themes is that of a man who is aware of the Renaissance as a European happening. It is something obscure and portentous and elemental. An old order is gone, a new chaos is come; and the signs of a new order yet are hard to discern.

The thought and the phrase recur continually in Chapman, both of the macrocosm and the microcosm. Instinctively, one compares Chapman's use with Othello's sudden words:

> When I love thee not
> Chaos is come again.

The packed suggestion of this is diffused, after Chapman's fashion, in the words of Montsurry to Tamyra.

> I know not how I fare; a sudden night
> Flows through my entrails, and a headlong chaos
> Murmurs within me which I must digest
> And not drown her in my confusions
> Which was my life's joy, being best inform'd.

Montsurry himself is not one of Chapman's tragic figures; he hovers between a lay-figure, like so many of Chapman's subsidiary characters, and a poltroon. But take away from the description of Montsurry, which as it stands might serve for a description of Othello, the suggestion that there had been a moment when the chaos was informed, and it would serve admirably to describe the condition of Chapman's lion-men. And just as the order within the Senecal man is one with the order of the divine reason that seeks to inform the world, so the chaos within a lion-man is one with the chaos of the age.

The impressiveness of Chapman is that his tragedies at their best do convey this sense of "murmuring chaos," both positively and negatively: positively, because the lion-men are the heroes, and negatively, because Chapman's failure to impose his philosophical pattern on his material reinforces the impression which is concentrated in his heroes. They are felt to be the creatures of their total environment; the obscurity and tension that is diffused through the whole drama comes to a head in them. This singular effect has been ascribed to "a moral confusion" in Chapman; and the phrase, if it were used precisely, might serve. But what we generally understand by a moral confusion is the kind of moral insensitiveness which is evident in such a poet as Fletcher, and which made him congenial to the Restoration mind. Chapman's confusion is entirely different; it is that of a man defeated in a genuine effort to comprehend. It is his intellectual seriousness which, being baffled creates the strange atmosphere of his tragedy, and makes him the half-conscious *vates* of an era when an old great order had crumbled, and the emergence of a new seemed doubtful.

Probably, we succumb too easily to the magic of Shakespeare. He tells us, in enchanted accents, what we would like to believe concerning his age, and it seems almost perverse to break the spell by reflecting that what Shakespeare has to tell us was never true of any age. It is the kind of thing by which any age would be enchanted, but in which no age would ever find the reflection of itself. Jonson may have been using a great commonplace when he declared that Shakespeare was not of an age but for all time; but in its most exact sense it is true. There is singularly little of the Elizabethan in Shakes-

peare; yet he is become, for most of us, the epitome of that great period, whereas he is, in fact, the means by which we humanize or idealize it to our liking. Through him, we digest the chaos. From Chapman we receive a grim reminder of what it was; and with it awakens a sense of sympathy for the embittered philosopher who had a grudge against Shakespeare for his trick of alchemy. Probably Chapman felt angry with the enchanter, who seemed to him to evade reality, instead of wrestling with it, who took "the plain way to barbarism" and "poesy as pervial as oratory", and dared to declare that Love was as potent a principle of harmony as Reason. The trouble was that Chapman's principle would not work, whereas Shakespeare's did—even though what it worked was a miracle.

We have said above that it is impossible to tell what compulsions of poverty Chapman may have suffered. That is to exaggerate our ignorance, for it happens that one of Chapman's best poems—*To M. Harriots*—is rich with autobiographical material. Harriots was a philosopher-friend of Chapman's, evidently in a position to prosecute his metaphysical studies without material anxieties: whom Chapman addresses thus:—

> Thus as the soul upon the flesh depends,
> Virtue must wait on wealth; we must make friends
> Of the unrighteous mammon, and our sleights
> Must bear the forms of fools or parasites.
> Rich mine of knowledge, O that my strange muse
> Without this body's nourishment could use
> Her zealous faculties, only t'aspire,
> Instructive light from your whole sphere of fire;
> But woe is me, what zeal or power so ever,
> My free soul hath, my body will be never
> Able t'attend; never shall I enjoy
> The end of my hapless birth; never employ
> That smother'd fervour that in loathed embers
> Lies swept from light, and no clear hour remembers.
> O, had your perfect eye organs to pierce
> Into that chaos whence this stifled verse
> By violence breaks; where, glow-worm-like, doth shine
> In nights of sorrow, this hid soul of mine; . . .
> And how her genuine forms struggle for birth
> Under the claws of this foul panther, earth,
> Then under all those forms you should discern
> My love to you in my desire to warn.

There are the genuine accents of a smothered and suffering soul, and incidentally a very good description of the qualities of Chapman's "strange muse." The ring of sincerity endures throughout the poem: so that when he pleads that his thoughts may be excused "as bent to other's aims", and speaks, with a humility as affecting as it is unexpected, of Homer's "seven books which my hand hath dressed in rough integuments", we realize suddenly that Chapman was indeed a man at grips with adversity, a philosopher born, struggling as a literary hack in the Elizabethan Grub Street.

Were there no other evidence than this, it might perhaps be thought that Chapman was only one of the many professional men of letters who have dreamed that, had they been free from the "strong necessity" of keeping their bodies rather than their souls alive, they would have done more nobly than they did; and that he, in believing that his true bent was philosophy, was the victim of a dear illusion. But apart from the manifest philosophical bias of his tragedies, there is a most substantial and impressive piece of evidence in another of Chapman's poems. *The Tears of Peace* is a philosophic poem of a very high order indeed; which has never received the attention it deserves. It is both beautiful and profound; it gives a truer idea of Chapman's intellectual stature and religious sincerity than any other single work of his; and it is sustained throughout by a gravity of impassioned thought which burns his alembicated language into a noble simplicity. The Peace who speaks in this remarkable poem—to which we know of no similar in Elizabethan literature: even Fulke Greville is commonplace beside it—is at once the peace of understanding, and the peace which passes understanding; and the essence of Chapman's argument is that they are the same peace.

> But the effect
> Proper to perfect learning—to direct
> Reason in such an act as that it can
> Turn blood to soul and make both one calm man,
> So making peace with God.

Read "wisdom" for "learning"—and that is what Chapman meant—and it would be hard to find in all our literature a nobler expression of the creed of Christian Stoicism. And this

is not a high spot in a characteristic Chapman chaos. On the contrary, the poem is sustained throughout on the same level of noble thought and lucid expression. Only *The Address to M. Harriots* can be compared with it; and that is a much smaller thing. If Chapman is to be judged by a single poem, then assuredly it is by *The Tears of Peace* that he must be judged. And that is not only a deeply impressive poem in itself; but it is the signal justification of the claim which he makes, with such unexpected modesty, in his apologetic address to Harriots.

In both these poems the thought of his beloved Night recurs. Beautifully and sadly to Harriots he speaks of "his stifled verse,"

> Where glow-worm-like doth shine
> In nights of sorrow this hid soul of mine,

and the verse itself is warrant of its truth. But even more notable, after the culmination of *The Tears of Peace* in a statement of Christian experience impossible save to a truly religious nature, he breaks into this:

> And thus because the gaudy vulgar light
> Burns up my good thoughts, form'd in temperate night,
> Rising to see the good moon oftentimes—
> Like the poor virtues of these vicious times—
> Labour as much to lose her light as when
> She fills her waning horns; and how, like men
> Rais'd to high places, exhalations fall
> That would be thought stars; I'll retire from all
> The hot glades of ambition, company
> That with their vainness makes this vanity,
> And cool to death in shadows of this vale.

There we have a glimpse of the veritable Chapman in his habit as he lived: the quiet and meditative scholar, the lover of peace and night, a true philosopher and a true poet, with the capacity to be both together, but starved of opportunity. Yet the smothered fervour shines always through the embers of his stifled verse; and sometimes makes them incandescent with the fire divine.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE CUCKOO

Last year I first heard the cuckoo in the early morning of April 24th. Twice, at least, in the four previous years I have heard it first on April 23rd. By tradition, April 23rd is the date of Shakespeare's birthday in 1564. It is challenged nowadays. Sir Edmund Chambers has pointed out that all we have legal evidence for is that *Guglielmus filius Johannes Shakspere* was baptized on April 26th, 1564. But a tradition is something, after all.

Anyhow, its uncertainty does not worry me. On the contrary, it pleases my fancy to think of Shakespeare's arrival as a little uncertain, like the cuckoo's. Somewhere roundabout April 23rd, Shakespeare was born—on that day, also, he died—somewhere roundabout April 23rd, the cuckoo is pretty sure to make itself audible again in my part of the country.

The coincidence is satisfying. Its mere simplicity is magical. It is positively childish. Not too good to be true, but too good to be false. I think of Keats's nightingale:

> Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,
> No hungry generations tread thee down—

and, God knows, that is wonderful enough. But more wonderful still is the fact that Shakespeare's nightingale—if I may put it so—is the cuckoo. For the voice of the cuckoo is at once unearthly and elemental. Could anything be simpler than that call?

As if on purpose to reassure me that my imagination is not fantastical, Shakespeare himself (and Shakespeare alone to my mind), has captured in words the simple magic of the cuckoo:

> The finch, the sparrow and the lark
> The plainsong cuckoo gray.

"The plainsong cuckoo gray". That *is* the cuckoo; that is perhaps the answer to the question of a lesser, but a true and noble poet:

> Shall I call thee bird
> Or but a wandering voice?

It is typical too of Shakespeare's answer to most questions. To "Either, or?" he replies: "Neither, both". And just as

Shakespeare alone has caught the essential cuckoo between the opposites of earthiness and ethereality, so he alone has recorded, with a simplicity in tune with the nakedness of the fact, what in the human world would be called the tragedy of the cuckoo:

> He was but as the cuckoo is in June,
> Heard, not regarded.

When, in June, the cuckoo's voice is become familiar, monotonous and importunate, I find myself automatically repeating those words. They are just a bare statement of fact. "The poetry", as Wilfred Owen said of a greater theme, "is in the pity"; and that is where, in this matter anyhow, it ought to be.

But if the cuckoo is the victim of a tragedy, he is no less the villain of one. That also is duly recorded, without emphasis or exaggeration, by Shakespeare:

> And being fed by us you used us so
> As that ungentle gull, the cuckoo-bird
> Useth the sparrow; did oppress our nest;
> Grew by our feeding to so great a bulk
> That even our love durst not come near your sight
> For fear of swallowing; but with nimble wing
> We were enforced, for safety sake, to fly.

The phrase: "that ungentle gull, the cuckoo-bird," satisfies me wholly. Not only does it fit and harmonise with "the plain-song cuckoo gray"; but there is in it a happy suggestion of the hobbledehoy clumsiness of the young cuckoo. No cunning plotter he, but just a loutish force of Nature—an "ungentle gull".

> For you know, nuncle,
> The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long
> That it had it head bit off by its young.

That is the cuckoo in its own world—the rather grim world of pre-human Nature to which the human world in *King Lear* is on the point of reverting. But there is a realm between, where the human becomes animal indeed: non-moral, immoral if you like, but by no means red in tooth and claw. It is the human lapse into this reprehensible but not cruel animality, of which the cuckoo is the time-honoured harbinger. And of this also, Shakespeare is the infallible poet.

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks;
When turtles tread and rooks and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then on every tree
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! O word of fear
Unpleasing to a married ear!

It is all very wicked, and natural, and delightful. A charming but a dangerous time this, when the sap begins to rise freely in the veins of Nature. Cuckoo-time, indeed. The cuckoo, whose note is the veritable voice of spring, teaches a subversive lesson in morality to the humans whose pulses are stirred by it. Shakespeare, it must be admitted, shows no sign of being perturbed by the menace of the cuckoo. He seems to have been distinctly indulgent towards the heyday in the blood of primy youth.

§

There is no word, in literary criticism, or in the whole of language more tantalizing than the word "Imagination". I have not the authorities by me; but I suppose it did not come to vex us until the great outburst of Romantic poetry at the end of the 18th century. First, there came a man, William Blake, uttering quite incomprehensible oracles concerning this faculty of Imagination, which, up to that time, had been kept decorously in its place by the Age of Reason: Imagination was, for that age, the faculty of combining images. And the Age did a lot of image-combining, mostly with capital letters to mark the solemnity of the process on which it was engaged. But Blake talked another kind of language altogether about the Imagination, for example: "The Imagination is not a State, it is the Human Existence itself". It was inevitable that such a deliverance should be neglected. It was just incomprehensible.

We have to leave out Blake. The moment when we can really distinguish the emergence into a more current consciousness—only relatively more current, of course—of a new conception of the Imagination is the moment when, at the age of 24, Coleridge first met Wordsworth personally. Wordsworth read him a poem in manuscript; and it made a startling—one

might say, a revolutionary—impression on Coleridge. He described the effect upon him years afterwards in the *Biographia Literaria.*

> It was not . . . the freedom from false taste . . . which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and, subsequently, on my judgement: it was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and, with it, the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dewdrops.

