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ESSAYS AND STUDIES
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VOL. III

COLLECTED BY W. P. KER

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1912

HENRY FROWDE

PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK, TORONTO

MELBOURNE AND BOMBAY

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WHAT ENGLISH POETRY MAY STILL LEARN FROM GREEK

(November 17, 1911)

My first words, ladies and gentlemen, must be an apology for the title of my address. It seems a rather arrogant theme for a Professor of Greek to lay before the English Association. But the truth is that I do not for a moment mean to hold up Greek literature as a model for all others to follow. Every great literature has something to teach the others. If ever, in some different life, it were my privilege to address an audience of ancient Greeks, there is nothing I should like better than to suggest to them some qualities which Greek literature might learn from English. But for the present the other side of the question is more fruitful. For some cause or causes the Greek poets produced extraordinarily successful poetry: I wish now to make a rough attempt to analyse some of those causes and see what we can learn from them.

Perhaps it is also rather a stale theme. Many generations of English critics have dealt with it, from Milton to Walter Pater. Matthew Arnold's *Lectures on Translating Homer* are, I see, now made into a school-book, with introduction and notes. Why, then, have I felt justified in treating the subject again? Because, I would say, though the Classics themselves remain fixed, our conception of them is continually moving. Since the time of, let us say, Matthew Arnold, our actual knowledge has vastly increased. The general widening of our studies, even the process of turning our focus of attention away from the Classics to more concrete and vivid subjects, has benefited our classical scholarship. It has greatly increased our knowledge, and

still more increased our power of imaginative understanding. If any one doubts that, I would ask him to think of three books, the first three that come into my mind: Dittenberger's *Sylloge Inscriptionum*, Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, and Mr. Zimmern's *Greek Commonwealth*; to reflect on the vast field covered by those three books and consider how little of it was known to Matthew Arnold's generation. I take Matthew Arnold as a type, not out of disrespect but out of respect. He is not merely a critic of the first rank, which would be one reason for choosing him, but he is also to an unusual degree fearless and lucid. One knows where to have him, and where to challenge him. I take him as the best type of a liberal, cultivated, and well-read generation, who applied to ancient poetry—and sometimes to modern: witness his treatment of Shelley—the somewhat blighting demands of unimpassioned common sense.

Let me begin by taking at length one small concrete instance, his attack on Ruskin about the meaning of the words *φυσίῳος αἶα*.

In the *Lectures on Translating Homer*. p. 8, he warns us that

‘against modern sentiment in its applications to Homer the translator, if he would feel Homer truly—and unless he feels him truly how can he render him truly?—cannot be too much on his guard.’

He then takes the famous lines, *Iliad* iii. 243, about Helen's brothers :

τοὺς δ' ἦδη κάτεχεν φυσίῳος αἶα.

‘So spake she; but they were already held by earth the life-giver in Lacedaemon far away, in their dear native land.’ And he quotes for dispraise Mr. Ruskin's comment :

‘The poet’, says Mr. Ruskin, ‘has to speak of the earth in sadness; but he will not let that sadness affect or change his thought of it. No; though Castor and Pollux be dead,

yet the earth is our mother still—fruitful, life-giving.’ This is a just specimen of that sort of application of modern sentiment to the ancients, against which a student who wishes to feel the ancients truly cannot too resolutely defend himself. . . . The reader may feel moved as he reads it; but it is not the less an example of ‘le faux’ in criticism; it is false.’

How does Matthew Arnold himself translate *φυσίκοος*? He does not say; I greatly fear that if pressed he would have said it was ‘merely an ornamental epithet’. As a matter of fact, I think we may safely say that it is an epithet steeped in primitive mysticism. Ruskin’s error was that, not having the clue, he did not go far enough. His feeling about the word was right; but he stopped short at sentiment, whereas the word really connoted religion. The ‘life-giving earth’ is that most ancient goddess who is the cause not only of the quickening of seeds but of the resurrection of man. We are familiar with the thought from St. Paul’s use of it as a metaphor. But the conception is far older than St. Paul, and lies in the very roots of Greek religion, as may be seen in Dieterich’s *Mutter Erde*. The detailed evidence would, of course, take us too long; but I may dwell on it thus much. The word *φυσίκοος* occurs only five times in ancient Greek poetry; twice it is applied to Castor and Pollux, who shared, as we all know, an alternate resurrection (*Il.* III, *Od.* XI); once in an indignant speech of Achilles (*Il.* XXI) it is used of a dead man who seems to have returned, ‘with twenty mortal murders in his crown’, from the grasp of the *φυσίκοος αἶα*; once in an oracle, quoted by Herodotus, of the dead yet ever-living Orestes, who holds the balance of victory between Sparta and her enemies. In the fifth instance (*Hymn to Aphrodite*, 125) this mystical reference is less clear, and I will not press it. The point may seem small, but it is of shades of meaning like these that the quality of language is formed. This is merely one of the cases in which greater knowledge has

widened and deepened our whole conception of Greek poetry, and swept magnificently away some of those limitations which we were taught to regard as 'Classic'.

Let us now take a few current judgements about Greek poetry and see what we can deduce from them. I will begin with some quotations from Coleridge's *Literary Remains*, as edited in Dent's Library by Professor Mackail:

'The Greeks were polytheists; their religion was local; almost the only object of all their knowledge, art, and taste was their gods; and accordingly their productions were, if the expression may be allowed, statuesque, whilst those of the moderns are picturesque. The Greeks reared a structure which, in its parts and as a whole, filled the mind with the calm and elevated impression of perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion.'

'Almost the only object of their knowledge, art, and taste was their gods'. That is in a sense true, though very misleading; for we know now that there were at least two stages in Greek religion: first, something more like the religion of other primitive though gifted races, something deep, turbid, formless, and impassioned; and secondly, an anthropomorphic movement, clarifying, humanizing, and artistic in its spirit, which led to the formation of the beautiful but somewhat unreal family of Olympian gods. Coleridge himself expresses the truth a little later in the phrase 'Bacchus, the *vinum mundi*'. A Greek θεός is much more adequately conceived as the 'wine of the world' than as an anthropomorphic statue. It is in that sense that we can understand such a line as that of Euripides,

δουλεύομεν θεοῖς, ὅτι ποτ' εἰσὶν οἱ θεοί.

Such θεοί are not anthropomorphic figures; they are wills or forces.

'Their productions were statuesque'. Coleridge explains what he means by this. 'They reared a structure which in its parts and as a whole' made an 'impression of perfect

beauty and symmetrical proportion.' This criticism seems to me profoundly true, though I should almost have thought that a better word for it was 'architectural'. It is borne out in the old contrast between the Gothic church with its profusion of detail, always rich, always exciting, sometimes ugly, and constantly irrelevant, and the Greek temple, in which every part is severely subordinated to the whole.

Another remark of Coleridge is rather curious to read at the present day: 'the Greeks, except perhaps Homer, seem to have had no way of making their women interesting but by unsexing them, as in the tragic Medea, Electra, &c.'. Here I think there is little doubt that we have simply moved beyond Coleridge, and thereby come nearer the Greeks. Yet his words are perhaps in their literal sense true. The romantic heroines of Coleridge's day needed a good deal of 'unsexing' before they stood fairly on their feet as human beings, with real minds and real characters. The romantic fiction of a generation or two ago could never look at its heroines except through a roseate mist of emotion. Greek tragedy saw its women straight; or, at most, saw them through a mist of religion, not through a mist of gallantry or sentimental romance. When people are accustomed, as Coleridge was, to that atmosphere, it is pitiful to see how chill and raw they feel when they are taken out of it. As a matter of fact, Greek tragedy as a whole spends a great deal more study and sympathy upon its women than its men, and I should have thought that, in the ordinary sense of the word, it was hard to speak of Antigone and Deianira and Medea, hard to speak of Andromache and Hecuba in the *Troades*, or even of Clytemnestra and Electra, as 'unsexed' creatures.

I will refrain from making quotations from Matthew Arnold on the subject of Greek religion. However tolerant the English Association may be, there are limits to the disrespect it will allow towards its great critics. But I must

protest in passing against his use of the *Mime* of Theocritus about Gorgo and Praxinoë as an instance of Greek feeling about religion. It is almost as if you took, as an instance of modern religion, one of Mr. Anstey's *Voces Populi* describing, say, a church parade.

The thing that troubles the ordinary English reader in Greek religion is that we are accustomed to a religion that is essentially moral and essentially dogmatic. Greek religion, in the first place, is not pre-eminently concerned with morality; it is concerned with man's relation to world-forces. In the second place, there is no omnipotent dogma.

I will, however, venture to take a sentence or two of Pater's. In one passage he sums up a discussion by saying that Greek art and literature are characterized by 'breadth, centrality, blitheness, and repose'. Now I daresay this is true, if only we understand the words as Pater meant them. But of course each word is really a species of shorthand, which summed up for him various long chains of thought. The danger is that we may accept them as catchwords.

'Breadth.' The word always reminds me of an ancient occasion when I was rehearsing a Greek play, and the stage-manager came forward in a cheery manner to the caste and said: 'Now, ladies and gentlemen, remember this is classical. Breadth! Breadth! No particular attention to meanings!' But I do not suggest that he was interpreting Pater rightly.

'Centrality.' This seems true; at least the Greek poets have a clear normal tradition of style. They do not strike one as eccentric or cliquey. But we must remember that they are largely central just because other artists and poets have gathered round them. They stood where they happened to be, and it is the rest of us that have made a centre of them.

Blitheness.' Well, their best work on the whole lies

in tragedies and dirges. I have tried hard to understand what the critics mean by the 'blitheness' of the Greeks. It perhaps means what I think would be quite true, that the Greeks have on the whole an intense sense of life, of the beauty of things beautiful, of the joyousness of things joyous, as well as of the solemnity or tragedy or horror of other things. Greek poetry in classical times is certainly hardly ever depressed or flat or flabby.

'Repose'. Yes; perfectly true, and undeniably characteristic. Every Greek tragedy, every great impassioned poem, ends upon a note of calm; and we all know the same quality in the paintings and statues.