In that retrospective account, the function of the "imaginative faculty" is limited to "modifying the objects observed": there was in Wordsworth's poetry some mysterious—and to Coleridge's mind, novel—harmony between truth in observing, and modifying the objects observed. That does not take us very far. And Coleridge was not content with that.

I believe that this effort to penetrate the secret of Wordsworth's "imagination" was the main effort of all Coleridge's critical thinking; and that from the contemplation of the Imagination at work in Wordsworth, and on the basis of results reached by that incessant investigation, Coleridge turned to Shakespeare. I mean that Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism is, originally and essentially, an application to Shakespeare of a conception of the Imagination which he derived from Wordsworth. He did not derive it from Wordsworth *as* a conception; he witnessed its actual working in Wordsworth, and came very near (though never quite so near as he would have liked to believe) to participating in those workings.

Now, Wordsworth was a great poet—and great by virtue of the presence in him of that power which Coleridge discerned, and responded to, in him—the power of Imagination. I think Coleridge was absolutely right to use Wordsworth's imagination as the clue to Shakespeare's: I think Wordsworth is, indubitably, our next greatest imaginative poet after Shakespeare (just as I think that Keats would have been if he had lived). But there is a great and palpable difference

between Wordsworth and Shakespeare: a difference easy to recognise, but almost impossible to define or describe. The clumsy terms, subjective and objective, lead us nowhere.

Wordsworth is very different from Shakespeare. But the difference between them is not the difference between the subjective and the objective. Wordsworth is an almost *intolerably* objective poet. In Wordsworth's poetry, and in those parts of his poetry where his peculiar genius is most manifest, the object looms upon, dominates us, terrifies us almost. William Blake is reported to have said to someone: "I can stare at a knot in a piece of wood until it terrifies me". That conveys the sensation of Wordsworth's poetry at its most powerful and its most characteristic moments. He was rapt out of himself by the overpowering reality of the objective world. He describes his emergence into boyhood:

> I was left alone
> Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
> The props of my affection were remov'd,
> And yet the building stood as if sustained
> By its own spirit.

And the creative response in himself was so strong that there were moments when:

> Such a holy calm
> Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
> That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in my mind.

It was the overpowering reality—the objective imminence or superimpendence of the outward world which gave the dream-like quality to Wordsworth's experience of it. It had the startling and awful vividness of a dream. Coleridge, I am sure, knew nothing of this experience. Wordsworth once said of him, that "he was not under the influence of external objects". The simple phrase is worth remembering. It indicates a radical difference between the two friends.

This was the psychological basis of Wordsworth's Imagination. It was by no caprice that he included under *Poems of the Imagination* the simple and seemingly naive lines:—

The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun:
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one.

It is an almost staggeringly simple example of what Wordsworth meant by the Imagination: of how it works, and what it does. The clinching, dream-like vision comes almost with a snap, and the picture before the mind's eye is made one. You could take one after another of Wordsworth's *Poems of the Imagination* and find the unifying power at work. It is not exactly a power of the poet; he is recapturing an experience—an experience of unity. And sometimes in his poems Wordsworth is describing this experience, sometimes re-creating it, sometimes both together. His cuckoo is as it were an agent of this Imagination:

O blessed Bird: the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial faery place
That is fit home for Thee.

There it is the "wandering voice" which gives the unity of dream to the visible world. In "Airey Force Valley", it is "A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs" which creates, and is the symbol of, the dream-unity.

§

I have no doubt at all that Coleridge was the first to understand and appreciate and unfeignedly admire this imaginative power of Wordsworth's; and I have not very much doubt that Coleridge built his whole theory of Imagination upon Wordsworth's achievement. It was to fit precisely this singular power of Wordsworth's that Coleridge coined his exact and peculiar phrase: "the esemplastic power", as a definition of Imagination. He carefully gives the etymology of his new adjective— εις εν πλαττειν —the power "of moulding

into unity": what he called in himself, when he lamented its passing, in the *Ode to Dejection*, "my shaping spirit of Imagination". But it is pretty certain that Coleridge never possessed it: he had, for a brief period—namely, the period of his most intimate association with Wordsworth—Imagination of an authentic kind, but emphatically not this Imagination of Wordsworth's: not the Imagination of a man "under the *influence* of external objects."

Wordsworth's imaginative power was intimately and inseparably connected with his unique capacity for experiencing a unity in Nature—an experience which he describes many times, but always without monotony and with novelty, because the experience was ever new. And he re-creates it over and again in the responsive reader. The sense, the significance, the reality of the external world, experienced in all its diversity, would be gathered up as it were into a Oneness, of which the poet was a part. He would be pervaded by a solemn peace, a calm and religious joy, a humility of complete surrender. Of this Oneness, in which he participated, some external object would be the creative symbol. "Dans certains états de l'âme presque surnaturels", wrote Baudelaire, "la profondeur de la vie se révèle tout entière dans le spectacle, si ordinaire qu'il soit, qu'on a sous les yeux. Il en devient le symbole". The French poet is speaking (I think) of exactly the same experience as that which visited Wordsworth so frequently and so powerfully. Reality took on an immediate Unity so startling that it stood out in such moments from the ordinary texture of experience with the vividness of dream.

§

Now, though this experience in Wordsworth had an altogether peculiar intensity, I believe that Coleridge was not in the least mistaken when he sought in it the clue to Imagination in general; and in particular, the clue to Shakespeare's Imagination. I believe that Wordsworth's Imagination is, in a sense, indeed the type of the poetic Imagination; and that Wordsworth was right in believing that it was to a faculty of this quality and order that Shakespeare himself was referring when he wrote:

> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact . . .
> The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

Shakespeare was fairly young when he wrote that; and he was, from the beginning and by profession, a dramatic poet. Again, he was—at this time—light-hearted, as Wordsworth never was. But, essentially, this "giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name" was the same process by which the "esemplastic power" operative in Wordsworth discovered in the figure of the lonely old leech-gatherer the symbol and present assurance of the Unity, of which for a melancholy moment he had despaired. I do not mean that Shakespeare's "airy nothing" is exactly the same as Wordsworth's "something"—the mysterious and memorable "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.

The nothing and the something are not the same; but they are of the same order. The difference in phrasing and in tone is due less to an essential difference in the thing of which the two great poets are speaking, than to a difference in the whole structure of society,—a change in the quality of the spirit of the age that had supervened in the two hundred years which separate Wordsworth from Shakespeare.

I would say simply that the young Shakespeare did not have to take poetry seriously, as young Wordsworth had to do. Shakespeare was to become very serious indeed, and to attain or at least persist in a seriousness that outsoared even Wordsworth's; but not yet. The world of the young Shakespeare was secure. It was in many ways a tough, grim world—a world in which it was hard for poetic genius to achieve security—but

a world of which the frame-work was solid. "The King was in his counting-house, counting out his money; the Queen was in the parlour, eating bread and honey". We all remember that world, in which royalties were as singular, as certain, and as definite as they are in a pack of cards—the world we know as children: a very solid and satisfying world. Well, I think that childish memory gives one some idea of the *kind* of world in which young Shakespeare lived and in which he fought his way—a world full of glories and full of horrors, indeed, but where you did know what was what, with a certainty unavailable to young Wordsworth, and still less available to the young genius of today. Not in the least a world where you had to begin by worrying about how you ought to be governed, or one where you had to vex your mind with thinking about religion. That was all settled. There was still only one religion to be had, and you had to have it. That is a rather satisfying state of things. It puts religion—so to speak—in its place; and leaves plenty of margin. And margin is a useful thing to have if you are a young genius.

Young Shakespeare did not, like Wordsworth (or Coleridge, or Blake, or Shelley, or Keats for that matter) have to go about looking for Unity: it was there already, or enough of it was there to enable him to take it for granted. Within the framework of a stable social order, clamped firmly to an unquestioned religious-political basis, the unity was manifest in the social hierarchy; and the poet did not have to assume the function of prophet, priest and king—or, as Shelley put it, "the unacknowledged legislator of the world". Or, at any rate, he did not have to assume these functions consciously. Indeed, he would have been bottled up very promptly if he had dared to. But in any case, he did not naturally seek any licence in that direction: there was no need for it. A quite respectable remnant of the full Catholic tradition was still in being. And it left the poet free to enjoy himself. He wasn't expected, and he didn't expect himself, to be anything much. So, for instance, you have young Shakespeare letting himself go, spontaneously and delightfully and immorally about the cuckoo—the cuckoo of the natural countryman. I have no doubt that Shakespeare also on occasion felt like Wordsworth about it, and wondered:

Shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

But he did not have, as Wordsworth did, to lean on such a moment; to treasure and turn back to it, as a clue to the mystery of existence; it wasn't important for him, as it was for Wordsworth: he wasn't looking for the same thing as Wordsworth in the cuckoo-call. What Wordsworth was looking for was signs of Unity—or evidences of God.

That, I think, is the reason (or an approximation to it) why Shakespeare could speak lightly of "airy nothing" and yet be referring to what was not essentially different from Wordsworth's sublime "something". Shakespeare did not have to find God in it. The Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury —with quite a lot of the Catholic tradition behind them to make them august—saw to it that his needs in that direction were amply supplied. And another relevant consequence of this general keeping of things in their places—keeping religion in its place, and the young Shakespeare in his—was that, whereas Wordsworth was terribly troubled (and quite likely, as Mr. Herbert Read conjectures, troubled for life) by his love-affair with Annette, Shakespeare took his love-affair with Anne Hathaway pretty casually. I find no convincing evidence that he did otherwise. Young Shakespeare was on terms of casual intimacy with Nature: Wordsworth took it or her much more seriously. Yet I suppose Wordsworth's actual childhood in the country was not very different from Shakespeare's. The difference was that Wordsworth was compelled consciously to seek in the experience of his childhood sustenance of a kind that Shakespeare was not compelled to seek from his.

§

In the early Shakespeare—the Shakespeare prior to *Hamlet* —we have the simple miracle of a man who experienced this Unity in and with Nature without interruption, and as it were unconsciously. With him it was normal; not "religious" by reason of its exceptionality, its intensity, or its significance. It was diffused into the texture of his day-to-day existence. And the consequence of this was that the Imagination in him

could find free and unchecked expression in the form of Imagery.

Imagery, when it is creative or revealing, is a spontaneous exercise of the faculty which, on the fully conscious level, is the Imagination. In his preface of 1815, where Wordsworth discusses the Imagination, very pregnantly but with tantalizing brevity, he puts together three instances—from Virgil and Shakespeare and Milton—of the simple metaphor "hangs" used in each case with splendid effect; and he says that, in the former two, there is "a slight exertion of the faculty which I denominate Imagination". I follow him in this matter entirely. It seems to me that the original act of vivid sense-perception (which is the origin of any creative and revealing imagery) is a sort of miniature and unconscious paradigm of that abnormally vivid apprehension of the external world, concentrating itself in a single object, which is the main substance of Wordsworth's greatest poetry. The connection between Imagery and Imagination is very intimate indeed. We may go to Baudelaire for a corroboration of Wordsworth's view. In this book *L'Art Romantique*, after anouncing his conviction that "the fundamental condition necessary for creating a healthy art is a belief in the integral unity of the universe", he goes on to say that:

> "In excellent poets, there is not a metaphor, or comparison, or epithet, which is not adapted with a mathematical exactitude to the actual circumstance; because these comparisons, these metaphors, and these epithets are drawn from the inexhaustible well of the universal analogy."

That is to say, every creative image is evidence of Unity; the master of creative imagery is declaring his belief in Unity —a belief which is of course generally instinctive and unconscious, in the sense that it is not formulated intellectually. And from this angle, some of Wordsworth's most splendid poems (for instance *The Leech-Gatherer*) may be regarded as single images used with a full intellectual and religious awareness of their significance. But the poet who, like Shakespeare, was absolved from the necessity of seeking a religious significance in the workings of the imagination, could use Imagery with the spontaneous facility and felicity of Nature itself. The ultimate belief in Unity, concealed at the heart of every sense

impression which registers itself—because of its felt significance —on "the more than ordinary organic sensibility" of the natural genius, does not require to be unfolded and made explicit. When society itself still embodies some sort of religious unity, then for a halcyon moment, the poet is free to be a poet, with the instinctive grace of an animal. His Imagery is the texture of his natural speech; and in his poetry he has no need to be more than the unconscious witness and voice of Unity —which does not at such a moment require conscious formulation: there is no need at such a moment to separate out the religious element implicit in all poetic-creative experience; and it is part of the same spontaneity, part of the same lived unity, that the poet, at such a moment, is at one with the ordinary world of men and women. The poet feels himself to be a native of the workaday world: he is exercising a profession just like other men. I do not really believe that Shakespeare felt that in doing his best to touch up old plays and write new ones to attract people like himself to Blackfriars, he was doing anything essentially different from the man who tilled a field or made a table. And that I think is the reason why the only epithet by which the living Shakespeare survives to us in contemporary discussion is the epithet "gentle". It is obvious that a man who knew him as well as Ben Jonson knew him, found in Shakespeare nothing out of the ordinary. True, he produced astonishing things with astonishing ease; and that was a baffling phenomenon; but the man himself made no impression of peculiar genius. He was unobtrusive: he behaved like an ordinary man; and, whereas Ben Jonson himself made the impression on his contemporaries of an immense superiority and evident genius, Shakespeare was nobody in particular.