Pater again makes great use of the word 'statuesque', and it is a word that I can never feel quite happy about. Stone, of which statues are made, has certain obvious qualities: it is cold, hard, immovable. Speech, of which literature is made, has its qualities also, and they are remarkably unlike those of stone. Speech is warm, swift, vibrating, transitory. The 'statuesque' theory is derived, I believe, from Winckelmann, who was very intimate with the statues and knew little of the literature; consequently he interpreted everything through the statues. And every dilettante is under the temptation of following him, since a decent acquaintance with the statues is an easy thing to acquire, and any first-hand acquaintance with the literature a hard one. We should also remember that the statues which Winckelmann and the critics of his time knew, and used to illustrate classical Greece, were almost without exception the work of the decadence, and to our present judgement markedly unlike the spirit of the great period.

Now what result emerges from this rather rough summary? First, that Greek poetry is full of religion. This is true and important, though religion, as we noticed, is not exactly what we mean by the word: classical Greek poetry is some-

how always in relation to great world-forces. Every great vicissitude, every desire and emotion, seems to be referred to the mysterious action of tremendous and inscrutable laws or wills — something that a Greek would call *θεός*. Secondly, it is full of this statuesque, or, as I prefer to call it, ‘architectural’ quality. Every work of Greek art is ‘a structure, which, in its part and as a whole, aims at an impression of beauty and symmetrical proportion.’ This is a principle of which the Greeks themselves were eminently conscious. Aristotle lays down flatly the law that a poem or tragedy should be *εὐσύνοπτον*, ‘capable of being felt as a whole’; and the writers on style from Terpander and Gorgias down to the later rhetoricians are never weary of telling us that a speech or poem must have ‘a beginning, a middle, and an end.’ We may perhaps think that we knew that before; but if we compare the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* with any of our English epics or long poems we can hardly help feeling an astonishing difference in this point of architecture. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are definitely ‘constructed’; they have a beginning, a middle, and an end. They have a story working up, through a great series of climaxes and digressions, to a tremendous height of emotion just before the end, and in the actual end reaching a note of calm. Turn them into English prose, and they still make thoroughly good stories. Now think of our epics, the *Faerie Queene*, the *Excursion*, the *Revolt of Islam*, *Endymion*; are they not to an amazing degree shapeless and lacking in this quality of the ordered whole? I cannot help thinking that this is the real cause of the failure of the long poem in English. A poet should always remember that poetry excels prose threefold and fourfold in sheer boring power; and yet our poets never seem to have grasped the importance of making a long poem organic in its parts, as they would a prose story. Even *Paradise Lost* is not from this point of view well-constructed. It may be that the future here has something

great in store for us. In this matter of construction we have learnt our craft on the short story, and brought it to a degree of perfection perhaps never equalled in the world. It seems now as if we were able to grapple with the long prose story. After that perhaps will come the turn of the long poem. Of course it is not the same quality of construction that is wanted. The amount of sheer excitement and intellectual interest which is needed to float a long prose story would probably kill an epic poem, or distract the attention from its higher poetic qualities. But there is an organic construction for a poem too, and that, I believe, is one of the obvious tasks that lie before us.

Religion, architecture; there is also, I think, a third quality, which critics have not noticed, or have treated as obvious. I mean the quality and precision of the texture out of which Greek poetry is woven. It is not merely that the actual words are finer in quality than English words, though I incline to think that this is true also. They build their palace of cedar, and we of rougher wood. But still more important is the actual precision of the building, the exact fitting of word into word with reference both to the emphasis and the rhythm. This depends greatly on the importance of quantity in Greek speech. To take one instance: it is the essence of Greek poetry that a long unstressed syllable shall nevertheless be felt as long; and that is a rock on which English verses make shipwreck by the thousand.

Perhaps some caution is necessary here. I am assuming, it may be said, a careful and studied pronunciation, which is really characteristic of Greek as a dead language spoken by scholars, just as it is of Latin for the same reason, but which probably never belonged to any language in the rough-and-tumble of common intercourse. Well, I cannot stop to debate the point at length, but I think

that, first, the detailed rules of Greek metre and the laws which the poets followed, and, secondly, the definite statements of grammarians of the best period, show that in poetry and public speech at any rate the Greeks did demand and intensely enjoy a very clear and accurate articulation. In the time of Philostratus people came in thousands to hear a sophist who could really pronounce the old poetry with full attention to quantity, to stress, and to that curious variety of musical tone which in post-classical times became important and was denoted by accents. But the question is highly technical and I will not discuss it further.

Let us go to Matthew Arnold again. 'Homer', he says, 'is rapid in movement, plain in style, simple in ideas, noble in manner.'

Yes; but what I think strikes me still more is the combined gorgeousness and precision of the texture.

ὥς ὅτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἄστρα φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην . . .
hós hot' en ouiranô ástra faeinên amfi selénên

Put it against the beginning of Pope :

'Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
 Of woes unnumbered, heavenly goddess, sing :
 The wrath that hurled to Pluto's gloomy reign
 The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain.
 Their limbs unburied on the naked shore
 Devouring dogs and ravening vultures tore . . .

Yes, it is rapid, plain, dignified, and full of fire ; but will it stand for a moment in point of texture and quality beside that

ὥς ὅτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἄστρα φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην . . .

Try even Milton :

Him the Almighty power
 Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
 With hideous ruin and combustion down
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
 In adamantine chains and penal fire,
 Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

That is much nearer : it is gorgeous and it is precise, only it has not quite the simplicity ; it has nothing near the musical swing. It cannot, for instance, in that metre, give habitually and as a matter of course full value to the long unstressed syllables. It is only by training that we are able to do this in the Greek hexameter, to say ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων, *āndrōn hērōōn*, without letting some two of the five long syllables go short, or to pronounce Pallas Athēnē rightly, and not as if it were ‘Pallus Atheený’. Our poets of course have tried the hexameter, fascinated by that swing. I take two passages that are selected for their merit in Ward’s *English Poets*, and I must ask you carefully to observe the rhythm of them, comparing them all the time with some one line of Homer.

Bút in the | interval | here the | bōiling | pēnt-ūp | water
 Frees it | self by a | sudden descent, attaining a basin
 Tēn fēēt | wīde ānd | ēightēē | lōng, with | whiteness and
 fury

Occupied partly but mostly pellucid, | pure, a | mirror ;
 Beautiful there from the colour derived from the green rocks
 under,

Beautiful | most ōf | all, where | beads ōf | foam uprising
 Mingle their clouds of white with the delicate hue of the
 stillness.

(Clough, *Bothie*.)

All day long they rejoiced ; but Athene still in her chamber
 Bent herself over her loom, as the stars rang loud to her
 singing,

Chanting of order and right, and of foresight warder of
 nations ;

Chanting of labour and craft, and of wealth in the port and
 the garner ;

Chanting of valour and fame and the man who falls with the
 foremost

Fighting for children and wife, and the field which his
 father bequeathed him.

(Kingsley, *Andromeda*.)

Now, what is wrong with the first of these passages is pretty obvious. It is that, on any standard approaching

that of the Greeks, the metre is beneath criticism. The stress on 'but', the utterly lamentable and destructive use of trochees instead of spondees, so that 'most of' and 'boiling' have to count as two long syllables, while 'pure, a' is apparently a dactyl. The poet, in fact, is completely baffled by the most obvious technical difficulties of the metre he has chosen. (This is not, of course, to deny the beauty of many lines and passages, and the interesting character of the poem as a whole.)

The passage from Kingsley is metrically ever so much better. The chief flaw is monotony, mainly at the beginning and end. The difficulty of starting on a stressed syllable drives the poet to monotonous construction—witness the four lines running beginning with a present participle—and there is almost as much monotony in the constant disyllabic endings. There is no approach to that perfect control of the instrument which enables Homer—and Virgil even more—to vary rhythms and pauses without ever spoiling the metrical structure.

The stressed syllable at the start and the disyllabic ending; those are two great difficulties of the hexameter in English; and it is by avoiding them, as well as by his wonderful skill in other respects, that Swinburne has contrived to build up in English a trisyllabic metre that will really stand alongside the Greek.

I have lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love
 hath an end;
 Goddess and maiden and queen, be with me now and befriend.
 Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that
 laugh or that weep,
 For these give joy or sorrow, but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
 Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold,
 A bitter god to follow, a beautiful god to behold?'

'Thou art more than the gods that number the days of our
 temporal breath,
 For these give labour and slumber, but thou, Proserpina,
 death.'

ὥς ἔρ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἄστροι φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην . . .
οὔτ' ἐμέ γ' ἐν μεγάροισιν ἑὺσκοπὸς ἰοχέαιρα

Yes ; the English will bear the comparison. The great difficulty is that such texture of language in English is somehow exotic ; it has to choose its language and diction with special exclusiveness. It hardly ever, not even in Mr. Swinburne's sea-poems, seems really to belong to the wind and the open air. The strong direct life of the Homeric hexameter comes out more in Sigurd the Volsung :

There Gudrun stood o'er the turmoil, there stood the Niblung child :

As the battle-horn is dreadful, as the winter wind is wild,
So dread and shrill was her crying and the cry none heeded
or heard,

As she shook the sword in the Eastland and spake the hidden word :

'The brand for the flesh of the people, and the sword for
the King of the World.'

Then adown the hall and the smoke-cloud the half-slaked
torch she hurled,

And strode to the chamber of Atli, white-fluttering mid the
smoke ;

And their eyen met in the doorway and he knew the hand
and the stroke

And shrank aback before her, and no hand might he upraise ;
There was naught in his heart but anguish in that end of
Atli's days.

But she towered aloft before him, and cried in Atli's home :
'Lo, lo, the daylight, Atli, and the last foe overcome.'

It is fine poetry, strong and beautiful. I hardly like to say anything against it ; but taken as mere metrical workmanship it remains rough. The texture of the language is sometimes cheap, sometimes a little affected ; the long unstressed syllable, on which everything depends, is little considered. The texture of Sigurd seems to me sometimes to be founded not upon Homer but, as it were, upon something earlier and cruder than Homer. Keeping the sound of it in your ears, think first of Swinburne, then of the words spoken to the

dead Achilles in Od. XXIV., how all day long down to evenfall the bravest of Achaeans and Trojans met their death

*μαρνάμενοι περὶ σείο· σὺ δ' ἐν στροφάλιγγι κορὴς
κείσο μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἵπποσυνάων.*

The Swinburne had one quality of great poetry, and the Morris another, but has not this, almost to the limit of perfection, both? It is so smooth and splendid, and at the same time so simple and strong.

In illustrating this question of poetic texture, I find I have been speaking chiefly of epic. Is there any future for this form of poem in English? Most people will say that they do not see any clear hope; but we must remember that such negative evidence is not of much value. As soon as somebody can see the thing he will do it. As we said before, it is chiefly architecture that is wanted. The texture, indeed, may need generations of craftsmen to build it up, but we must remember that Milton practically did make such a texture once, single-handed. The other great quality, religion, is wanted, too. Probably a great epic should be based on some traditional story with characters and incidents that already mean something in the national mind. At any rate it must be somehow related to life as a whole, or to the main issues and interests that men feel in their lives. It is some quality of this sort which makes in large part the special greatness of Mr. Hardy's *Dynasts*.

About drama I will say nothing at present, or almost nothing. The three qualities we have noticed, religion, architecture, and beauty of texture, are notably present in Greek tragedy, the religion most obviously so. As to architecture, whatever may have happened to the supposed classical unities, it is the rarest thing in the world to get a Greek drama which does not aim essentially at unity of effect and unity of atmosphere. I think that one of the rea-

sons why comparatively few scholars enjoy Greek tragedy as much as they enjoy Homer, say, or Theocritus, is that drama so seldom condescends to burst out into specially beautiful scenes or passages. Every character and every scene is subordinate. Each is doing work for the whole. It is largely the same quality, I think, which in modern times leads to the comparative unpopularity of Ibsen with lovers of literature. Of course I do not compare him with the Greeks in his actual attainment of beauty; but in his resolute disregard for the beauty of the part, and his concentration on the value of the whole, he works exactly in their spirit.

But how, you may say, does this comparative disregard of beautiful or eloquent language fit with my doctrine of texture? It does so in quite an interesting way. Let us spend a moment in considering it.

The diction of a poetical play in any language has, I conceive, two tasks, among others, laid upon it. It must be able to move up and down a certain scale of tension, the lower end tending towards ordinary conversation (or the illusion of ordinary conversation), the upper end towards sheer lyrical poetry. And secondly, it must somehow preserve always a certain poetical quality of atmosphere—something ideal, or high, or remote, however one may define it.

Now you will find that the ordinary English poetical play tries to solve this problem by (1) rather slack and formless metre; and (2) ornate, involved, and ultra-poetical diction. The first enables the poet to slide into prose when asking for his boots; the second, almost unassisted, has to keep up the poetical quality of the atmosphere. It does so, of course, at the expense of directness, and often with the ruinous result that where you have Drama you have killed Poetry, and where you have Poetry you have killed Drama.

Greek tragedy tried quite a different method. It has (1) a clear ringing and formal metre, based indeed on the

rhythm of ordinary conversation but perfectly strict in its rules and unmistakable to the ear. Comedy and Tragedy both write their dialogue in iambic trimeters, but the critics tell us that if in comic dialogue any line occurs which observes the metrical rules of tragedy, that line is a parody. So clear is the tragic rhythm. (See Mr. Neil's edition of the *Knights*.) (2) This metrical system, aided by a corresponding convention in vocabulary, so maintains the poetic atmosphere, that the language can afford to be extraordinarily direct and simple, though of course it can also rise to great heights of imaginative or emotional expression.

I may mention that these two points constitute part of the reason why, after many experiments in blank verse, I came to the conclusion that the tragic trimeter was best represented in English by rhyme. Rhyme gives to the verses the formal and ringing quality, remote from prose, which seems to my ear to be needed; it enables one to move swiftly, like the Greek, and to write often in couplets and antitheses, like the Greek. I also found that, while in neither case would English convention tolerate for long the perfect simplicity of language that is natural in Greek, it was possible in rhyme to write far more directly and simply than in blank verse. Blank verse, having very little metrical ornament, has to rely for its effect on rich and elaborate language. Rhyme often enables you to write lines as plain and direct as prose without violating the poetical atmosphere.

That is a digression, and my judgement may of course be wrong. But I believe you will find that one reward which Greek tragedy reaps from its severe metrical rules is that, the ear being satisfied and unconsciously thrilled by the metre, the language can at will cast away all ornament, and go straight for drama. In the greater part of the *Oedipus* you will find scarcely any deliberate eloquence, and scarcely any poetical ornament. What you do find in

every speech and every line is dramatic relevancy. There is beauty, of course, but not as it were a beauty that is deliberately sought and imposed upon the material. It is the beauty that necessarily results from clean well-balanced proportion, psychological truth, and intensity of feeling.

It is in lyric poetry that the difference between Greek and English, and, I will venture to say, the great technical superiority of Greek, comes out most strongly. I am considering, of course, as far as the two can be separated, technique and not inspiration. I am not for the moment concerned to deny that for sheer poetic beauty some quite simple English song, with no elaboration or subtlety about it, may stand as high as the choruses of the Agamemnon. I merely urge that in point of technique there is hardly any comparison. It is only in the last century that English poetry has begun to learn its business in the writing of lyrics, under the lead first of Shelley, and then of Swinburne. Some admirers of Elizabethan lyrics will, perhaps, here rise in indignation against me, but I must still maintain that in the matter of lyrical skill in the Greek sense Elizabethan song is absolutely rudimentary. I will base that statement on three grounds :

1. Elizabethan song cannot handle the trisyllabic foot. No English poet succeeded in doing so till the generation of Shelley.

2. No Elizabethan song can handle what the Greeks called syncope—that is, the omission of a short unstressed syllable, so that the long syllable that is left becomes over-long (as in ‘ Break, break, break ’).

3. No Elizabethan song can make anything of the unstressed long syllable.

These are three purely metrical points, but I would add another of wider range. The whole essence of lyric is rhythm. It is the weaving of words into a song-pattern, so that the

mere arrangement of the syllables produces a kind of dancing joy. Now the older English lyric seems to associate this kind of marked rhythm with triviality. It has no feeling for the sublimity of song as such. Even at the present day our clearest lyrical measures are almost confined to the music-halls. Many people still feel sublimity or even seriousness to be incompatible with good lyric rhythm. Now Greek lyric is derived directly from the religious dance; that is, not merely the pattering of the feet, but the yearning movement of the whole body, the ultimate expression of emotion that cannot be pressed into articulate speech, compact of intense rhythm and intense feeling. The two are not in Greek incompatible; on the contrary, they are intimately and essentially connected.

This rhythmical movement of the body accompanying the lyric leads naturally to an extreme precision in metrical values, a full valuing of each word. The long unstressed syllable comes by its due; trisyllabic and even quadrasyllabic feet like the *Ionic a minore* (˘˘˘, 'morituri'; 'in a palm tree') are easily managed; and syncope, which we find so difficult, is almost a central and necessary feature. It is curious to think how difficult it is for us to work words together into one of the commonest of Greek song-metres.

Παρθενή, παρθενή, ποῖ με λιποῦσ' ἀποιχέι;

Seldom again, seldom again, streaming across the twilight...

What we do is to help ourselves out by rhyme, that is, by a very clear stress on the last syllable of some member of the song, to make up for the rather blurred values in other places.

Again, in lyric also we find the architectural quality. A good Greek lyric always builds up to the rhythm of its final lines. To quote instances would take us too long, as each one would have to be proved in detail. But let any

one read the last two or three lines of each verse of the Fourth Pythian, and see how the rhythm is deliberately at certain chosen places entangled and checked, in order to run loose at the end in smooth trochees, with just the thrill of one resolved arsis. Almost any of the more serious lyrics of Euripides will show the same process. Let me illustrate this point of architecture in English. Take a good Elizabethan song—I tremble here at what I am going to say in this company of Elizabethan scholars, but my convictions will out—an Elizabethan song, in which a short line is purposely mixed with long lines :

Come unto these yellow sands.
 And there take hands . . .
 Curtsied when you have, and kiss'd,—
 The wild waves whist . . .

Here there is no architecture. There is no lyric value in the shortness of that line. The ear has not been led up by a series of rhythms to demand that particular short line, and to feel a special rest and refreshment when it comes. You will tell me that it was meant to be accompanied by music, and that by working the music right you can make the two-beat line seem as if it had four beats. Quite true, but no defence ; admit modern music, and all thoughts of metre and poetic rhythm go to the wall. Modern music would justify the first column of the *Daily Telegraph* as a lyric.

Now take a poem that *is* architectural :

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
 Star-inwrought,
 Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day,
 Kiss her until she be wearied out ;
 Then wander o'er city and sea and land,
 Touching all with thine opiate wand ;
Come, long sought !

.

Thy brother Death came and cried
 ‘Wouldst thou me?’
 Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy eyed,
 Murmured like a noontide bee:
 ‘Shall I nestle near thy side,
 Wouldst thou me?’ And I replied:
 ‘No, *not thee!*’

If you read this carefully, a little dreamily, letting your speech move somewhat in the direction of song, you will find that the short lines, especially at the end, are deliberately built up to. That is what makes them serve their rhythmical purpose. They give just the rhythm that the ear has been made to hunger for.

I could write at great length upon this subject, but I have perhaps already indicated the main point, and I would like now to call attention to one particular misunderstanding.

Professed imitations of Greek rhythm in English poetry seem to me to have gone practically always on quite wrong lines. They ought to have been more intensely rhythmical than the average; as a matter of fact, they think they are being Greek when they lose lyrical rhythm altogether. Swinburne, as usual, as far as metre is concerned, gets triumphantly to the heart of the matter:

She is cold and her habit is lowly,
 Her temple of branches and sods;
 Most fruitful and virginal, holy,
 A mother of gods.

That has a strong clear rhythm, full of majesty and sweetness, and it happens to be practically a Greek metre:

Μελισσοτρόφον Σαλαμῖνος
 ὦ βασιλεῦ Τελαμών,
 νάσου περικύμονος οἰκή-
 σας ἔδραν.