This is, more or less, how I think it actually was. Shakespeare during his early years was a natural man; the only difference being that he was more natural. He did not have to question things: he took them as they came: he adjusted himself to life with the stubborn delicacy of a sapling tree: his sensitiveness was exquisite, but so was his sanity. And his language was the natural utterance of his being: he expressed himself through imagery of a richness and variety that has never been approached before nor since, simply because his sensational

experience was so rich and various, and because Imagery is the natural language of the man who feels himself at home in life. That is what the language of imagery means—that the person who uses it *is* at home in life: the visible universe is familiar to him, as the house in which he is born and lives is familiar to a child. And when the time comes that such a nature begins to feel a sense of alienation from the universe, it can never produce upon us the impression of an ultimate severance: the unconscious man, and the language of the unconscious man, are for ever bearing witness against the desperate conclusions of his consciousness. Take, for example, *Macbeth* (a dark play if ever there was one); at its darkest moment, the hero,—who, in spite of all the horror of his doing, is still partly by virtue of the working of this unconsciousness in Shakespeare, a hero indeed,—greets the severing of the last tie that held him to the human world—the death of Lady Macbeth—with the inexhaustible words:

> She should have died hereafter;
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

There is Shakespeare's imagery at its most natural and its most magnificent; there is, so far as the intellectual statement goes, the utterance of a complete despair; and yet the utterance is almost unbearably rich. It is surpassingly difficult to express one's reaction to it. If this be despair, one feels, then what could be more natural and more glorious than to despair? The only other English poet who had command of a power precisely like this, was John Keats. I do not refer to the obvious resemblance between the quality of this utterance of Macbeth and the quality of the *Ode to a Nightingale*:

> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain.

But beyond this—there is a constant quality of Keats's poetry by which he gives I know not what richness and opulence to the expression of his bitterest pangs:

> She dwells with beauty, beauty that must die,
> And joy whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding Adieu.

In such magical phrases there is the tragedy of life. And yet, at the moment, it is a more abundant life than ever. A miracle of this kind we sometimes say (rather foolishly) is an effect of language. That is all very well: it *is* an effect of language; but unless we have explored the secret of poetic language to its source—in the poetic nature feeling itself at home in the universe, and, by virtue of that relation of child-like familiarity, unconsciously absorbing into itself the magical particularity, the *haeccitas*, of the created world—we are saying little or nothing at all by saying that this marvellous and contradictory and re-assuring effect of great poetry at its greatest, is an effect of language. It is the spontaneous achievement of those rarest of rare natures, which are born to be at home in the universe, and who, for that reason, when she sentence of separation, or exile, or death falls upon them, ttill cannot but bear witness, by the operation of their unconscious being, that even in their sufferings they are at home in the universe still. "Though he slay me, yet will I believe in him". That is the utterance of this mysterious and simple truth on the pure religious level. A Shakespeare, a Keats, a Wordsworth do not have to say this thing in this fashion: their consciousness may cry out at the slaying, but in the very words they utter, their unconsciousness proclaims their belief.

Shakespeare differs from Wordsworth, not because he was more objective—as I have tried to show, Wordsworth is an intensely objective poet—but because he was a dramatist. We speak of his characters as "the creatures of his imagination". And that dramatic "imagination" seems at first sight to be very different from the Imagination of Wordsworth. Shakespeare's characters were certainly not, in the main, observed: if Mistress Quickly may have been, Falstaff certainly was not.

Nevertheless, I do not think that the problem of dramatic creation introduces any generically new factor into the consideration of poetic imagination. Precisely how these figures which (to use Keats's phrase) the dramatic poet "is intense upon"—in exactly the same way as a Wordsworth was "intense upon" a field of daffodils—are originated in the creative mind need not concern us now. We may be content to call them, with Coleridge, "modifications" of the universal life, of which the poet is the vehicle—a phrase which may help to spare us the illusion that Shakespeare's characters speak their own language and not Shakespeare's.

Anyway, I do not believe that the language of Shakespeare's characters is, in any ordinary sense of the phrase, dramatically appropriate. Othello's recital before the Signiory of his wooing of Desdemona is not, though it is often said to be, succinct and soldierly: but it is splendid. So with his great farewell speech: there is nothing soldier-like about it, except perhaps its heroism. Macbeth's meditation on tomorrow is not that of a murdering usurper. They are, most emphatically, the speeches of a supreme poet, whose imaginative being is for the moment thrust into situations so acute and so real that he loses self-consciousness. It is not that Shakespeare is or becomes Macbeth or Othello; but that he is himself within the limitations of Othello's or Macbeth's predetermined actions.

Indeed, I find nothing particularly or specifically dramatic in Shakespeare's use of imagery. On occasion, in a particular play, the act of realisation is so complete, Shakespeare is living his drama so entirely, that his imagery tends to be influenced by the sensation of the drama: as, for example, in the early scenes of *Othello*, where the imagery has a tang of the sea long before the drama itself reaches the quayside. This, I think, was quite unconscious. Scarcely more deliberate is the strange prolongation, in the final scenes of *Antony and Cleopatra*, of the elusive and beautiful imagery of a baby at the breast: first, the Queen a baby at the breast of Death; then, death the baby at the breast of the Queen: strange, that that play should end on such a note, yet surpassingly beautiful. It gives one an indefinable sense—over and beyond anything that the drama itself can convey—of what Cleopatra was in

Shakespeare's sensation—how simple, for all her infinite variety, and, for all her cruelty and caprice, how tender.

But I must not be led aside into any consideration of the nuances of Shakespeare's imagery. My purpose is severely limited—to suggest that creative imagery is the unconscious witness that the poet is at home in the universe. By creative imagery I mean imagery of the kind described by Keats:

> . . . the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the Sun come natural to him (the reader)—shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the Luxury of twilight— . . .

That is the imagery of which Shakespeare was the supreme master. It is in an eminent sense, "natural". Like the quality of mercy (with which after all it is not too distantly allied) it "blesseth him that gives and him that takes". It is the silent witness that the poet is at home in the universe, whatever his consciousness or his drama may be saying; and through our instinctive response to it we are made momentary partakers in the comfort of its security. Tragedy can never be unmitigated disaster when it is expressed in language which holds this healing virtue in its very fibres. And it often seems to me that discussions of Shakespeare's tragedy are incommensurate with the total impression of his great plays, precisely because they tend to abstract the drama from the poetry which is its substance, and the characters from the language which is verily their own flesh and blood.

I have hazarded the opinion that the process of accumulating the significant and vivid sense-impressions in the storehouse of imagery, which is the poet's unconsciousness, was—though of minor intensity—essentially the same as Wordsworth's rapt contemplation of the visible world, as it were gathered to a quintessence in an object of sense. At such a moment, for Wordsworth, reality became so overpoweringly real that it was like a dream.

Lately, I have caught myself wondering whether Shakespeare's last play may not contain a sublime instance of this experience (which in its less intense forms is one of the main roots of Shakespeare's poetry). We are familiar, almost to weariness, with Prospero's haunting words:

> These our actors
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air:
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded by a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd;
> Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled:
> Be not disturb'd with my infirmity.

It has often been remarked that there is nothing in the action of the play to call forth words so strange as these. They seem to have their motive from somewhere outside the play, in some extraneous thought which had disturbed the poet's mind and insisted on utterance. If I were to try to describe the quality of those lines I think I should be naturally drawn to use much the same phrases as I have used about Wordsworth's experience: I think I might even find myself quoting Wordsworth's actual words:—

> I forgot
> That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in my mind.

There is a difference. The glorious visible world, and all mankind, at this strange moment of Shakespeare's imagination, is not merely dream-like in its vividness in his mind: there is also the conscious thought that it may be *only* a dream. And Shakespeare-Prospero himself but part of it.

I have always been haunted and troubled by those lines of Prospero: they seem to torment me with a thought beyond the reach of my soul. I may be mistaken; but lately I have fancied that in Wordsworth's simpler, but no less profound poetic experience, I had the clue to them which I had sought so long in vain. It was—I have surmised—the very vividness, the overpowering reality and distinctness of the world of Nature—passing by insensible degrees into the world of Imagination (the world of Shakespeare's characters who are to us a second Nature)—that gave to this double universe, at

the last, the quality of a dream. That very thing which made Shakespeare the supreme poet, caused the supreme doubt to assail him—a doubt, the nature and quality of which we ordinary mortals can by no means make real to our experience. We have to stretch our moments of significant experience to the uttermost in order to have a secure glimpse of what Wordsworth is talking about. When we have to strain beyond that to Shakespeare's experience—ourselves to become

> the lodge
> For solitary thinkings such as dodge
> Conception to the very bourne of Heaven,
> Then leave the naked brain,—

we fall back baffled.

And my brain, I confess, is left naked in the effort to make real to myself the strange experience, of which (I feel) Prospero's lines are the utterance. But I do have a sort of monition that Shakespeare—the impersonal vehicle of Imagination—was at this moment beholding in his inward eye both the world of Nature, and the world of second Nature which had been created by means of him. There is a moment of terrible reality and vividness, and a sickening sense of dream. This inward eye of Shakespeare was not, at that moment, the bliss of solitude: it saw too much.

And if, as I surmise, that ineffable Doubt is such as *could* arise in, such as could be really *experienced* by only a supreme poet; because it is a doubt that springs from the very roots of his poetic genius—from the very intensity of his sensation, and the prodigality of his creativeness—it seems to me that there is something mysteriously and simply appropriate in Shakespeare's arriving on this earth with the cuckoo. The cuckoo was his bird.

F. V. BRANFORD

F. V. Branford is an English poet who has been forgotten; yet he is a remarkable poet. He is now in the middle fifties, he published two small volumes of poetry, *Titans and Gods* and *The White Stallion*, in the years immediately after the first world war, and he has been silent ever since. In this essay I propose to investigate the reasons why he has been forgotten.

Towards the end of his elegy on Francis Thompson (which is, in my judgment, by no means to be reckoned among his best work) Branford declares that that genuine but limited poet is an

> Uranian eagle towering on a pinion
> Serener than the Swan of Avon bore.

The judgment is significant, because it conflicts with a more genial judgment of Shakespeare in Branford's earlier volume, *Titans and Gods*. There, in the market-place of dreams, he

> Sudden came upon a star-high man
> Whose mighty composition hid the sun.

That man was Shakespeare. And we may say, I think, without distorting Branford's values, that he passes, in the progress from his earlier to his later volume from a judgment of Shakespeare that is in consonance with the instinctive estimate of humanity to one that is altogether peculiar to himself. To declare that Francis Thompson towers on a serener pinion than Shakespeare is not necessarily a foolish judgment when pronounced by one who has previously praised Shakespeare well; but it is obviously an esoteric one.

The judgment, I say, is significant; and the significance is twofold. First, it warns us what to expect, and what not to expect, from Branford's poetry. It will be the poetry of one who sets Francis Thompson on a pinnacle. It will be passionate; it may on rare occasions be simple; but it will never be sensuous. Branford is a rhetorical poet. If you do not like rhetoric, you will not like his poetry. Magniloquence is natural and necessary to him; and magniloquence is terribly out of fashion nowadays. Branford has fallen foul of the

Zeitgeist. So, for causes some the same, and some different, have I. I, like him, find this a very shallow age, almost deliberately oblivious of the deserts of vast eternity, of which he seeks to remind it. But, unlike him, I do not like magniloquence in poetry. Indeed, I should be quite sympathetic towards the irony and cynicism of contemporary poets, if only they would leave off writing poetry.

Branford has left off writing poetry; and he has left off writing it about the time I should expect a man of his experience to leave off; for he belongs blood, bone and sinew, mind, soul and spirit, to the war-generation of 1914-18. And he stopped writing poetry somewhere about 1923 or so. About that time, according to my private chronicle of modern times, the experience of the War got by the throat the men of imagination who had endured and survived it. They then realized finally that the peace—the mere and negative peace, the cessation of the unendurable, by the hope of which they had endured it—was never to be peace at all. Do not mistake me. I am not speaking of the disillusion of the idealists who had believed that the world was to be "made safe for democracy": most of those had perished, either in the body or in the spirit, by the end of 1916; and the youthful half-hopes that lingered on were finally done to death by the conclave of old men at Versailles. I am speaking merely of the dim belief in the imaginative man who endured and survived the War, that the horror, the grey death, within his own soul might have an end. Somewhere about the time that Branford ceased to write poetry, these men knew that the horror in their souls would never end. I could name others; but I must not. Therefore, I will name only D. H. Lawrence, who, in the winter of 1923-1924, discovered that the new life for which he yearned would never spring up within him. He learned that he was indeed a broken man; and his inevitable path to the final dissociation (which I have elsewhere much too harshly called disintegration) was made clear to him. It was not otherwise with his famous namesake, T. E. Lawrence.

With these Branford belongs, in the vital matter of experience. That he was silent, where D. H. Lawrence continued to utter himself, is not of the first importance; or rather it indicates a difference—radical and important enough in its

own order—in creative gift. D. H. Lawrence was a poet in a sense in which Branford is not: he was organically in touch with life after the manner of Shakespeare and Keats: like Ivan Karamazov he could never deny "the sticky buds." He could never have written, like Branford, of

> legless things with lateral gait
> Immortal slimes that never mate
> Themselves into their sons dilate
> With lack-of-love that laughs at fate.

That is powerful; but it is an intellectual vision—not the vision of one who feels the ebb and flow of life primarily on his pulses. It is (for example) the vision of Coleridge—"and slimy things with legs did crawl"—against the experience of Wordsworth. That conflict between imaginative despair and primary incontrovertible experience which carried D. H. Lawrence finally to the Nirvana of pure Sex was either never waged at all in Branford; or if it was waged—since no man is ever totally devoid of instinctive life-confidence—the struggle was sharp and sudden and soon ended. The intellectual despair was triumphant, in the form of intellectual ecstasy.

But the point I wish to make is that the modern fashion in poetry to which Branford is a stranger was set by Americans: Ezra Pound, the erratic and floundering pioneer, and T. S. Eliot, the man of genius. That is to say, the modern fashion in English poetry was set by men who had no real experience of the War. The irony of American disillusion and the inward shattering of the English spirit are vastly different things. One is the ironic disillusion of a machine-made mass-civilization; the other the spiritual annihilation produced by modern war. It is all the difference between world-weariness and Death. The post-war generation in England could not get on with the generation that had lived with modern Death: it had nothing to offer. The sweet war men were rotten; those who remained were either silent, or speaking incomprehensibly. Who, of the English poets of the next generation had learned anything from D. H. Lawrence, or from Wilfred Owen, or from Siegfried Sassoon? Poets can learn only things that are learnable—in the last resort, tricks—I use the word in no bad sense—tricks of technique, tricks of mood, tricks even of religion. The poets of

the war-generation had lost what tricks they had. Great or small, they had passed to a place where tricks had no meaning, entered a world of experience which Branford seeks to convey, and to my sense really does convey, in *The White Stallion:*

> Hoot-tu-hoot! the beast has caught
> In the dark den of his thought
> The speech of one who sayeth Naught
> But rides down every talking god
> On a tremendous stallion shod
> By the dumb smith Eternity,
> With steel as strong
> As time is long
> And nails that were used on Calvary.

There is no learning anything from that. It is either experience, or a noise; and emphatically, it is not the kind of thing you can take tea with. It does not encourage conversation. The post-war generation had to live; and the war-generation had nothing to give them to live by. For living, after all, though not a trivial business, is a social affair—a matter of interchange and conventions: practically speaking, you must have tricks to live, whether as poet or plumber or politician. Into the heart of the English tradition—I mean the kind of thing typified by Rupert Brooke, D. H. Lawrence, Siegfried Sassoon, H. M. Tomlinson and Henry Williamson—had come a hiatus. It was either dead, or posthumous; assuredly it did not know how to be social. It had lost the trick of it.

At this point America stepped in, in the persons of Pound and Eliot, to offer the young intelligentsia of the post-war years a thread of continuity. It offered them as it were a manual of conversation from which the ghastly and involuntary importunities of the war-survivors were eliminated.

> He holds him with his skinny hand.
> 'There was a war,' quoth he.
> 'Hold off, unhand me, greybeard Loon!'
> Eftsoons 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.

But the post-war intelligentsia, very naturally, was not going to let the Mariner have his will: he was not even talkative like

Coleridge's old man. His faraway eye and his stony silence cast a gloom which was not to be tolerated; and his somnambulist motion towards lifting the backcloth was hardly a contribution to discussion. It tended to make the small-talk sound small.

The company on the stage did not entirely forget that there was a something—or a nothing—behind the backcloth; but since, whatever it was, it was a thing you could not live with, and living cannot be avoided, it had to be shut off. So the new American idiom was eagerly adopted. It was a language built to register the minor monstrosities of modern life, the innumerable offences of a contemporary mass-civilization to a refined sensibility. Those offences were better articulated, and more clearly manifest in America. The uglinesses that were smudgy and dim and a little shamefaced in England were declared and blatant and self-confident in America. So that the American poets, who had fled their own country, appeared to the post-war generation of Englishmen as men who brought a revelation of reality and a technique to express it. Indeed, they did. They revealed post-war England to itself: for the world the American poets had learned to speak of with such fastidious and detailed loathing, and such a foil of traditional knowledge to set off the contemporary vulgarity, was indeed the post-war England, rationalized and booming, battening on its own betrayal of the ideal, which young Englishmen now knew. They had never known any other.

But there was one small and perhaps insignificant difference between the world the Americans spoke of and the English world—the American world was not *post-war*. Or maybe the difference was significant; but it did not signify, because it was unmentionable, and perhaps unutterable as well. The continuity of English utterance passed inevitably to Americans, because in America alone there was a continuity. In the English tradition of England there had come an uncomfortable hiatus—composed of men who had died in the flesh, and men who had died in the spirit. The thread of life had been cut off by the lightning of an incommensurable experience. And the survivors were ghosts at the banquet.

Nevertheless, the young Englishmen who followed Eliot

so eagerly, could not follow him into the Church of England. They drew the line at that. Dimly they knew that something irreparable had happened that was not to be mended by a pilgrimage to Canterbury. Eliot's idiom was elegant and fascinating; his gesture of profound respect for tradition while he cut it up in little stars had an Oriental suavity. Follow-my-leader behind him had been rich in contemporary thrills; but the finale in St. Paul's Cathedral was too bewildering. It did not speak to their condition.

Yet there was much in his submission to the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, which escaped attention at the time. In the person of his remote (and for all I know, direct) descendant, Eliot of the Parliament-men knelt before Laud and declared that he truly and earnestly repented of his contumacy towards the Lord's anointed, and his bad behaviour towards his Bishops; in the person of T. S. Eliot the Mayflower came home again, repentant and demiss, *plus royaliste que le Roi*.

> How like a younker or a prodigal
> The scarfed bark puts from her native bay
> Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
> How like a prodigal doth she return,
> With over-weathered ribs and ragged sails,
> Lean, rent and beggared by the strumpet wind!

That return of the American prodigal after three centuries was symbolic indeed, but irrelevant to the malaise of his English followers. Eliot annihilating America, deleting it from the book of history, was a striking gesture, but hardly more to them. He was able to busy himself with blotting out three centuries, precisely because he never knew the necessity of blotting out four years; but that necessity was at work, albeit unconsciously, in the being of those who were in all things else his disciples.

The parable is, or seems to me, illuminating—or else I would not dwell upon it. Eliot's revolutionary and Puritan ancestry—the Eliots, the Pyms and the Hampdens—on whose behalf he now pleads: "Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa," at the shrine of St. Thomas and the tomb of the Lord—were indeed the progenitors of the American civilization he abhors and flees from; but they were equally the progenitors of the English civilisation to which he flees—and of the *Ecclesia*

Angelicana in which he hides himself. But the veritable consummation of the civilization inaugurated by those great individualists is less visible in the gregarious nonentity of an American sales convention than in the obscenity of modern mechanical War. This is the point at which the mass-civilization, which repels Eliot, authentically reveals its own nature. Of that revelation he was not a recipient. Hence he has been able to take refuge in the private security of Anglican orthodoxy. He does not see, or if he does see he does not say, that the Church of England in which he takes refuge is consubstantial with the mass-civilization from which he would escape.

Much of the utterance, the peculiar charm and the extraordinary influence of T. S. Eliot derive from the fact that he was untouched and unscathed by the revelation of War. His extreme Englishness—his high Anglicanism, his Toryism, his Royalism—was possible only to one outside the English destiny, which though it was avoided by their consciousness, was yet registered indelibly on the plasm of the post-war generation of Englishmen. They admired and imitated him; indeed he "taught them language": but they could not follow him. If they *did* anything, they went to Spain, to participate in just such another war, and for the same cause as his ancestry fought—the cause that he has so elaborately repudiated. But whether they fought in Spain, or whether they remained at home toying with theological possibilities, or whether, like Huxley and Auden, they took the opposite journey—back to America, they had no faith. What they heard, though they dared not acknowledge it, was "the speech of one who sayeth Naught."

> Hark! the beat
> Of invisible feet
> The terrible tread
> of that great white dread
> Stallion galloping overhead.
>
> Ruin rides upon his back
> Beating down, with roar and wrack
> Beauty in blood, and black
> Dust, upon his smoking track.

The fervours of secular optimism—the plunge into dreams of

a Communist millennium—these were no more than an unconscious escape from the ultimate question that was put to Englishmen in 1914-1918. But so are the dreams of solace and communion in the Anglican Church militant. Both alike are self-engendered ecstasies to drown the sound of the terrible tread of the White Stallion.

The poem of that name is Branford's finest work. It has its moments when the rhetoric is overstrained; but it has a truly dreadful power on those who have once been gripped by the meaning of its symbolism. It is the utterance of a real and rare imaginative experience. That the imagination is essentially intellectual is true; but it is an intellectual imagination which has gripped the heart and soul of the man whom it visited.

Branford belongs to those who have not avoided Death: therefore—since every man would avoid Death if he could—to those who have been unable to avoid it. Since the whole fashion of modern utterance is shaped by the instinctive avoidance of Death, or the turning of it into a circumscribed and manageable mystery, he is perforce unfashionable.

Death changes; death is changing; death has changed. What was once a mystery for the individual to wrestle with, or to forget, is become the monster who menaces Man; who has perhaps killed Man already. Death that was once a part of Life, is now become the whole.

There were of old-time, plagues and pestilences: great waves of doom, sent forth by the inscrutable God, swept over the earth. Men, women and children fell before them. A voice was heard in Rama, sound of lamentation and great mourning—Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not. Such lamentations have been heard through the ages, and will be heard again. But the spirit of Man survives the sorrow of such disasters; it bows, and has bowed itself, to the dispensation of the unknown God, and risen renewed, by simple courage or by surpassing faith. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son of whom He receiveth."

Likewise in the past, man has been fearful and terrible to man. Cities have been sacked; women and children put to the sword; cruelty and desolation have been wrought by

man upon his kind. But there was an end. The sword-arm of the slayer grew weary. His anger or his blood-lust ebbed. Even his savagery was in some sort human, limited by human powers of endurance. And, over and over again, before the slayer's sword-arm slackened, his belly sickened, or even his heart misgave him at the sight of his own doing. And underneath the brutality and bestiality of war, there was a rough humanity. Warrior fought with warrior; equal to equal. What he did to the unarmed man, the woman and the child, was loathsome and terrible; but he himself would be ashamed of his fury. He knew that it was sin. He did not boast of it. The pride of the warrior lay in his triumph over his equal, in courage and in arms.

Thus here also the spirit of man lived on—lived on not merely in the courage and chivalry of war, but even in its brutality and bestiality. For, if the courage and chivalry were noble, the brutality and bestiality were a sin, felt and repented of as a sin. That is the point which must never be forgotten. Whether in the battle-struggle men gave death and received it, man to man, and man by man: or whether they behaved like beasts and ravished the innocent, Life was the master of Death. For Life is still the master when men are ashamed of their brutalities, and expect to be punished for their sin.

All this is changed. To-day Death is the master of Life. War is no longer the struggle of armed men against armed men. The sin of sins—the bestial murder of the innocent—is no longer sin at all. Modern warfare is a deliberate and indiscriminate massacre of the innocents. It has been said so often that it is a weariness to say it again—to ears that hear but understand not. This death comes not from God, but from the spirit of Death itself: who never before this age walked upon the earth visible and incarnate in Mankind. For there is Death in the soul of the man who needs must have recourse to this abomination. Let him be a patriot, let him be a revolutionary, let him be a Christian—God is mocked to-day—he is but one thing: part of the living Death. In him the spirit of Man has died, what lives in him is Death. This is the age of the living Death. And Life lives alone in them that know it.

Branford belongs to those who learned this twenty years

ago. He was one of the first of those on whom and in whom this grim knowledge dawned. He was an airman in the war.

> I too have drunk delight in weakling's tears
> The rapture of quick cruelty, and the prize
> Of sudden prey. I too have handled fears
> And filled the air with iron merchandise,
> Like a pitiless falcon nailed upon the skies.

He became the typical instrument of modern Carnage—the new Death that is death to the man who deals it. And he was one of the first to know what Man, in him, had become. The Airman in a bombing plane—that is Man to-day. Branford was that twenty years ago; and he became conscious of what he was: at twenty-three years of age he became That. And this is how he remembered it:

> Pit-a-pat, Pit-a-pat,
> All the dark years I never heard that.
> Pit-a-pat, Pit-a-pat.
> Pit-a-pat, Pit-a-pat
> At dead midnight
> Like the spirit of fright
> When I stood on the brink
> Of Hell—I think
> I should have gone mad
> If not for the glad
> Soft silence of that
> Pit-a-pat, Pit-a-pat.