But if you take, let us say, the most admired lyrics in *Samson Agonistes*:

God of our fathers, what is man?
 That thou towards him with a hand so various,
 Or might I say contrarious,
 Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
 Not evenly, as thou rul'st
 The angelic orders and inferior creatures, mute,
 Irrational, and brute;

or,

This, this is he: softly awhile;
 Let us not break in upon him . . .
 Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
 That heroic, that renowned
 Irresistible Samson, whom unarmed
 No strength of man or fiercest wild beast could withstand?
 Who tore the lion as the lion tears the kid . . .

This may be poetry of the highest order; I can quite imagine that those who know it by heart even enjoy the rhythm of it. But surely it is clear that the rhythm is exceedingly obscure, and utterly unlyrical in quality? There is far more swing, far more approach to song, in Milton's average blank verse. The beginning of the second passage is, I believe, meant to represent choriambics:

This, this is hé; sóftly awhile;
 Lét us not bréak in upon him;

but they cannot be considered successful choriambics. All writers of lyrics in English must face a disagreeable fact. When there is a perfectly clear and simple metre to give guidance, their readers will very likely, though not certainly, pronounce the words right; but the words themselves, however carefully chosen, will hardly ever guide the average reader through a difficult or original metre. It is a habit of our pronunciation to make the word-accent yield constantly to the sentence-accent; and if you try in lyric to impose on the reader some rhythm to which he is not accustomed; if you try to produce some rhythm that you think rare and beautiful, or particularly expressive of some phase of feeling; you must prepare for disappointment.

Unless you write in words of quite unmistakable rhythm (I recommend 'mulligatawny' and 'hullabaloo'), you will find yourself disappointed. The readers will twist your line away towards some rhythm with which they are thoroughly familiar. This is one reason among many why these unrhymed quasi-Greek metres are so certain to fail of their purpose. Take another case, from Matthew Arnold's *Merope*:

Much is there which the sea
Conceals from man, who cannot plumb its depths.
Air to his unwinged form denies a way
And keeps its liquid solitudes unscaled.
Even earth, whereon he treads,
So feeble is his march, so slow,
Holds countless tracts untrod.

But more than all unplumbed,
Unscaled, untrodden is the heart of man;
More than all secrets hid the way it keeps:
Nor any of our organs so obtuse,
Inaccurate, and frail,
As those wherewith we try to test
Feelings and motives there.

Now I do not say that the thought of these verses is unpoetic or dull, or that the expression is particularly bad; but I must say that the verses seem to me, as lyrics, to have absolutely no value at all. Put them for a moment beside the *Forsaken Merman* or *Strew on her roses, roses*, and see how not only are there no metrical refinements, no polysyllabic feet, no syncope, no unstressed long syllables, but there is no trace of the first necessity of lyric—the rudimentary swing that urges you in the direction of singing. Let us turn from that song to what I conjecture to have been its original model, a chorus in the *Choephoroi*:

πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ τρέφει
δεινὰ δειμάτων ἄχῃ—

Pólla mén | gá trefoí | deína deímatón aché |

Read this with its full metrical values, not being afraid, and realize that it was accompanied and its rhythm inten-

sified by some kind of movement or stress of the body ; then notice how all through the stanza your voice starts and is checked and is checked again, and then floods out in a ringing line. You will see that this solemn poem has a rhythm so marked that in modern England we should only think it fit for a music-hall ; and secondly, that it is full of metrical architecture. What a feeling of peace comes to the ear at the recurrence of the metrical phrase of the last line !

αἰγίδων φράσαι κότον.
aigidôn frasai kotón.

In general, I believe that in the last generation or two we have been gradually getting to understand Greek metres—though of course we do not understand them fully yet—and at the same time English poetry, especially that of Shelley and Swinburne and their followers, has been developing its own lyrical genius. We are now, for instance, able to handle four-syllable feet as well as three-syllable. Compare

When you've 'eard the East a-callin' you won't never 'eed
 naught else—

No, you won't 'eed nothink else—

But them spicy garlic smells,

And the palm-trees and the sunshine and the tinkly
 temple bells,

On the road to Mandalay ;

and

*σὺ δέ μ', ὦ μάκαιρα Δίρκα,
 στεφανηφόρους ἀπωθῇ
 θιάσους ἔχουσιν ἐν σοί.
 τί μ' ἀναίνῃ ; τί με φεύγεις ;*

And the palm-trees | and the sunshine | —

τί μ' ἀναίνῃ ; | τί με φεύγεις ; |

We are learning to manage syncope, from 'Break, break, break', onward through various beautiful Christy Minstrel songs like

Gra-asshopper sittin' on de swee-eet 'tater vine ;

and so getting back to lines like

'Ιδαῖά τ', 'Ιδαῖα, κισσοφόρα νάπη,

the clue to which is that the 'I of the second 'Ιδαῖα is equal to -- or -~ :

‘And Ida, da-ark Ida, where the wi-ild ivy grows . . .’

Also several writers of lyric since Swinburne have observed their unstressed long syllables. Just at the moment, it may be, we are in the midst of a reaction against metrical accuracy, and many of our best writers pursue an effect like that which the Greeks found in the *scazon* and similar freaks of verse, a deliberate disappointment to the ear, producing some feeling of pathos or frailty. Personally, I think it is overdone, but the fact that good writers do it probably shows that they have at least an ear for accurate rhythm, and could produce it if they were not, for the moment, tired of it.

I have spoken much about texture and much about architecture ; I have said little of the other of my three points—the constant connexion of Greek poetry with religion. I feel that to some any emphasis laid on this point may seem almost paradoxical. To them, perhaps, Greek religion is a thing of anthropomorphism and lucidity ; a thing essentially without mystery, and almost without earnestness. I would ask them to remember the background ; to remember the evidence of anthropology and even of Greek religious inscriptions, and to realize that older religion which vibrates at the root of Greek poetry. The lucidity of the fifth and fourth centuries was imposed on a primitive tangle of desires and terrors, on a constant sense of the impending presence of inscrutable world-forces. Greek poetry is never far removed from the primitive religious dance. Some particular lyric may stand perhaps half-way between an original magic dance meant to bring rain and

fill the water-springs, and a more artistic dance meant to show its own gracefulness. But at any rate there is always about it some trace of the first, and through the beautiful words and graceful movements of the chorus one feels the crying of a parched land for water.

‘All thoughts, all passions, all desires . . .’ In our art it is true no doubt that they are ‘the ministers of love’; in Greek they are as a whole the ministers of religion, and this is what in a curious degree makes Greek poetry matter, makes it all relevant. There is a sense in each song of a relation to the whole of things, and it was apt to be expressed with the whole body, or, one may say, the whole being. It sometimes seems as if, for poetry, we have become too much differentiated. Poetry needs intellect, of course, and rots without it. But poetry also needs the whole self in one piece: every thought in it needs the support of a subconscious and instinctive emotion. With us, when inspiration comes, the ruling powers of the brain are apt to dance their Bacchic dances alone; in classic Greek one feels that the underground inarticulate impulses moved more along with them, as they did with Euripides’ Bacchanals, when

all the mountain felt
And worshipped with them; and the wild things knelt
And ramped and gloried, and the wilderness
Was filled with moving voices and dim stress.

It may or may not be possible for men to arrive again at this oneness; it may be that it depends on the actual quality of the daily life we live, and that to the Greeks of the great age, not for long, but for a few glorious generations, the daily stuff of life was really a thing of splendour. If so, our task in the matter of poetry is wider, and perhaps harder, than we thought; but it is a task to which voices on every side are calling us.

GILBERT MURRAY.

SOME CHILDISH THINGS

THE earliest of our kind (for it is a historical rather than a literary interest which attaches to the verse codes of mediaeval behaviour in Dr. Furnivall's *Babees' Book*) were written by Dr. Watts.

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, when Watts was in the forties, there appeared a small volume, *Songs Divine and Moral*. These were poems for children, and intended for their instruction. 'It may often happen', says the good doctor in his frank engaging preface, 'that the end of a song running in the mind may be an effectual means to keep off some temptations, or to incline to some duty, when a word of Scripture is not upon their thoughts. This will be a constant furniture for the minds of children, that they may have something to think upon when alone, and sing over to themselves. This may sometimes give their thoughts a divine turn, and raise a young meditation': and, later, 'I have added, at the end, some attempts of *Sonnets on Moral Subjects* for children, with an air of pleasantry, to provoke some fitter pen to write a little book of them.'

Such was the purpose, and, allowing for the tone of the Age, which regarded its young aspirants with acrimony, it was a purpose that was reasonably fulfilled. 'He is one of the few poets', says Dr. Johnson, shining in a left-handed compliment, 'with whom youth and ignorance may be safely pleased.' It depends, I suppose, for what haven the little barks are sailing. Perhaps to-day we should consider the moral teaching banal or injurious.

Particularism is regarded not as a necessary human failing,

but as a difficult virtue. Little Britishers are to remember what there never was danger they would forget:

'Tis to thy sov'reign grace I owe
That I was born on British ground.

The elect are to remember their election:

Lord, I ascribe it to thy grace,
And not to chance, as others do,
That I was born of Christian race,
And not a Heathen or a Jew.

Few other moral virtues are directly inculcated. The precepts are chiefly negative. Children are not to steal, to lie, to quarrel, to keep bad company, to scoff, to swear, to curse, to idle, or to get into mischief. They are not to do any of these things; and the one thing they are to do is to be obedient. It showed the necessity of Rousseau's coming that these innocents should be instructed as potential criminals. For the rest, this code is set out in a sort of spoon English so childishly complacent that it has stuck to every memory:

Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For God hath made them so.

Or again, and from a different poem:

Birds in their little nests agree;
And 'tis a shameful sight
When children of one family
Fall out, and chide, and fight.

Or, once more, perhaps the best known of all:

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From ev'ry op'ning flower!

In works of labour, or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

One selects the happy hits, but it will be understood there is not much opening in these terse moralisms for the play of the poetical imagination. Occasionally there is a stroke of contemptuous dignity :

How proud we are ! how fond to shew
Our clothes, and call them rich and new !
When the poor sheep and silkworm wore
That very clothing long before !

And much that we have to say on the true Doctrine of the Infinite as applied to Art is summed up in the remonstrance to the draggled kite that soaring believed it could altogether dispense with attachment to the earth :

Oh ! foolish kite, thou hadst no wing,
How could'st thou fly without a string !

There is too a flight of Wordsworthian plainness in 'The Beggar's Petition :

Oh ! take me to your hospitable dome ;
Keen blows the wind and piercing is the cold ;
Short is my passage to the friendly tomb,
For I am poor and miserably old ;

but, in the main, Watts as a poet is a religious poet, and he warms most in such places as his 'Cradle Hymn'. There are few verses specially good, but the effect of the whole is that of crooning. You can hear the human dove making its purr of liquid satisfaction as it sits covering its young :

Hush ! my dear, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed !
Heav'nly blessings without number
Gently falling on thy head.

.

Yet to read the shameful story,
How the Jews abused their King ;
How they served the Lord of glory,
Makes me angry while I sing.

See the kinder shepherds round him,
Telling wonders from the sky !
Where they sought him, there they found him,
With his virgin mother by.

See the lovely babe a-dressing,
 Lovely infant, how he smiled !
 When he wept, the mother's blessing
 Soothed and hushed the holy child.¹

These are poems, then, adapted, or considered by their Age to be adapted, to children ; at any rate, they are adapted to the comprehension of a child. They are poems for children, for their instruction.

Nearly three-quarters of a century later appear Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, but these are not poems for children at all. They are poems about children ; that is to say, about life viewed innocently. Sometimes the child is taken as the spokesman, but, broadly speaking, there is no attempt to get back into the mind of the actual child. It is true that in some degree they appeal, or at any rate do not appear altogether strange, to very young children. 'The Lamb' is not a thing of marvel to a child, but it is not strange. The simplest of these poems express something for children before they have learnt to think. But as soon as this happens the poems are too simple and are despised. A child of fourteen or fifteen sees nothing in them, does not even recognize herself in them at seven or eight—is all at sea with what seems to her the uncouth. In short, these poems do not trace, nor do they attempt to trace, the processes of the child mind. They are not about toys. On the contrary, they exhibit a primitive wonder, and when not a primitive wonder a primitive delight in the simplest things. They show Blake's imagination working at its purest, as far as

¹ As a hymn-writer, Watts is known wherever the English language is sung :

O God, our help in ages past,
 Our hope for years to come, —

though Watts wrote 'Our God'. It was Watts, too, who wrote the lines beloved of Arnold :

When I survey the wondrous cross
 On which the Prince of glory died.

possible almost untinged by reflection. The mind is occupied with impressions, or, in Blake's words, if one may vary a verse of his own, with perceptions:

The good are attracted by perceptions
And think not for themselves.¹

It is the impact upon the opening eyes of the soul of the collected mysteries of earth:

The skies of day, the moon, and the stars of night.

Thus there is 'The Lamb', where innocent delight in existence alone is portrayed; and 'Infant Joy', where this delight has become personal and lyrical. Again, there are poems about children, the least childish imaginable, where the babes are seen from a superiority at once tender and wistful—the little company in 'Holy Thursday', with 'their innocent faces clean'; or Mary, Susan, and Emily with their sweet round mouths, 'The opening eyelids of the morn'.

Some foolish comparison has been made between the best of Dr. Watts's pieces and those wonder-strokes of Blake:

Abroad in the meadows, to see the young lambs
Run sporting about by the side of their dams,
With fleeces so clean and so white;
Or a nest of young doves in a large open cage,
When they play all in love, without anger or rage,
How much may we learn from the sight!

That is to talk baby language.

When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still.

¹ Blake's actual verses are:

The good are attracted by men's perceptions,
And think not for themselves,
Till experience teaches them to catch
And to cage the Fairies and Elves:

where, of course, he is referring to the perceptions of *other* people.

'Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies.'

That is to speak the speech of mortality.

The 'Songs of Experience' are not different but by subject from the 'Songs of Innocence'. They betray a similar naive wonder, only here at the misery and terror of the earth. 'The Lamb' has its accurate counterpart in 'The Tiger', and 'Infant Joy' in 'Infant Sorrow'. 'Ah, Sun-flower' is a sigh for aspiration, and in the nurse's song about children the innocence and insouciance of her charges are brought into startled contrast with the deceits of the world. All these poems, need I say, are saturated with poetical imagination.

Nearly a century later,¹ Christina Rossetti published a volume called *Sing Song*, of which the sub-title very correctly is 'A Nursery Rhyme Book'. These are poems for children, nor ill adapted either (*me judice*) to the children of the later Victorian days; little dainty tiny poems,

¹ I pass over 'The Daisy' and 'The Cowslip', 1806 (?), by Miss Turner. Except that the punishments are more suited for children than the prospective gallows of Dr. Watts, these verses mark no advance, and I mention them only to say that they also are 'cautionary stories'.

Of Jane, Ann, and other Taylors, especially of Ann, 'let me indulge myself in the remembrance':

Little Ann and her mother were walking one day,
Thro' London's wide city so fair;
And bus'ness obliged them to go by the way
That led them thro' Cavendish Square.

How forcibly did the verse—

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place to make it well?
My Mother--

impress itself on my infant sensibility, and for how much of genuine and not to be expressed affection did these poor words stand to me! I suppose there is no English male of my years or more who does not still remember them.

with not too much in them, not too difficult to be comprehended by children of that good Age. To-day and for our children, complex little maturities, they are perhaps too single and uncynical. Her voice has 'such a silver sound'.¹

In her verses children are seldom directly admonished, but the moral flavour is not absent. The chief virtue inculcated is one of which the young have abundance, for I suppose we have to grow old to grow discontented :

If all were sun and never rain,
There'd be no rainbow still ;

or, more poetically, in a staid sort of parable :

There is but one May in the year,
And sometimes May is wet and cold ;
There is but one May in the year
Before the year grows old.
Yet though it be the chilliest May,
With least of sun and most of showers.
Its wind and dew, its night and day,
Bring up the flowers.

A child could understand that, though the voice is not the voice of a child. Similarly, here is a very simple statement to call the child's attention to the beauty of earth :

Where innocent bright-eyed daisies are,
With blades of grass between,
Each daisy stands up like a star
Out of a sky of green.

Perhaps this is too lightly stressed to be heard by small ears. More explicit is the following morsel :—

Dancing on the hill-tops.
Singing in the valleys,
Laughing with the echoes,
Merry little Alice.
Playing games with lambkins
In the flowering valleys.
Gathering pretty posies.
Helpful little Alice.

¹ Mr. Goldwin Smith invented the phrase for Cowper, with what propriety let it not be agitated !

If her father's cottage
 Turned into a palace,
 And he owned the hill-tops
 And the flowering valleys,
 She'd be none the happier,
 Happy little Alice.

How strange it is that in speaking to little people we must lie or suggest a lie! It is true that small girls are as happy in cotton as in silk, but grown-up women know the difference.

If her father's cottage
 Turned into a palace,

 She'd be none the happier;

but *he* would be in ecstasies with the exchange. Why should poets have this facile predisposition, and make light of the comforts of civilization? The morals are sounder when drawn from Nature:

An emerald is as green as grass;
 A ruby red as blood;
 A sapphire shines as blue as heaven;
 A flint lies in the mud.

 A diamond is a brilliant stone,
 To catch the world's desire:
 An opal holds a fiery spark:
 But a flint holds fire:

which is Emerson's doctrine of Compensation in a nutshell.

Sometimes in this charming volume, not often, there are poems that would not interest a child, poems about babies and meant for consumption in the sixth form at Miss Pinkerton's, expressing in fact very prettily in baby language, that is to say in words that might be used by a child, a mother's feeling for her babe:

My baby has a mottled fist,
 My baby has a neck in creases;
 My baby kisses and is kissed,
 For he's the very thing for kisses.

Sometimes, again, there are poems not meant to comfort children, but to suggest to them a sad thought—children like sad thoughts:

Sing me a song—
 What shall I sing?
 Three merry sisters
 Dancing in a ring,
 Light and fleet upon their feet
 As birds upon the wing.
 Tell me a tale—
 What shall I tell?
 Two mournful sisters,
 And a tolling knell,
 Tolling ding and tolling dong,
 Ding dong bell.

That is perfect—the lithe movement caught to a nicety, and enough of tragedy for the young, for what they like to contemplate in death is only the poetry of stopping.

How great a favourite this volume would be if only children were leisurely and poetical! For though its quality of poeticalness is very marked, it is not as much beyond children as Blake. 'There is no offence in 't', for while there is a slow under-current of poetical feeling, the poetical imagination is rarely employed with sincere strength. Occasionally, no doubt, it is so employed, as in the distant 'Wind-Flowers', which is not a child's poem at all, being all built up of cloud and suspiration, faded petal and evening breeze; or as in the flower song:

Roses blushing red and white,
 For delight;
 Honeysuckle wreaths above,
 For love;
 Dim sweet-scented heliotrope,
 For hope;
 Shining lilies tall and straight,
 For royal state;
 Dusky pansies, let them be
 For memory;
 With violets of fragrant breath,
 For death—

the passing of life's colour by transition, and her going out in a scent.

Other poems of such quality, I hasten to assure younger readers than I am likely to have, there are none. They would be rare in any book; but what I mean is that the bulk of the poems are poems for children—such pretty things, prettily said, as are meet for babes.

Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses* is a composition of another kind. It is an exceedingly crafty and alluring production. Blake is too deep for children, and Miss Rossetti is too faint, too finely faint for most; but they understand and like Stevenson as soon as they are out of the nursery: old men, too, like his tiny volume just as much.

The reason is, there is a mixture. In the first place, there are many poems which are the actual words and thoughts of a child. In the second place, there mingle with these, poems of a quite different order—poems that are very obviously the glance backward of the grown man at childhood. There is, too, a third class, in which this distinction is not preserved, and where in one poem both voices are heard, the junction sometimes being effected exquisitely, the old sentiment coming in at the end like a smile.

Besides this, it must be remembered that the poems of the first class do not come altogether in a lump, nor do the poems of class two. There is no order: separate poems from either class are sprinkled anyhow over the pages, so that in fact the effect of class three is given throughout. It is a quadrille, let us say—the Lancers, anything you choose; anyhow, a dance with interweaving figures in it, in which grandparents and grandchildren thread the 'grand chain'.