It is beautiful to those who understand, and terrible to all. There thrills the comfort of the annihilation of modern Man.

Branford is a prophet, because he is prophetic. But the war ended when he was twenty-six. He was then a poet for whom some of us, in those far-off days, had learned to listen. After all, we could listen to strange things in those days; and we had strange things to listen to. In those days you could sometimes hear the heart of humanity breaking. There were silences in those days. There have been none since. Who wants silence to-day, when he knows what he will hear? In what church, in what street, in what countryside, does silence dare to be to-day? *Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat.*

Branford is silent. He has been ever since. In his heart and mind at least, silence dares to be. Yet he was trumpet-

tongued—too trumpet-tongued, indeed, for such as I. But in the midst of the storms and the thunders was the still small voice: not comfortable as of old. *Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat.*

Now, as I understand, Branford craves for an audience again. He has found one, in me; and I, in turn, seek to win the ears of others for him. But with little hope. Men do not want to hear what he has to say. They want to forget War; for if they did not forget it, how could they prepare for it? And I fear that not even those who protest against War will care to listen to Branford. He is the thing itself, the Man who has died.

Who returneth whence he came
  Through Night of Nothing to Thy Heart
By the Bridge of Sin and Shame,
  He shall know thee who Thou art.

Who hath died so deep in life
  That Death disdain him for his dart,
Shall turn in fierce and loving strife
  On Thee, and know Thee who Thou art.

Who shall prevail, in awful grace
  Of love, o'er Thee, shall surely run
With fire and wind before Thy face;
  He is Thy Beloved Son.

Who this secret shall acclaim
  He the many, Thou the One,
Through doubt, and fear, and sin, and shame,
  He is Thy Beloved Son.

Branford has seen God face to face: the God that is, and not the God who was. It is a mistake; but it is also a destiny. It is a mistake, above all to-day, when the far-off, omnipresent tremors of the God that is, are driving men on every hand to hide their faces from Him in the skirts of the God who was. Communist and Christian to-day alike worship Him.

What is God, if He be not comforting? And what is comforting to-day but the Lie? And what is the Lie?

The Lie is that men need not die to live. They need not change, to change the world. Because they cannot change, they must have the Lie. Because men will not die, Humanity must.

It is better, I think, far better, to have seen God and been slain by Him, than to live not having seen Him at all. But it does not make for success. Branford does not even take the trouble to call on man to repent. I think he should. And

doubtless he would, if he could; but he was as one blinded by his vision; and the scales are still over his eyes. He does not see men any more. All is one, and all's one.

Who hath had commerce in grave peaceful hours
With scared, awful, elemental powers;
Who undismayed while yet the kind dawn shone,
Looked to the scroll of flesh and read thereon
How in each man there walks his skeleton.

He, in the crashing circumstance of doom,
  Under the splitten skies,
  When the iron devil flies
Through white vestures flaming from the loom
Of Nature weaving, even in the tomb,
  Beauty for the hour she dies.

He, in his steadfast thought, shall rise
Above the treason of his eyes,
To follow sights beyond his seeing
To borrow breath above his being;
Till shattered flesh and twisted bone
Are mingled into air and gone;
Till he stand up in the starkness
  Of his spirit, and the darkness
  Of Death and Light are One.

That is a moment: an eternal one, maybe. But Man cannot live there. There, if he seeks to live, even his own integrity becomes a snare. Not even the starkness of his spirit can sustain him. He must become humble again, inhabit the tabernacle of frail, sweet flesh as though it were his only home.

That is what I miss in Branford's poetry—the note of compassion. The compassion is in him, and the note is there; but only once, to my sense, is it sounded as it should be sounded: in *December, 1918*:

Through this pontiff hill I hear
Christ comforting, with ghostly cheer
The last hour of the dying year.

Poor broken-hearted year! who fain
From her tomb would turn again
For pardon that she brought us pain.

Night has shown my heart until
I see the silence of this hill
Is God's sad spirit standing still.

Standing still, because He fain
Would let the poor year turn again
For pardon that she brought us pain.

One who merely endured the War has neither right nor desire to criticise one who waged it. But it is time that Branford broke his silence. I am speaking not of the poet, but the man. I have tried to explain why there is no communication between his work and the present generation. It is for Branford himself to make it, not by changing his mode of utterance, but by descending again to the world of men.

He cannot do that if he listens for ever to "the speech of one who sayeth Naught." That is a speech which, once heard, can never be forgotten. Nevertheless, it must not become the dominant; if it does, the poet who has experienced deeply must become the prophet of love, or men will not listen to him. They will not follow Branford to the heights of his austere experience unless they know that there is something human and precious and simple to be gained at the end.

And the name for that human and precious and simple thing is Love.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

The significance of Branford's poetry is that it reveals, in the idiom of an intense individual experience, the spiritual impasse of contemporary England, and contemporary Europe. We have come to the end of our tether—to the end of our philosophy, or our religion. To-day, such is the general atmosphere, that assertion would be received with general indifference. Yet our great English visionary and prophet, William Blake, spoke the simple truth when he said: "Man must, and will, have some religion." But when we see the realization of this saying in the new religion of the totalitarian state, the Germany that was, in the Russia that is, we are genuinely horrified. But we have nothing of the same order to oppose to it.

What we are faced with, in England and in Europe, is the collapse of an individualist morality before the necessities of a mechanical and industrial "civilization." There is a profound and fatal contradiction in our philosophy. By the advance of the machine we have become an integrated community on the material level; but the philosophy by which that advance has been achieved is radically anti-communal.

The concrete and visible result is that the productive energies of our pseudo-community are more and more devoted to preparing the means of destruction.

European civilization can endure only if the constituent nations can rise to the conception of a European community. This realization is terribly remote. The history of Europe during the grievous post-war years has been of the history of a steady and cumulative desertion of the idea of international community and international law. Yet that appears to be inevitable, so long as the morality of the individual within the nations is so intensely individualistic and competitive. To expect an international morality to be superior to the inter-individual morality is idealistic illusion. Yet without the re-establishment of the reign of international law, and its immediate development into international community, it seems inevitable that Europe must destroy itself; and that the astonishing advances of its technical civilization will have served only to enable it to destroy itself more utterly.

Hence the sense of doom that invades the more imaginative European minds, like Branford's. They are a prey to the conviction that our "civilization" is impotent to save itself. That means only that it has ceased to be a civilization at all. It is a material technique, which has developed in independence of all natural morality, and on the ruins of such natural morality as Europe once possessed. In the impasse of Europe to-day is revealed the fallacy of Marxism, which holds that morality and religion arise from the material technique of production. If this were more than a half-truth, Europe would be a community to-day. In fact, it is a chaos.

THOMAS HARDY

I first met Thomas Hardy at Dorchester in May, 1921. I had long desired to meet him; but when the volume of his collected Poems appeared in the winter of 1919 the desire became almost a monomania. Certainly I had never longed to meet a living writer so much.

Hardy had sent me some very kindly letters, and in particular one concerning a review of the "Collected Poems" which I had written for *The Athenæum*. In that letter he was generous enough to say that the history of English poetry ought to be re-written in accordance with the principles I had tried to establish in regard to his own. So that it would not, I suppose, have been outrageous if I had asked him if I might visit him. My friends, too, who regarded the extremity of my desire to see him as an amiable *tic* of mine, urged me to take the initiative. I was tempted, but I made no effort, partly out of shyness, but much more because I regarded Hardy as the one indisputably great English writer living.

At that time Hardy was, in truth, for me a being set apart. It was not merely that I was convinced that he was the only great English writer living in the world. There was also a peculiar quality in his greatness which made an intimate and almost painful appeal. In Hardy it seemed honesty was made absolute. He had purged out of himself the last trace of the lie in the soul. He was the only man in whom I believed. And to give this belief something of the passion of despair there was the precise point of time. It was at the end of the year of complete disillusion which followed the Armistice of 1918. We had hoped against hope that the peace would be so glorious and generous that it would somehow justify the sacrifice made to gain it. It was quite a different peace, and as the news of its shameful terms gradually became known, the sense of the hideous waste and the utter futility of the whole monstrous war became steadily deeper and deeper. One felt that England, the true England, had ceased to exist.

Rather, it appeared to exist in Hardy alone. He had held himself remote from the fervours of literary militarism; he had never let himself be blinded to the essential horror of war;

and, more than this, he had faced a disillusion, more prolonged if less catastrophic than the four years of war and peace. If we were to continue to believe in England—and, after all, we must, being Englishmen—then the England of Hardy alone was left to us; not the country or the characters of his novels, but the great and achieved simplicity, the all but terrifying candour, of the mind which had conceived them. In the midst of corruption, this was sound; in the midst of squalor, this was beautiful; in the midst of weakness, this was strong; in the midst of fear, this was brave.

Not that I imagined Hardy as more than mortal: but he represented an immortality. He was the vehicle of a spirit of humanity in which we must believe if we are to believe in humanity at all; the spirit which loathes the lie even though it be most comfortable. Far from imagining him superhuman, I knew by the report of those who had seen him that he was simple. I had been told that he was even naive, credulous about things of which my own generation rightly enough had no conceit at all. I had been told that he believed that editors were important people, and that newspapers existed primarily in order to communicate what they believed to be the truth; I had also been told that it would be the easiest thing in the world for me, who was then an editor, to see him, if I would only ask.

I felt that I would rather not see him at all, than see him by such means; and I resented the importunity of those men of letters, young and old, who "just dropped in" upon him. It seemed worse than indecent, a confession that they were ignorant what manner of man he was who made England still tolerable, and the profession of literature more than a means to a livelihood. They were abusers of his kindness. It was part of his greatness that he should be open to such abuse. But that only made me the angrier and hardened my resolve never to go near him unless I were invited of his own unsuggested motion. Still, I knew that I should see him: it was impossible that it should be otherwise.

It was appropriately ironical that I should have been compelled to leave England at the moment the invitation came; ironical that, owing to the coal strike, the visit was very hard to arrange during a brief return; ironical that I who

had a terror of adding one single item to his correspondence should have been compelled to send a telegram cancelling one day and fixing another, then another telegram to cancel that.

It was an unusually hot day in May, 1921, so hot that the railway carriage, with both windows open, was stifling. The name of Hardy's house, Max Gate, had suggested to my mind that it must be in the middle of the town, like the Bar Gate at Southampton. The suggestion had become a certainty. Accordingly in my telegram I had allowed five minutes for getting from the station to the house. The train was late. Instead of arriving at half-past four, it was well past five when I began to walk through the blazing heat from the station into the town. I asked a labourer the way to Max Gate: he told me to turn to the right, and that would take me straight there. Then I remembered that I had not found out the time of to-morrow's trains at the station. We were in the middle of the coal strike. I could not expect Hardy or his wife to know, and it would be painful if I were to outstay my welcome, or cause any trouble in departing. So I hurried back to the wrong station—there are two in Dorchester—and made my way across a cattleyard to the right one. It was nearly half-past five. They would have given me up.

The heat was killing. Dorchester pavements are made of boiling pitch. My bag grew heavier and heavier. Still, it was only a few hundred yards away. I hurried along the road I had been shown. It was interminable, but it ended in a railway bridge, a twisted fringe of new red-brick houses on the other side and then the open country. Once more I asked the way. "D' you see that house there in the trees far as you can see? That's Max Gate." The man pointed with his pipe. I saw a house roof among the trees. "Which is the nearest way?" "You can go round by the road"—he followed it round with his pipe. "But the *nearest* way is across the fields here."

I dashed across the fields. A wall and a barbed wire fence of many strands prevented me from bearing towards the house I had marked. I tried to make a short cut, but the barbed wire was impassable. I was in the road, having lost another five minutes. I asked again. "Oh, Mr. Hardy's house. That's it. You'll see a plate on the wall," and he

pointed a good six hundred yards down the road. I had, in my haste, mistaken the roof. If I had kept along the field path I should have been there long ago. Five minutes to six. I was dead-beat.

It was certain they had given me up now. I resigned myself, and walked slowly along. Then I realised that I was terribly thirsty. Of course, there couldn't possibly be any tea. And the utter impossibility of tea made me long for it. I forgot about everything else. Only visions of cups of tea.

Max Gate. I rang at the door, completely discouraged, with hardly enough energy to sponge my face with my handkerchief. Well, there I was.

Mrs. Hardy came forward. "I hope you won't mind. We've begun our tea."

A fire kindled in me. There *was* tea.

It is true. I scarcely noticed Hardy—not more than that he was wearing an old suit of check tweed, of the kind that I dimly remember long ulsters and travelling caps with ear flaps tied over the top were made of in the early 'nineties. Not until I had drunk two cups of tea. I drank five in all: I became self-conscious just before the sixth, and politely declined.

Hardy seemed very small. As he sat there sideways turned away from the light of the window, he seemed not so much old as shrunken. That old brown suit, so well worn, must have fitted him well once; it hung loosely on him now. A big grey bobtailed dog danced in the room.

"When he came to the house," said Hardy, "he was so sorry for himself that one was sorry for him—an insignificant, pitiful, shivering thing. He has become the absolute master."

It was a room without personality, full of gilt framed pictures, cretonne, mahogany and silver. Afterwards, when I looked more closely, I found that everyone of the pictures had some personal or local justification; but few of them combined with this the beauty of a work of art. The one obvious exception was the portrait of Hardy between fifty and sixty painted by William Strang, I think, in 1893. Hardy told me that Strang had been sent down by John Lane to make a drawing of him for some edition of his work. The drawing finished, Strang took out a panel and painted it

swiftly, within an hour. Some twenty years afterwards, Strang had returned to make another drawing (perhaps for the Mellstock edition) and Hardy had produced the old panel. Strang had quite forgotten it. "I painted well in those days," he said. He signed and dated it and had it framed for Hardy. It is a portrait of Hardy in full maturity, and it deserves the praise the artist gave it. Yet all I remember of it is the old-fashioned low collar, the big tie, and the generous moustache.

The rest of the pictures were watercolours, many by amateur hands, of places in Wessex; there was a sketch from imagination of Egdon Heath, sent Hardy by a lady. "The curious thing," he said, "is that it is very like what I meant." Another represented "Eustachia's Barrow," according to the written legend beneath. I pointed out that Eustachia was wrongly spelt. "I never noticed that before," said Hardy, "it was done by my wife." I was annoyed with myself for my clumsiness, although I could not have known. But when he told me, the misspelling of the name reminded me of his poem—

It was your way, my dear...

Personality in this intricate and detailed sense there was in the room; but none in the larger. No touch of fastidious arrangement, nothing to one's immediate sense inviolable, nothing from which one might have guessed at Hardy. It might have been the drawing-room of a country vicar who combined a passionate admiration for Hardy's work with antiquarian tastes: for there was a glass case filled with Roman bowls. They had been discovered when the foundations of Max Gate were being built. Three skeletons were also found in shallow oval holes scooped out of the chalk. Hardy said that he had kept it from his wife, that she might not be frightened; but he too had felt that the omen was evil. Still, nothing had happened.

"I never have cared for possessions," he said. "What is in this house has come together by chance. The things I have bought, I bought as I needed them, and for the use I needed them for. Those chairs, for instance, I paid thirteen shillings for at a sale. Now I'm told they're Chippendale. I remember my mother selling a dozen, much better than those, to the

cheap-jack at two shillings apiece, so that she could get some new-fashioned ones for her drawing-room. The cottagers bought them of him for half-a-crown. But I've never troubled about these things. A good table to write at and a solid chair to sit in."

After tea we walked to William Barnes's grave. Up the hill in front of Max Gate. On the left a double hedge and a field bright yellow with charlock—"the farmer says there's no way of getting rid of it; but I think I should have found a way." To the right a huge monstrous field stretching to the very edge of Dorchester, a field of 4,000 acres, running to the top of the bare ridge; beyond, bare ridge followed bare ridge to the horizon, with ancient earth-works always outlined at the crown. "Over that one lies Weymouth." He mounted the hill most gallantly. A man of fifty could not have gone better, with a strong dog tugging at the leash; but perhaps a man of fifty, even though he breathed harder, would not have taken those short angular steps with a bent knee. "All this is Duchy land. When I bought my few acres, I had no trouble about deeds. I held it direct from the Prince."

We paused at the top of the hill. Far away to the front and to the right showed a gap in the ridge. There twenty miles of heath country began. "Egdon Heath?" I said. But Hardy would do no more than admit a half-identity. Egdon Heath was partly based on it.

We entered a copse that thinned out within a hundred yards into a formal avenue of trees running through a park. The young leaves joined together overhead and the almost horizontal rays of the sun poured through them, making them one shining network from pure gold to a green that was nearly black. We stopped to look. The effect was very hard to get, he said, in watercolour. It was one, I replied, that the early English watercolourists, Cozens in particular, frequently captured. He agreed. The dog had been let loose and had to be leashed again. The farmer had said to Hardy one day: "Money can't pay for the damage that dog'll do my cows."

At the bottom of the avenue was the bed of a stream: it was called the Winterbourne, because it ran dry in the summer. The story was that no one had ever seen it run dry

or seen it flow again. ' One day the gentleman at the great house made up his mind to test the legend. He set up a sentry-box when the bed was dry and posted two watchers to relieve each other. Nothing happened: the bed remained dry. The man walked off for five minutes to get a drink of cider. He returned to find the Winterbourne flowing fast. When we reached the bed, it was dry. Hardy was surprised. It had been full three days ago. He had never known it dry so early in the year as May.

We passed some cottages huddled up against the high wall of the great house to which the avenue had once been planned as a drive. They had been put there, said Hardy, in the eighteenth century in order that the village might not be seen from the house—nor visited by the sun; they were dark, dank and unwholesome. Perhaps the new housing laws would do something for the poor denizens. But the supremacy of the great house could still be felt. The very path by which we walked to the little church had the air of belonging not to the people but to the park.

William Barnes's grave, with a Saxon pillar and cross in dark stone, was growing weedy again. The piety of his descendants, not even now believing that he was a poet, was spasmodic. Hardy thrust his stick into the turf, tied his dog to it, and led the way into the little church. It had suffered little: there was an old Jacobean altar-screen, and a severe and beautiful pulpit from which Barnes used to preach. One day towards the end of Barnes's life—he died in the early 'eighties—Edmund Gosse had made a journey down for the express purpose of seeing him. Hardy and Gosse had sat together to hear him preach. But instead of producing a special sermon for the London critic, Barnes had ignored their presence, and spoken just as he used to the villagers, homely, broad, simple stuff. Hardy had been greatly impressed. Perhaps a London critic was always more to him than he could be to Barnes.

An Elizabethan monument to the great family, with two reclining figures, stands to the left of the altar. They were... He had forgotten. He had known so well once. I looked round the base and could see no inscription. There in the failing half-light of the dim church he stood on the altar

steps peering into the obscurity above the tomb, trying, it seemed, to rescue something from oblivion—in vain. "My eyes are going. I have forgotten."

"You would not think," he said, "that Napoleon's name is signed in the register here."

"No." I hurriedly tried to fit a visit to Calne Winterbourne into what I knew of Bonaparte's career. There was no room for it, anywhere. But still, Hardy ought to know. I held my peace.

"Yes, he very nearly married the daughter of the house here. But the family would not have him. In those days they thought him a rather seedy adventurer. If they had known! But he lived with them for a long while, and signed as a witness to the daughter's marriage."

It was Napoleon the Third, of course! The story developed as we slowly made our way back to the village. Before he was presented to the rectory at Calne, William Barnes had been the master of the Dorchester School. He had an usher named Han. Han was Hardy's mother's name. He was persuaded that Han the usher and his mother were related; for the trait in Han's temper was just like her own.

One Sunday afternoon Barnes and Han were walking along the promenade which runs round the old wall of Dorchester, when they met Napoleon and the young ladies of the family, walking the other way. Just as they were passing, Napoleon thrust the cane he was carrying between Han's legs. Han saved himself from falling, swung round, and in a flash tossed his coat to Barnes. The two stood facing one another, while Barnes tried to hold Han back, and Napoleon's companions dissuaded him. After a long pause Napoleon apologised, laughing, and Han, still smouldering, walked away with Barnes.

"We have plenty of Napoleonic connections, you see. Still, it's doubtful whether there was any of Bonaparte's blood in Napoleon III."

"His silly behaviour with the stick suggests that there might have been," I said.

"Or was he merely trying to make them think there was? I have wished many times that I had taken more trouble to collect these memories when I was young. They're very

precious and valuable when one grows older. When I first went to London, in 1863, I heard Palmerston speak in the House of Commons—an extraordinary mixture of eloquence and puns. Somehow it made all the difference when I came to write *The Dynasts* that I had actually heard the man who was Secretary for War against Napoleon. I seemed to be able to touch hands with Pitt in a way I could never have done otherwise."

Afterwards Hardy showed me a stiff little watercolour of Westminster from the Green Park which he had made when he first came to London. It was done in the faintest of yellows and greens. In the middle distance was a man with a chimney-pot hat and a lady with a crinoline. It brought back the time to him, he said.

"Of course," he went on, "I always used to frequent the men who had fought against Napoleon who lived hereabouts. For some reason it interested me when I was young. And when I went to Paris, I went to see them at the Invalides. But even if they could make out what I said, I could not understand them. Their voices seemed very rough, even though they were so old, and the French they spoke seemed quite different from the French I knew—as perhaps it was."

I told him a story Sir Walter Raleigh had told me a few days before. In the 'sixties as a small boy of six or so he had been in Paris; and there he had been taken to see an old lady, who said that her first memory as a little girl of five was hurrying along the street holding her father's hand. Suddenly they were stopped by a man in a red cap holding a pike, and on the point of the pike, a head. "Prêtez le serment, citoyen!" —she remembered the man's words, and her own fear, because she somehow knew that her father was on the other side. However, he repeated the Republican oath and passed on.

"Yes, those things make the past very real. My grandmother saw a man hanging in a gibbet just over there. The post remained there for years. But lately—at the end of the war—they made a bonfire round it and only the charred stump remains."

"What a terrible waste the war was," he said. "They're beginning to see it now. It achieved absolutely nothing—only pure loss."

I said that his poem in *The Times* on the anniversary of the armistice had given expression to the deepest feelings of most of us; he had said for us what we could not say.

He was glad of that. He had been very nervous about the poem; but when the request came from *The Times*, he felt that he ought not to refuse. But he had not been satisfied with what he had done.

We entered the house. "We won't change for dinner—we call it supper, here—if you don't mind," he said. When I came back to the drawing-room, I found Mrs. Hardy there. "An awful thing has happened. I'm afraid it's one of the things that can't be believed. But I've lost the key of the wine-cellar. But there's whisky and cider."

I said it did not matter in the least: I wasn't a regular wine drinker.

Hardy came in again. He had changed his brown tweed for a dark suit.

"You have heard of the disaster? You're sure you don't mind?"

In the dining-room, Mrs. Hardy asked me: did I mind sitting to face the light? Hardy's eyes were weak. I sat opposite him. Mrs. Hardy was at the head of the table. We ate soup and mutton chops and trifle.

I poured myself some whisky. Hardy watched me.

"I think I'll have a little of that."

"Do you think you ought to?" said Mrs. Hardy.

"I'll have a little." He poured himself out a finger and a half.

We talked—about mead, and firmity; about modern writers—as a whole they seemed to Hardy "to have lost grip" —he felt very often that they did not know what they wanted to say; he said how he had enjoyed Katherine Mansfield's story, "The Daughters of the late Colonel," how he had laughed when his wife had read it to him. "She has got right into her characters. But she mustn't stop there. She must follow their lives right through to the end. You must tell her that—from me." What a lot of verse was being written now! He felt he must be getting out of touch; there was very little of it that he could appreciate.

He had lately pieced together the fragments of the

mumming play he had put into "The Return of the Native," and he had managed to fill it out with his own memories and the recollections of some other men. It was worth rescuing. Mrs. Hardy had had it printed.

Though the talk went on, the quiet was always waiting to descend; it descended on the conversation itself, which seemed to come from very far away. I heard continually the faint *plack-plack* of Hardy's teeth as he chewed. It drowned every other sound to my ear; it reasserted itself at every moment. He chewed with a quick persistent movement, and each mouthful of his lasted four times as long as my own. *Plack, plack, plack, plack.* Yes, he was very old.

Plack, plack, plack. It was impossible to find the courage to speak against it: as well try to stop the passing of time itself with words.

I was glad when dinner was over. For a moment I was alone with Mrs. Hardy in the drawing-room.

"I hope I'm not tiring him." And I felt a sudden sense of acute shame that I should be talking of Hardy behind his back, as though he were a child.

"No, I'm very glad you were able to come. You've taken him out of himself. He has been worrying over some business arrangement for the last two days. He has quite forgotten it now. He *will* do his business himself."

"But why doesn't he use an agent? The biggest agent in London would think it an honour to do his business—for nothing; I should imagine so, anyhow." I rushed into the opening I had made to escape from my sense of guilt. "And why aren't his poems sold simultaneously in America? I understand that he may not care. But it's almost a question of principle. Why should the Americans have the best poetry that England produces for nothing, while any common or garden English author takes care (quite rightly) that the American copyright remains his own?"

"You must tell him that when he comes in. We're comfortably off; but still a little extra money would be useful nowadays."

When he returned, Mrs. Hardy began: "Mr. Middleton Murry was saying that you ought to have an agent to sell your poems in America."

He thought for a moment. "I don't think it's worth while, now. And besides poems are such very personal things. I can't get quite used to being paid for them at all. I don't think I can make a change now. I'll see..."