There are four sections in the book, as Stevenson has divided it—the kind of division that is made to break up a table of contents, serving no other purpose. Of these the first section is much the best—a happy mingle of both attitudes; the second section has one or two pretty pieces;

while the third is thin except for the two at the end. The fourth is very short and very pretty, but it does not contain any poems where the child is speaking.

In the whole volume there is very little of poetical imagination, strictly so called—just a pleasing *souçon* of it here and again. It comes out almost entirely in the last part, as in the lines to Louis on the beach of Monterey, a tiny note, very delicate, very plaintive—just R. L. S. at his best—no more, but so much; or as in the heartfelt quatrain from the middle-aged man to the ageing mother:

You too, my mother, read my rhymes
For love of unforgotten times,
And you may chance to hear once more
The little feet along the floor;

or in the memorable verses that close the volume, bidding the child reader not to pine for the child in the book:

For, long ago, the truth to say,
He has grown up and gone away,
And it is but a child of air
That lingers in the garden there.

The only other poem I find I have marked 'P' in my copy is that called 'Young Night Thought'. More properly it could be called 'The Young Poet', this *processus virorum* and caravan of momentary beings, all bound for the same inn:

At first they move a little slow,
But still the faster on they go,
And still beside them close I keep
Until we reach the town of Sleep.

It is the ancient thought of Pascal, that the waters of Babylon are ever flowing and falling and carrying us away.

To speak of the *Child's Garden* generally, its unique triumph is the way in which the poems (some of them) represent the child mind. Of these there must be nearly twenty. Take the verses on the first page:

In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer, quite the other way,—
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

This is really a child speaking, and reminds one of Mr. Kenneth Grahame's *Golden Age*. One opens the book again at 'Looking Forward':

When I am grown to man's estate
I shall be very proud and great,
And tell the other girls and boys
Not to meddle with my toys.

These verses are not about a child, or for a child: they are by a child. This is just the thought—true even in the detail of expression—with which the small person's bosom swells. 'A Good Play':

We sailed along for days and days,
And had the very best of plays;

is as perfect a piece of mimicry. Auntie and her skirts are seen from a level less important than hers:

Whenever Auntie moves around,
Her dresses make a curious sound;
They trail behind her up the floor,
And trundle after through the door.

This is to present you with the impression as registered—registered, received, and left at that. I remember still the shape of my writing-master's forefinger with which he used to demonstrate the inelegancies of my copy.

As close to the facts of the child mind are the famous

‘Land of Counterpane’, the infantile ‘My Shadow’, ‘The Lamplighter’; and childhood’s awesome and half-delight-some terror in the rapturous ‘Shadow March’. The ‘Escape at Bedtime’ has the same kind of toddler’s excitation, but this time without the fear :

and the pail by the wall
Would be half full of water and stars.

I do not know that ‘Foreign Children’ could be bettered :

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
O! don’t you wish that you were me?

The child does not think so very differently from Dr. Watts :

’Tis to thy sov’reign grace I owe
That I was born on British ground.

No; but it puts it differently, with less, let us say, of corporate satisfaction.

But why should one multiply instances when ‘Farewell to the Farm’ is all we want?

The coach is at the door at last ;
The eager children, mounting fast
And kissing hands, in chorus sing :
Goodbye, goodbye, to everything!

To house and garden, field and lawn,
The meadow-gates we swang upon,
To pump and stable, tree and swing,
Goodbye, goodbye, to everything!

And fare you well for evermore,
O ladder at the hayloft door,
O hayloft where the cobwebs cling,
Goodbye, goodbye, to everything!

Crack goes the whip, and off we go ;
The trees and houses smaller grow ;
Last, round the woody turn we swing :
Goodbye, goodbye, to everything!

Here is the absolute recapturing of the child's point of view, the unalloyed and literal transcript of what passes in the mind of the child. And this is done for the first time in English verse, done here and in twenty other places—done to perfection.

The second great triumph of the book, perhaps its greatest artistic triumph, is the way in which these genuine child poems are mingled, and apparently so innocently, with ironical child poems, poems that pretend to be written by children but speak so very like ourselves. What, for instance, of arresting oddity did any child ever see in saying grace? The quizzical adjective and the patronizing tone both come from the poet:

It is very nice to think
The world is full of meat and drink.
With little children saying grace
In every Christian kind of place.

Nice! Well it is intellectually pleasing to contemplate that opposition—on the one side those uplifted 'paddock' hands, and on the other the vast howling hungry world spinning on its voyage of shade.¹

Here, too, is a poem full of 'matter and not common things':

From breakfast on all through the day
At home among my friends I stay;
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do—
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

¹ I have often thought that 'Pulvis et Umbra' was a half statement, and that, to complete the picture, this verse ought to be at the head of it. As to 'paddock' hands they are Herrick's, in his 'Grace for a Child':

Here a little child I stand,
Heaving up my either hand,
Cold as paddocks though they be.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

Francis Thompson speaks of this same place more effortfully
as being

In the land of Luthany, and the tracts of Elenore.

It is where the 'Mistress of Vision' presides; but Thompson
for all his effort has no adjective for the experiences of the
imagination as sufficing as 'curious', 'the curious music
that I hear'!

Sometimes the irony is open:

Every night my prayers I say,
And get my dinner every day;
And every day that I've been good,
I get an orange after food.

The child that is not clean and neat,
With lots of toys and things to eat,
He is a naughty child, I'm sure—
Or else his dear papa is poor.

Ah, ha! so you are laughing, Mr. Stevenson!

Sometimes the 'grown-up' knowledge is merely insinuated,
as throughout the 'good' advice in 'Good and Bad
Children', with its culminating

Cruel children, crying babies,
All grow up as geese and gabies,
Hated, as their age increases,
By their nephews and their nieces.

The suggestion of an unmarried prime is one from the
Ancient Mariner. And here is a thing ancient, aged, with
graveyard mould beneath its pinafore:

When the bright lamp is carried in,
The sunless hours again begin ;
O'er all without, in field and lane,
The haunted night returns again.

Now we behold the embers flee
About the firelit hearth ; and see
Our faces painted as we pass,
Like pictures, on the window-glass.

Must we to bed indeed ? Well then,
Let us arise and go like men,
And face with an undaunted tread
The long black passage up to bed.

Farewell, O brother, sister, sire !
O pleasant party round the fire !
The songs you sing, the tales you tell,
Till far to-morrow, fare ye well !

Now all these when mingled with the genuine child poems make a very pretty medley, a medley of sentiments and points of view, and this medley is pleasing. The great originality of the book is doubtless in the genuine child poems, but the originality of the charm is in the mixture of these with poems that only pretend to be so—poems that like the one just quoted are really occupied with *our* thoughts about life.

Sometimes this mixture appears not by the mingling of poems of different *genre*, but in different parts of the same poem. In the 'Marching Song',

Bring the comb and play upon it !
Marching, here we come !

we have the voice of the genuine child playing at soldiers, at least we have that in the first three verses. In the fourth we slip into Stevenson :

Here 's enough of fame and pillage,
Great commander Jane !
Now that we've been round the village,
Let's go home again.

Great commander Jane!’ It is like putting the toys back when one has done with them.

How cunning is ‘My Ship and I’, where Stevenson waits for the last line to speak for himself:

O it’s I that am the captain of a tidy little ship,
Of a ship that goes a-sailing on the pond ;
And my ship it keeps a-turning all around and all about ;
But when I’m a little older, I shall find the secret out
How to send my vessel sailing on beyond.

For I mean to grow as little as the dolly at the helm,
And the dolly I intend to come alive ;
And with him beside to help me, it’s a-sailing I shall go,
It’s a-sailing on the water when the jolly breezes blow,
And the vessel goes a divie—divie—dive.

O it’s then you’ll see me sailing through the rushes and the reeds,
And you’ll hear the water singing at the prow ;
For beside the dolly sailor, I’m to voyage and explore,
To land upon the island where no dolly was before,
And to fire the penny cannon in the bow.

All this is the purest child’s talk, the purest child’s planning, from the first line to the penultimate, till, in fact, the grin in the word penny. Similarly, though in a graver sort, a touch of old and serious meaning creeps in at the close of ‘The Gardener’.

In this volume there are very few poems merely about children. ‘My Kingdom’, *about* the child’s world, is such a one, however, and ‘Travel’ too: surely one of the most charming things in the volume, the whole romance of the nursery seen in retrospect, the dainty argument of a play written later—*Peter Pan*. There is also the famous explanation of the child’s happiness—

The world is so full of a number of things,
I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings—

a happy and true explanation, but an explanation that never occurred to a child.¹

Yet poems of this character are very infrequent. What are frequent are genuine child poems. What are common are ironical child poems. What are not infrequent are poems that are both at once. Sometimes the interweaving of the two sentiments is very subtle, as in 'A Good Boy', where one type of child is speaking, a beastly type, only to break into the sweetest R. L. S. at the end. Sometimes, as in 'Winter Time', we have Stevenson looking at the world through a child's eyes and using a child's voice; but it is Stevenson making himself small, Stevenson who so liked to play at once with words and things :

And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress;

and sometimes we have a poem which can only be characterized as containing both the imagination of a child and the thought of a man —

The lamps now glitter down the street ;
Faintly sound the falling feet ;
And the blue even slowly falls
About the garden trees and walls.

Now in the falling of the gloom
The red fire paints the empty room :
And warmly on the roof it looks,
And flickers on the backs of books.

Armies march by tower and spire
Of cities blazing, in the fire ;—
Till as I gaze with staring eyes,
The armies fade, the lustre dies.

Then once again the glow returns ;
Again the phantom city burns ;
And down the red-hot valley, lo !
The phantom armies marching go.

¹ Mr. Bridges offers the same explanation, but without pretence :

A coy inquisitive spirit, the spirit of wonder,
Possesses the child in his cradle when mortal things
Are new.

Blinking embers, tell me true
Where are those armies marching to,
And what the burning city is
That crumbles in your furnaces?

We come to a stop with this question, which we shall never answer. We all know it is the City of Imagination; but why it is that man lives there, and for what purpose—what indeed is that far country in which he dwells—if we knew that, there would be no more secrets to tell.