I urged the question of principle. "Yes, there's that way of looking at it. I had forgotten. But the difficulty is that they're written almost as people ask for them. Not written to order, of course. But there's always someone who has been asking me. There's *The Fortnightly* for instance. About once a year I get a letter from Courtney saying: 'It's time we had another poem from you.' And if I've got one half-finished, I try to finish it and send it off. Then there's the poem in *The London Mercury*. I had a letter from Mr. Squire saying: 'If you don't send me that poem, I shall come down and fetch it.' There wouldn't be time to make arrangements in America."

"But you have only to say when you send the poem, that it must not be printed before such and such a date—six weeks ahead. That would give plenty of time."

Hardy seemed to think that the editors would not be pleased with that. "I'll see," he said. He turned more hopefully away from the subject. "These business arrangements are very trying, don't you think? I've spent two days trying to worry out a question of Canadian copyright. Does it belong to the English or the American publisher? It's too difficult."

Two days—of Hardy's time!

"But that's precisely what literary agents are for," I persisted. "All that kind of thing is easy to them. They like it."

"I have always been on such good terms with my publishers. They do a great deal for me. And I've known them so long.." Again he turned away with relief. "There's one thing I would like to have your advice upon. A man who works for the Clarendon Press was here the other day; and he urged me to have a thin India-paper edition of my poems printed. He said that when the Oxford Book of English Verse was printed on India-paper, the sale suddenly trebled. What do you think?"

"It's an excellent idea," I said. "Your *Collected Poems* make

rather a heavy volume—heavier than the thick Oxford Book of English Verse. People like books of poetry they can carry about easily. They read them on their holidays. As it is, they can only take the little Golden Treasury book of selections."

"I'm glad you agree. Do you hear that, Florence?" He turned to Mrs. Hardy. "Mr. Middleton Murry thinks that it would be an excellent thing to print the poems on India-paper. Now *that's*"—he turned back to me—"the kind of suggestion that M——'s like. They're very good about practical things like that."

I had a fairly clear conception of the kind of suggestion that M——'s didn't like.

Mrs. Hardy unlocked a bookcase and produced the privately printed pamphlet of the mumming play.

"Are you interested in valuable books?" said Hardy.

"I like to look at them; but I don't collect them. And I don't suppose I should, even if I could afford to."

"They don't interest me."

Mrs. Hardy put on the table under the lamp a number of privately printed books of Hardy's poems—one, of the first he had ever written.

"I don't think it's even a curiosity," he said. "But one day I turned it out. X—— happened to be here. He said: would I mind if he had some dozen copies printed to give to his friends? I didn't mind. And after that he printed a good many other scraps in the same way."

Mrs. Hardy took up the tale. "One day a friend of ours saw one of these in a bookseller's catalogue at twelve guineas. He wondered how it had got there, and he made up his mind to find out. Meanwhile he told us not to let Mr. X—— have any more scraps to print 'for his friends.' His friends turned out to be Y——'s the booksellers. So now I do them myself."

"It's one of her perquisites," said Hardy.

"Still, I don't suppose you make quite as much out of it as Mr. X——," I said, and I wondered whether Mr. X——, who was known as the possessor of one of the best Hardy manuscripts, came by it in the same way.

"Speaking of turning out things," said Hardy. "This morning I was hunting in a drawer and I came across a letter

from Meredith. I'll fetch it. It's rather interesting—in a way."

He went upstairs and reappeared with the letter. "My dear Sir," it began; it was dated late in the 'eighties. He would be pleased to see Mr. Hardy (Meredith wrote) in his little home at Box Hill, and he gave a long list of trains—three-quarters of the letter was trains. "Very faithfully yours," it concluded. "It's very stiff and formal," said Hardy. "And yet we had known each other fifteen or sixteen years then. He read my first book for Chapman and Hall."

It was ten o'clock; time to let him go to bed. I said good-night. There was the same impersonality in my bedroom. Everything was exquisitely clean and polished, but without centre or focus. The furniture refused all attempts at alliance. An overmantel with terra-cotta busts, one of Hardy himself, a capacious modern wardrobe in polished mahogany sneered, like parvenus at the solid old oak table. A proof of Strang's drawing of Hardy for the Mellstock Edition; a little picture of the Matterhorn with crosses and dotted lines in red ink, and underneath an inscription: "Whymper traced out the course of his climb on the Matterhorn on this picture for me in 187—. The cross marks where his companions fell."

I woke early in the morning and sat on the turf in the sun outside the door. The dog sprawled on the gravel at my side. The surrounding trees isolated the house completely from the surrounding country. Hardy came out, and we began to walk on the path that runs through the trees, making a square alley-way round the house. "It's never one moment the same," he said, pointing to the trees. "They change continually. When you know them, they are different every morning. I planted them; and now the waste wood from them is more than enough to keep us in firing for the year. One doesn't realise how fast they grow."

At breakfast he sat with a pile of letters. One was opened. It was from some remote cousin, enclosing an essay by his son, aged sixteen, and a photograph of the boy. His masters at school said he showed great ability. Would Hardy give his opinion of the essay, and advise whether the boy should adopt literature as a profession? "I've never seen either of them: I suppose I shall have to reply." His correspondents were so

persistent. For a time he had tried to answer them all; but now he had given up. They were always asking for specimens of his handwriting. He was sorry, but it was impossible; if he replied, his whole day would be occupied. But one thing had grieved him. A young man, who had been a friend of Rupert Brooke's, had asked for a fragment of his handwriting. He had not given it. And now he had learned that the man was suddenly dead.

Hardy walked with me on my way to the station, across the fields as far as the bridge. He had been safely articled to a famous Church architect when he was a young man; but the desire to write poems had taken hold of him. He sent them to the editors, but not one was ever accepted. So he thought he would try his hand at a story. His dream had been that he would make his living as a poet. Yet he had liked the architecture. He didn't know why he had turned away from it. These things were so.

He said I must come back with a bicycle and ride over the Dorset country; it was worth the knowing. A bicycle made travelling delightful. Now for him it was only a weariness of the flesh—the packing, the getting to the station, the hotels. But in the old days he had, by taking thought, reduced his luggage on a bicycle to ten pounds. Then he was free to learn the countryside. Did I know that excellent hairbrush with a mirror fitted to the back and a little slot to take the comb? An admirable thing. I must fit myself up like that, and come to him again. He would give me my cruising orders.

We paused at a little gully where the fields become the town.

"I must put the dog on the leash here," he said. "The town boundary begins halfway across the bridge. There he must be muzzled; here he is free." The dog tugged him to the middle of the bridge. We shook hands.

I turned back to watch him. In his old brown suit, and his dark grey felt hat, he went resolutely back. I saw the deliberate bend of his knee as he walked. He seemed, ever so slightly, to be stamping on the ground before him.

When men speak, as many do to-day, and as Shelley also might speak if he were alive, of "the eternal Values," meaning thereby the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, they beg a mighty question unawares. What they really mean is the Ideal values. For there is no reason why we should assume that the Beautiful is any more *eternal* than the Ugly, the True than the False, the Good than the Evil. The Good, the True and the Beautiful are not less involved in the flux of Becoming, because we love them. This surreptitious lifting of these particular Essences to a transcendental status of their own, from which their contraries are excluded, is a triumph of the Heart over the Mind: which is human but illegitimate.

To call the idea of the Good, as Plato and Shelley did, eternal in some different sense from that in which the Idea of the Bad is eternal, is merely to give a metaphysical sanction to a deep and undying desire of the human heart. We seek the Good and ensue it: if we do not, according to our powers, we are less than human: but the Good we seek is not eternal, or we should not seek it. We seek the best we can imagine in reality—more good, more truth, more beauty: the highest perfection we can conceive of earthly existence. But what we seek is not something beyond existence—as the Eternal is. Or if we do seek something beyond existence: a condition of perfection immune from change and decay, then we can have it at the price of acknowledging that the longing is a simple human desire. There *is* a condition beyond existence —Eternity indeed—but it is not entered after the death of the body, and is not a condition which we can conceive as a perfection of existence. Change and decay are the conditions of Life itself. To be immune from them is to be immune from Life.

That is my doctrine, or my belief. Shelley's was different. That brings me to the likeness and the difference between the thought of Shelley and Keats. It is subtle, and of surpassing interest. Take, for a beginning, the famous and lovely lines from *Adonais:*

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured 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...

The meaning seems to be plain. Through death, which is a liberation from life, we are gathered to the One, which is "eternal." But that plain meaning is deceptive. Shelley is not talking to such as you and me. He is talking to himself: bidding himself hasten to leave mortal life and fly to that transcendent felicity, where

The soul of Adonais like a star
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

By "the Eternal," in *Adonais*, Shelley undoubtedly means those whom we call "the immortals." Adonais has bought "a grave among the eternal" (VII); and more emphatically still (XLVIII)

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

It is "the kings of thought" alone who are "eternal." They alone are gathered to the One. What happens to the others is hard to discover; and the cynic might have some excuse for suggesting that in fact "the Many," instead of being the metaphysical description of all that is involved in existence—including Shelley himself—is hardly different from "the mob." That would be unfair, for Shelley includes among "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown"

Many more, whose names on earth are dark
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark....

These also are "robed in dazzling immortality." But all alike, known or unknown, are "kings of thought." And Eternity is reserved for them alone.

Now, this I hold is to degrade the conception of Eternity. Eternity is not at all the same as what we call the "immortality" of fame. They are generically different conceptions. And, if "immortality" alone be considered, though we may

set surpassing value on the immortality of fame—"the last infirmity of noble mind"—to restrict "immortality" to "the kings of thought" is, to my thinking, a far less noble conception than that of Jesus who declared that one solitary forgotten impulse of simple human love should gain a man a place in His Kingdom.

And what has the immortality of fame to do with the One? Shelley speaks nobly of the One. But if we press home his thought it eludes us. Adonais by his death "is made one with Nature." But was he not one with Nature during his life? In some mysterious way, by being freed from the clog of mortal clay, he becomes united with the Power

> Which wields the world with never-wearied love
> Sustains it from beneath and kindles it above.

It may be said that that is no more difficult than the Christian conception; and it may not be. But the Christian conception is at least humanised by the university of Forgiveness. In Shelley's it is only "the kings of thought" who are thus gathered into the stream of never-wearied love that sustains and kindles the universe.

I cannot imagine this Power as a reality unless it is immanent in the actual universe. It is as near to us in birth as in death, by land as by sea. But not so for Shelley. For him it is something from which mortal life is a separation—only just not entire:

> That benediction which the eclipsing curse
> Of birth can quench not.

The doctrine is like Wordsworth's in the Immortal Ode, though Shelley would hardly allow that Heaven was about us in our infancy. The shades of the prison-house close on us long before that. Birth itself is a curse, eclipsing the light of the One. Nevertheless, it is

> 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.

Let not the lover of these beautiful lines condemn me for sacrilege, because I seek to understand them. I can understand the sustaining love; and how it is blindly wove through

the web of being by all the creatures and all the elements; but I cannot understand how it burns bright or dim in "beast and earth and air and sea," according as these are bright or dim "mirrors of the fire for which all thirst." That this should be said of men, I understand. I take it that Shelley, in the case of men, is saying that as their consciousness more completely reflects the beauty of the One, so they are more perfect vehicles of the sustaining Love as which the One is manifested in the world of existence. But in what sense that can be true of animals and elements, I do not see, unless it is that Shelley conceives these as manifesting now more, now less, of Beauty. His thought would then be that there are moments when animals and elements—the non-human universe—appear irradiated by an extreme of Beauty, and these are the moments when the sustaining Love burns brightest in them.

Of such moments he appears to be thinking in Stanza XIX when he looks upon the early summer around him—*Adonais* was written in early June, 1821—and cries:

> 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;
> All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
> Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight
> The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

At any rate one cannot fail to connect this verse with the lines quoted previously. At this moment the stars of Heaven shine more softly beautiful, and the great surge of Love wells up in the brute creation. But to relate these two manifestations is arbitrary. In early summer the stars may shine more softly than in mid-winter; but they are assuredly not more beautiful than on a keen, cloudless, frosty night. And, though it is true that men's pulses quicken in sympathy with the onset of summer, that is because we also are part of Nature, as Lucretius understood who gave this primordial feeling its most splendid expression.

Moreover, if it be true that those humans who reflect in their consciousness the beauty of the One are indeed the

purest vehicles of its power, why need they hunger and thirst after death? They have conquered mortality in Life. They have become perfect instruments of the One. Why should they seek to be dissolved in it again? Their business is in life, and with life. It seems to me that there is a fatal weakness in Shelley's creed here. He does not know, in the last resort, whether the One is beyond and hostile to the Many, or within and informing it. He speaks both languages. And he is indeed, as he pictures himself in the poem, one "fleeing 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.

He is the victim of the divided mind, or the divided heart and mind. At one moment he accepts and glorifies Existence, at another he rejects and denigrates it. At one moment Life is the utterance of Love, at another it is the dull, dense Matter that clogs the feet of Spirit.