A. A. JACK.

A LOVER'S COMPLAINT

THE poem entitled *A Lover's Complaint*, printed at the end of the volume of Shakespeare's Sonnets when they were published in 1609, is interesting enough on its own account to have received more attention than has hitherto been paid to it. In most modern editions of the Sonnets it is ignored, or only mentioned casually. Nor has it received any very careful study in editions of Shakespeare's Poems. In Mr. George Wyndham's edition, for instance, there are only a few rather perfunctory notes on it. The only serious discussion of it of which I am aware, is in Sir Sidney Lee's introduction (pp. 49 and 50) to his facsimile reprint of the 1609 quarto. To this he has added some further valuable notes, textual and linguistic, in the *Caxton Shakespeare*.

This comparative neglect is the more strange, because the piece is expressly ascribed to Shakespeare, and was published as an appendix to the Sonnets, upon which, as much as or more than on any of the plays, comment and interpretation have for many years been concentrated. It obviously cannot be ignored in considering the problem of the Sonnets, and more particularly, that part of the problem which deals with the way in which they reached Thorpe's hands, the MSS. from which they were printed, and the circumstances of their publication. Nor can it be neglected in any general consideration of Shakespeare's poems taken apart from the plays, whether we regard it as an authentic work of Shakespeare or not.

This is a question which has been left undetermined by

the few critics who have touched upon it. Swinburne, whose judgement on such a matter no one could afford to pass by, and who so seldom left his judgement on such a matter doubtful, is here for once curiously ambiguous. He includes *A Lover's Complaint* in a general reference to Shakespeare's 'actual or possible work', and adds that it has two (superbly Shakespearian lines) in it—presumably ll. 288-9—'which any competent reader's memory will naturally and gratefully detach from their setting and reserve for his delight.' But he leaves it quite uncertain whether he thought these lines to be actual Shakespeare, or whether he would detach them from their setting in authorship as well as in quality.

What Lee (*loc. cit.*) says on the subject is worth quoting, with some brief comment :

'The attribution of the poem to Shakespeare', he says, 'may well be disputed. It was probably a literary exercise on a very common theme by some second-rate poet, which was circulating like the Sonnets in written copies, and was assigned to Shakespeare by an enterprising transcriber.' The 'enterprising transcriber' must of course here be taken in connexion with Lee's whole theory as regards the 1609 volume ; namely, that it was in the full sense a pirate publication, not merely unauthorized, but stolen. This theory, however probable it may be, falls short of being proved. It is true no doubt, as Lee says elsewhere, that 'a dedication from the publisher's and not from the author's pen was, unless the substitution was specifically accounted for on other grounds, an accepted sign that the author had no hand in the publication.' But at most this only assigns to Shakespeare what Lee calls 'passive indifference'; and such indifference may be of different degrees. All we can say for certain is that Shakespeare did not formally accept any responsibility for the publication of the volume, or for its containing what it does contain.

Lee goes on : 'The reference (ll. 209-10) to

deep-brain'd sonnets that did amplify
Each stone's dear nature, worth, and quality,

combines with the far-fetched conceits to suggest that the writer drew much of his inspiration from that vast sonnet-literature which both in France and England abounded in affected allusions to precious gems.' It is of course the corner-stone of Lee's theory of the Sonnets that this was just the source of their inspiration ; so that this point would be indifferent as regards Shakespeare's authorship, or if anything rather in its favour than against it. We may, however, note that this particular affectation, 'couplement of proud compare . . . with earth and sea's rich gems', is expressly censured in Sonnet 21. The further fact that 'the typography of the poem has much the same defects as the Sonnets' points to no conclusion. The MS. was probably in both cases faulty, the printer was certainly in both cases careless, but he was, on any theory, the same printer. The printer's errors are of such a kind that we must suppose that in neither case were the proofs corrected by the author. But Shakespeare, though he was, as we know, a swift writer, was so far as we can judge no great reader—no great reader, that is to say, of books : and most likely he never corrected a proof-sheet in his life.

The only other opinion as to authorship that I need quote is the most recent, that of Mr. Masefield ; and I must quote it only to dissent from it. 'It is a work of Shakespeare's youth,' he says, 'fresh and felicitous as youth's work often is, and very nearly as empty.' I do not know how far Sir Sidney Lee would still hold by an *obiter dictum* in his Life of Shakespeare, that 'if, as is possible, it be by Shakespeare, it must have been written in very early days.' Careful study leaves its authorship doubtful, but makes one thing pretty nearly certain, that whether it be by Shakespeare or not, it is not a work of Shakespeare's youth.

This will appear on a more detailed consideration of its vocabulary, syntax, and style. First, however, for the sake of clearness, it will be well to set down the actual facts.

The quarto of 1609 in which it appeared (licensed on the 20th of May, and on sale before the end of June in that year) consists of forty leaves. The first two leaves contain the title-page, 'Shakespeare's Sonnets never before imprinted', and the publisher's dedication to Mr. W. H. The next thirty-two and a half leaves contain the text of the Sonnets. Then on the verso of the thirty-fifth leaf follows 'A Louers Complaint by William Shakespeare', filling the remaining five and a half leaves of the volume. At the end of it, as at the end of the Sonnets, is the word 'Finis.' This is all the external evidence we have to go upon.

The poem itself consists of 47 stanzas (329 lines) in rhyme royal. The management of the verse is not distinguishable from that of the *Lucrece* of 1594; but this verse was a settled form, in which we find but little metrical variation between one artificer of the period and another. The language, however, presents peculiarities which distinguish it sharply from Shakespeare's other poetry. These may be taken now under the three heads mentioned: (1) Vocabulary, (2) Syntax, (3) Phrasing; the last of which leads up to further consideration of the more subtle and imponderable element which we call style.¹

I. VOCABULARY.

Almost the first thing which strikes one on reading the poem is that this is highly mannered, and that the mannerism is not daring or even inventive, but rather laboured

¹ Here I may make the Baconians a present of the following fact. The printed title of the poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, by William Shakespeare, may be anagrammatized, without any playing fast and loose with the exact spelling, into a very startling statement: 'I, Bacon, write all plays; he, rival, makes poems.'

and tortuous. It does not, as Shakespeare habitually does, 'keep invention in a noted weed', so that even strange words sound natural and right where they occur. Going into it more particularly, we find :

(1) Words which do not occur elsewhere in Shakespeare. Of these there are twenty-three : *plaintful* (l. 2), *untuck'd*, *sheav'd* (l. 31), *maund* (l. 36), *affectedly* (l. 48), *enswath'd* (l. 49), *fluxive* (l. 50), *fastly* (l. 61), *browny* (l. 85), *termless* (l. 94), *habitude* (l. 114), *weepingly* (l. 207), *annexions* (l. 208), *invis'd* (l. 212), *pensiv'd* (l. 219), *enpatron* (l. 224), *phraseless* (l. 225), *congest* (l. 258), *supplicant* (l. 276), *extincture* (l. 294), *plenitude* (l. 302), *unexperient* (l. 318), *lover'd* (l. 320).

In this list we may particularly notice the large number of Latinisms : *fluxive*, *habitude*, *annexion*, *congest* (=heap together), *supplicant*, *extincture*, *plenitude*, *unexperient* ; and the fondness for coining adverbs : *affectedly*, *fastly*, *weepingly* ; and participles : *sheav'd*, *pensiv'd*, *lover'd*.

To these twenty-three non-Shakespearian words should perhaps be added seven more :

sistering (l. 2) : *sister* as a verb occurs in one of the prologues in *Pericles*, which are generally held to be wholly non-Shakespearian.

forbod (l. 164) = forbidden.

acture (l. 185) : but *enacture* occurs in *Hamlet*.

paled (l. 198), meaning not, as in Shakespeare, fenced, but pale ; it may be merely a variant spelling of *pallid*.

encrimson'd (l. 201) : but *crimson'd* occurs in *Julius Caesar*.

impleach'd (l. 205) : but *pleached* occurs in *Much Ado*.

blend (l. 215) = parti-coloured : *blended* in an analogous sense occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. v, 'this blended knight, half Trojan and half Greek.'

(2) Words used in a different sense from their Shakespearian use. Of these there are sixteen, as follows :

fickle (l. 5), meaning delicate or 'nesh'.

storming (l. 7), with the sense of raising a storm over :
' storming her world '.

occasion (l. 86), in the sense of impact.

parcels (l. 87), meaning locks of hair.

phoenix (l. 93), used as an adjective, and apparently meaning newly-sprouting.

cost (l. 96), apparently in the sense of coat (*coste, côte*). It is curious that there is the converse doubt in l. 236, where *coat* seems to mean *cost*, though it may perhaps bear its ordinary meaning.

charmed (l. 146), in the sense of exercising charm.

mood (l. 201), in the sense of tint or colour.

talents (l. 204), meaning locks of (ruddy or golden) hair, like *parcels* already cited.

radiance (l. 214), used in a highly technical sense= power of vision, in accordance with one particular theory as to the nature of the sense of sight.

similes (l. 227), apparently meaning, or substituted through confusion for, symbols: a most curious usage. *Simile* in its ordinary sense is fairly common in Shakespeare.

distract (l. 231), as an adjective=separate.

suit (l. 234), used collectively and=body of suitors.

caged (l. 249), in the sense of cage-like or encaging.

impress (l. 267), in the sense of strike against or attack.

suffering (l. 272); with the meaning of painful.

In this list we have to note the recurrence of two characteristic features in the vocabulary of the poem which have already appeared in list (1) above: namely, the partiality of the author for Latinisms (*occasion, distract, impress*); and for participial neologisms (*storming* and *suffering*, analogously to *sistering*; and *charm'd* and *caged*, analogously to *sheav'd, pensiv'd, lover'd*.)

This mass of *prima-facie* non-Shakespearian words or usages of words in a poem of only 329 lines raises of itself

the question of Shakespearian authorship, though it falls short of pointing distinctly to an adverse conclusion. But, taken together with the list next following, it points distinctly to this, that if the poem is by Shakespeare, it belongs not to his early youth, but to his fully developed middle (or later) period. Some of the words already cited have, as we have seen, analogies in *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Julius Caesar*.¹ But there is a further set of words which arrest attention by their strangeness, and which only occur in the Shakespearian plays of that middle or later period.