I come to this: that Shelley does not *satisfy* me in this matter. And whether or not I am unreasonable in my demand to be thus satisfied, I can only say that there are poets who do satisfy me, and that I believe this sense of final satisfaction is the supreme test of the greatest poetry. It is the power to awaken it which is, to quote the words of Robert Bridges, "the highest gift of all in poetry, that which sets poetry above the other arts: I mean the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of language on one point, so that a single and apparently effortless expression rejoices the æsthetic imagination at the moment when it is most expectant and exacting, and at the same time astonishes the intellect with a new aspect of truth." Precisely this I find rarely in Shelley.

I do not find it in *Adonais*. At the crucial moment, when I seek to press the thought home to finality, it seems to dissipate. "The One remains, the many change and pass." But what is the One if it is not the Many also: they *are* the One. It may be said that I am quarrelling with Plato, not with Shelley; but Shelley believed in Platonism, or wanted to believe in it. So did I once. But I found that Plato did not satisfy me.

Neither does Shelley's Platonism now. I do not believe, neither do I desire to believe, that

> 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...

Nor, I fear, could Shelley really believe it, for the last line of that stanza (XXXVIII which is addressed to Keats's reviewers) is this:

> While thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

Keats's reviewers had behaved stupidly, malignantly, cruelly; but are they therefore to be denied their portion of the Eternal (in Shelley's sense)? Or is Eternity reserved for those in whom "the One spirit's plastic stress" is supremely manifest, in whom the fire of Life and Love glows to incandescence? This is not Eternity, as I have said, but what men call "immortality," the fame which attends on the achievement of men whom Humanity must remember with love and will not willingly let die. These men are indeed wrought into the very substance of the human race. They are the leaven that leaveneth, the seed which dies and springs again; but they are not eternal, either in my sense or Shelley's. They are not a portion of something which "glows through Time and Change, unquenchably the same."

To me, who am no Platonist, that vision of an absolute and unchanging perfection is profoundly alien, and all that it implies. I do not, and cannot believe that Birth is a curse and an eclipse; that Existence is a degradation from Eternity. I do not believe that life is the sufferance of "the contagion of the world's slow stain," by the pure spirit which at death returns to that immutable perfection whence it once declined. Still less do I believe that Keats, though nobly and eloquently, was truly praised in the memorable verse (XL):

> 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.

That is not Keats, nor Keats's desire. I am not blaming Shelley for not having known Keats. He would not easily have understood him if he had. Keats was wise in holding himself aloof. Shelley's Keats is Shelley, as no doubt he had to be; and Shelley knew it.

> 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...

But what does deeply interest and impress me is the profound and subtle difference between Keats's belief and Shelley's. How strangely does phrase after phrase of the stanza describing Keats above recall the very words of Keats! Yet how different they are! "And that unrest which men miscall delight." Instantly, my mind returns to *The Ode on Melancholy*.

> 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
> Veil'd 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.

"Nevertheless, O for a life of Sensations rather than Thoughts." The ignorant who have jeered at that phrase, not knowing what it meant—to be one total sentient living thing,—might learn from that verse what a Sensation, for Keats, was. For that *is* a Sensation—a moment when all life and all living is gathered into an utterance: and we know, and are at peace. How many times in my life have those first two wonderful lines come unbidden to me and brought me calm! I compare them with: "And that unrest which men miscall delight." The former is Sensation, while the latter is Thought.

So, likewise, at the lines:

> 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.

my mind instantly recurs to the *Ode to a Nightingale*: or rather not instantly, for first I find myself trying to imagine Keats "mourning a heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain."

In vain I try to imagine that. A heart grown cold! Cold that heart, of which the last record we have is this:

"I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. O God! God! God! Everything that I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear... 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 heart. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery."

That heart would never have grown cold—that heart which has power to burst and break my own—time after time, for ever and ever, until I also am surprised.... But to return. Keats also saw heads grown gray; but he had seen more than that:

> 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 spectre-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 to-morrow.

He had more to mourn than heads grown gray; he had to mourn a brother who pined away, he had to mourn the knowledge of a like destiny for himself. Not something that might be, if he lived, had Keats to mourn; but something that was, while he lived—something that he was living. Not "the contagion of the world's slow stain" had he to fear, but the quick and spreading stain of a spot on the lung. Yet did he speak, or think, of the world's slow stain corrupting the spotless purity of his immortal spirit? Far otherwise. At this moment, he thought of "a system of Spirit-creation." He imagined that what was born into the world, in the life of a new-born child, was "an atom of perception"—or consciousness, as we should say—pure with a primal innocence, undifferentiated, one with God. "How then are these sparks which are God to have Identity given them—so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence?" A *bliss*, mark you. "How, but by the medium of a world like this?"

"This is effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years. These three Materials are the *Intelligence*—the *Human Heart* (as distinguished from Intelligence or Mind) and the *World* or *Elemental Space* suited for the proper action of Mind and Heart on each other for the purpose of forming the *Soul* or *Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity.* I can scarcely express what I but dimly perceive—and yet I think I perceive it—that you may judge the more clearly I will put it in the most homely form possible. I will call the *World* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read, I will call the *Human Heart* the *Hornbook* read in that School—and I will call the *Child able to read*, the *Soul* made from that *School* and its *Hornbook.* Do you not see how necessary a world of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul ? A Place where the Heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways. Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, it is the teat from which the Mind or Intelligence sucks its identity. As various as the Lives of Men are—so various become their Souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls [i.e. Souls having an Identity] of the sparks of His own essence."

To me it is as wonderful still as in the days when it first brought me illumination. It *satisfies* me. Not the world's slow stain of the brightness of the pure spirit, but the world's slow shaping of its blankness into beauty, by the heart's suffering in a thousand diverse ways. And this suffering ends not in moaning or in mourning: but in bliss, but not in bliss that puts an end to sorrow, but in the bliss which knows, the bliss of knowing, that this it is to be alive, to be an individual, to *be.*

This, it seems to me, is the reality—on the human plane—of "the one Spirit's plastic stress." What Shelley means by it, I am uncertain; and I do not believe that he was certain, either; but what Keats means in those sentences I know. What makes a Soul of an Intelligence is the plastic stress of Life. And Life is not Spirit, it is just Life—neither spiritual nor material, but itself; and Spirit is the pinnacle of Life's consciousness of itself, when Man stands apart from himself and with the eye of Imagination comprehends what he truly is. At such a moment, of which Keats there gives us ar

example, the eye of Imagination sees that Life is growth. In spite of all, a man is what he is by virtue of all that he has experienced. Life has shaped him, as the elements shape the plant; and his Heart—his sensitive experiencing nature—is the means by which he draws sustenance and shape from the world: the Heart which is the teat from which the Mind *sucks* its Identity. True, there is an inward law governing the process. Just as no plant is merely passive to its conditions, but submits the elements on which it feeds to a change which makes them congruous with its own nature; so no human is merely passive to his experience. The Life in him co-operates with the Life without. Unless he also were Life, he could not submit to Life. There would be neither confluence nor congruity. But because he also is Life, all Life has meaning for him, all life is capable of being absorbed by him. He enters by experience into his own, and his own enters into him.

To have the power thus to blend with all experience; to be so completely filled with Life as to be able to absorb everything that Life may bring, seems to me the human ideal. Such a man would be himself the meaning of Life. And certain men have some near to being this. No one, not even Jesus of Nazareth, could be it utterly: for Life would stop. No imaginable man could ever say: I have experienced everything. No man has returned from the grave. And in smaller things, less easily remembered, there is an essential and inexhaustible newness in experience. All we can say is that there have been natures of whom we know that they would have grown under the stress of all that Life could bring. Therefore their wisdom cannot fail us. They do not tell us: This is the Truth; they simply show us that this is the way. It is as though their lives, in closing, let fall a seed of perfect richness, and we, in so far as our hearts are good ground for that seed, do not fail them. We do not become like them—that is beyond our destiny; but we in turn become all that *we* might be, as they were all that they could be. And that seed is the secret of human Life: through it there grows in us the gift of experiencing, each after his kind. We atoms of Intelligence begin at last to read our Hornbook, and when we begin, we become aware of those former scholars who meant nothing to us before. They smile on us and whisper from the shades:

"That is the way. We can teach you nothing. We can only give you the assurance that that is the way, and there is no other."

And how they give this assurance is a mystery. For, though sometimes it is explicit, more often it is simply an inflection of voice, a modulation of tone, a quiet and subtle vibration which, coming as we surmise from a heart full of peace, disposes the listening heart to peace. Heaven knows how often it has come to me from two of Shakespeare's simplest lines—lines so simple that I am almost afraid to set them down.

The ousel with his tawny bill...
The plainsong cuckoo gray...

They work the magic. I know not what candour of simple love inspired them that they can thus breathe it forth again—love and peace.

Maybe it is a defect in my own heart; but that simple vibration never comes to me from Shelley. There is love in him, deep, burning and impassioned love; but it is love of a different kind from that which I need. I say "need" advisedly, for I fear that if I had written poetry it would have been poetry of the Shelley kind: abstract, intellectual, metaphysical. But my heart demands something different. Shelley's metaphysical anguish, his devouring desire for the Absolute—for that which is absolved from time and Existence—in my own way, I have suffered. But there is the old lesson to be learned: "One cannot *live* in rebellion," and love of the Absolute means rebellion against the Relative. I admire Shelley for never ceasing to rebel against the chains that fettered him to Time, for desiring more beauty than ever was in any beautiful thing; but though I admire, my heart does not grow warm. Or rather it grows warm *for* him, it is never made warm *by* him.

Yet what is the difference between Keats and Shelley other than the subjective one that the former brings me peace, and the latter not? I might say that Keats really believed in the One, where Shelley only tried to; or that Keats submitted himself to Life, where Shelley could not; or that Keats turned away from abstract Thought, where Shelley was intoxicated with it. All these things seem to me to be true, but somehow harsh in their truth, as though I sought to bring

Shelley to judgment for judgment's sake. I do not. But that he does not, nor ever could, satisfy me, is certain; and I have to know why. For many years, I have been content to leave it in abeyance, as though it were a question better left unmoved by me. But one is never suffered to avoid these questions for ever. And since circumstances have brought me full up against it, this is my finding.

Shelley is a magnificent example—and therein lies his greatness—of the divided being. To use the words in the sense in which Keats used them, his Mind triumphed over his Heart. His Mind conceived an absolute perfection, and when the experience which came to his Heart denied it, he did not submit his Mind to the deliverances of his Heart, but sought to annihilate them. For the absolute and immutable perfection which Shelley conceived, though it is of the kind often spoken of as "the Heart's desire," is not of the Heart at all. It is a purely mental ideality. What is strange and wonderful in Shelley is the depth of passion which he felt for the purity of the Idea. In this sense, he was indeed "a philosophic poet," since philosophy in the ordinary meaning of the word draws its life from this passion. But of the deeper philosophy which is humble before experience, and seeks instinctively to make the Mind the servant of Life instead of its master, Shelley knew little or nothing. Life must bend to the Idea. And since Life will not bend to the Idea, save in so far as the Idea bends to Life, Shelley was indeed pursued by the raging hounds of his own thoughts.

Yet there is this also to be said: that the Idea to which Shelley sought to bend Life was indeed pure, and so was the devotion he felt towards it. And he did attempt to translate his Perfection into human terms. It was for him an imperative in the realm of conduct. Though, when he failed to fulfil his own imperative, he tended to put the blame, not on himself, but on the sheer conditions of Existence as he conceived them —the inveterate hostility of Matter to Spirit. It was the alien environment which prevented him from true obedience to the law of Perfection. Such a thought Keats was incapable of entertaining. Keats believed neither in perfection, nor perfectibility. So that he was not haunted at the end, as Shelley was, by the grim idea of the everlasting recurrence. If

Shelley tried to reconcile his Perfection with Existence, he found either that it was immobile or unchanging and therefore not in Existence at all, or if it was in Existence it was subject to change and therefore imperfect.

> Another Athens shall arise
> And to remoter time
> Bequeath like sunset to the skies
> The splendour of its prime;
> And leave, if nought so bright may live,
> All earth can take or Heaven can give.

That is lovely; but a dream. Let us listen to the prose of Keats beside it.

"The most interesting question that can come before us is: How far by the persevering endeavours of a seldom appearing Socrates mankind may be made happy. I can imagine such happiness carried to an extreme—but what must it end in? Death. And who could in such a case bear with death. The whole troubles of life which are now frittered away in a series of years, would then be accumulated for the last days of a being who instead of hailing its approach would leave this world as Eve left Paradise. But in truth I do not at all believe in this sort of perfectibility. The nature of the world will not admit of it. The inhabitants of the world will correspond to itself."

And from that he passes to his conception of Soul-creation. But Shelley at the end of the final chorus of *Hellas* is forced back at the last to the position whence Keats had begun.

> 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!

In Keats the world is not weary of the past; it learns slowly and painfully from the past from which it grows. And so, he believed, should the individual man. And so do I believe.