I now give a list (3) of these : there are twelve of them.

reword (l. 1), also in *Hamlet*.

concave (l. 1), also in *Julius Caesar*.

pelleted (l. 18), also in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

orbed (earth) (l. 25), also in *Hamlet* (orbed ground).

commix (l. 28), also in *Cymbeline*.

grained (bat) (l. 64), also in *Coriolanus* (grained ash).

(nature's) outwards (l. 80), also in *Troilus and Cressida* (beauty's outward).

pieced (=enhanced) (l. 119), also in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Winter's Tale*.

dialogue (as verb) (l. 132), also in *Timon of Athens*.

brokers (l. 173), also in *Hamlet*.

amplify (l. 209), also in *Coriolanus*, *King Lear*, *Cymbeline*.

cautel (l. 303), also in *Hamlet*.

We may further note, that with two of the words cited in list (1), *annexions* and *extincture*, may be compared words which occur once each in plays of that period, *annexment* in *Hamlet*, and *extincted* in *Othello* ; and with two more of

¹ The extraordinary Latinisms of *Troilus and Cressida*, which make its diction different from that of all Shakespeare's other plays, are one among many indications that this enigmatic and repellent drama was written under a powerful disturbing influence from without, and to some degree 'against nature'.

them, *termless* and *phraseless*, may be compared the couple *shunless* and *aidless*, which occur in one single line in *Coriolanus*.

II. SYNTAX.

Under this head three notable peculiarities are to be observed, all alien from Shakespeare's ordinary usage, though instances of them are to be found in his undoubted work.

(1) Ellipsis of subject :

- l. 5. Ere long [I] espied a fickle maid full pale.
- l. 272. And [it] sweetens, in the suffering pangs it bears.
- l. 312. And, veil'd in them, [he] did win whom he would maim.

(2) Ellipsis of verb :

- l. 8. Upon her head [was] a platted hive of straw.
- l. 190. Among the many that mine eyes have seen, [was]
Not one whose flame my heart so much as warm'd.

(3) Asyndeton : this is so largely used as to give a distinct colour to the style. The most striking instances are :

- ll. 44-7. gave the flood . . . cracked . . . found.
- ll. 51, 52. 'gan to tear ; cried, O false blood !
- ll. 170-4. And knew . . . heard . . . saw . . . thought.

The influence of such distinctive points in vocabulary and grammatical construction on our judgement as regards the authorship of this or any other work depends on their cumulative effect. Singly, or in small proportion, they count for nothing. If, for example, we take *Lucrece*, a poem of undoubted authorship and known date, we can find in it a few instances of all or nearly all the linguistic points I have taken. Thus, under vocabulary we find : (1) three words which do not occur elsewhere in Shakespeare, *appaid*, *physiognomy*, and *quenchless* ; also *mot* (= motto), which occurs in a probably non-Shakespearian part of *Pericles*, and *cabinet*, which does not occur elsewhere in Shakespeare

except once in *Venus and Adonis*.¹ (2) Two words used in a different sense from what is otherwise their Shakespearian use, *askance* as a verb, and *intrude* as a transitive verb (=force a way into). (3) One word only used elsewhere by Shakespeare in his later work, *prescience* (in *Troilus and Cressida*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Tempest*). And under syntax, ellipsis of verb three times, ellipsis of preposition once, and one rather doubtful instance of asyndeton. But it is obvious that these rare instances in a poem of nearly 2,000 lines present no effective parallel to the mass of peculiarities in *A Lover's Complaint* of little over 300 lines. This is so large that it cannot be ignored.

So far we have been dealing with definite facts, but with facts which prove nothing; at most they only point on the whole in a certain direction and suggest a possible inference. We may pass on now from purely verbal or grammatical points to another investigation, which is subtler, and requires more judgement in handling, but the conclusions of which, if any conclusions can be established, are more convincing; for it deals with matters which come closer to the vital essence of literary workmanship.

III. PHRASING AND STYLE.

'Phrasing'. for this purpose, is a part of style, covering characteristic usages in collocation of words and methods of expression. It is an element in style, but when we speak of style we look at the poet's language more largely, and with regard to his whole method and practice in the rhetorical evolution of thought or emotion through language. The word 'rhetorical' is here used in its technical, not in its popular sense; rhetoric meaning the science and art of language used so as to produce what is, in the full sense of the term, literature.

¹ We may also compare *hild* (for *held*, in order to get a rhyme), in *Lucrece*, l. 1257, with the *sawn* of *A Lover's Complaint*, l. 91.

In *A Lover's Complaint* there are a noticeable number of phrases which, in a certain stiffness, tortuousness, or cumbrousness, are equally unlike the habitual ease and fluency of Shakespeare's earlier writing and the habitual full-chargedness (often passing into overchargedness) of his later writing. In the latter, phrasing is often clogged by excess of imagination; this moves quicker than the language can follow it, and the result is a sort of shorthand notation in which the words actually used suggest rather than express the thought which is behind them. 'When his blood is up, he makes heaven and earth bend and deliver up what he wants on the instant, and goes crashing through the forest of words like a thunderbolt, crushing them out of shape if they don't fit in, melting moods and tenses, and leaving people to gape at the transformation.' In this power of transformation Shakespeare stands alone. We do not find it, or find it very rarely, in this poem. What we do find habitually is a forcing of phrase, which follows a fashion of the period, but follows it as a servant, does not sway it as a master. Sometimes this forcing of phrase appears due to pedantry, to the artificiality of a contracted and ill-digested scholarship; sometimes to mere clumsiness. what Lee aptly calls incapacity of expression. It is needless to say that both these, and the latter even more than the former, are very un-Shakespearian qualities. A few instances will be sufficient to cite. 'The thought might think' (l. 10), and 'to do will aptly find'='will be apt to find means of doing' (l. 88), are pieces of artificiality. 'A careless hand of pride'='a hand careless of pride' (l. 30), 'noble by the sway'='ennobled by submitting himself to government' (l. 108), and 'O, then, advance (of yours) that phraseless hand' (l. 225), where in order to get the words into the line and save the rhyme, 'of yours' is taken out of its proper place and thrust between parentheses into the middle of the phrase, are pieces of clumsiness. A more

curious instance is l. 91, 'What largeness thinks in Paradise was sawn'. This is probably the most distorted phrase in the whole poem; but it is not un-Shakespearian; it is a real case of what I called the shorthand notation of Shakespeare's later manner. But of course the point is that (1) Shakespeare does not use this highly compressed shorthand in his poems; and (2) where he does use it, his use of it is masterly.

On the larger matter of style as it bears on the question of authorship the following considerations have to be weighed.

(1) *A Lover's Complaint* is not the work of a beginner. Its style, alike in its good and its bad points, is formed and even matured. After all allowance has been made for Shakespeare's power of imitating the style of other writers, and of anticipating his own later style in his earlier work, it seems to me impossible to think of this poem as a work of his youth, belonging to the period of *Lucrece*. It is either a work of his later and matured period, or not a work of his at all. And what points towards its being not a work of his, is that the formed style is combined with an intellectual weakness leading here and there to feeblenesses and flatnesses. Take, for instance, l. 79:

I attended
A youthful suit (it was to gain my grace);

or l. 311:

Showing fair nature is both kind and tame.

I think we should be justified in saying that Shakespeare does not, even in his earliest work, and certainly does not in his later, write like that; he does not write with so little vitality.

(2) There are passages in *A Lover's Complaint* which, while quite Shakespearian in their quality, might have been written by any clever versifier who had studied Shake-

speare, and learned the trick so far as it is a trick ; such as ll. 155-6 :

But ah ! who ever shunn'd by precedent
The destined ill she must herself assay ?

or ll. 183-4 :

All my offences that abroad you see
Are errors of the blood, none of the mind.

And there are others which distinctly give the impression of imitations of Shakespeare by an inferior artist, like l. 21 :

In clamours of all size both high and low ;

or ll. 104-5 :

His rudeness so with his authoriz'd youth
Did livery falseness in a pride of truth ;

or the whole of the stanza about horsemanship (ll. 106-12), if compared with the well-known passage in *Venus and Adonis*, stanzas 44-50 :

Well could he ride, and often men would say
That horse his mettle from his rider takes :
Proud of subjection, noble by the sway,
What rounds, what bounds, what course, what stop he
makes !

And controversy hence a question takes,
Whether the horse by him became his deed,
Or he his manage by the well-doing steed.

Not only is the first line of this stanza incredibly flat, but the whole stanza is poor and ragged.

(3) On the other hand there are more than a few passages in the poem which are like Shakespeare at his best, and of which one would say at first sight that no one but Shakespeare could have written them, so wonderfully do they combine his effortless power and his incomparable sweetness. I need only cite three or four instances (ll. 14, 146-7, 237-8, 288-9) :

Some beauty peep'd through lattice of sear'd age.

Threw my affections in his charmed power,
 Reserv'd the stalk, and gave him all my flower.

But kept cold distance, and did thence remove,
 To spend her living in eternal love.

O father, what a hell of witchcraft lies
 In the small orb of one particular tear !

This last passage, as Shakespearian in its concentrated weight of passion as in its exquisiteness of rhythm and phrasing, contains a striking verbal likeness to a phrase in Sonnet 120; and this is only one out of several: we may compare the use of *oblation*, l. 223, and Sonnet 125; 'heard where his plants in others' orchards grew', l. 171, and Sonnet 16; 'glaz'd with crystal gate the glowing roses', l. 286, and Sonnet 5. These and other lines if quoted carry the mind instinctively to the Sonnets. One might instance also ll. 75-7 :

I might as yet have been a spreading flower,
 Fresh to myself, if I had self-applied
 Love to myself and to no love beside,

as compared with the setting forth of the converse doctrine in the first section of the Sonnets, e. g. in Sonnet 4, *Unthrifty loveliness*, and Sonnet 10, *For shame deny that thou bear'st love to any*: or l. 194,

Harm have I done to them but ne'er was harm'd,

as compared with Sonnet 94, *They that have power to hurt and will do none*. They suggest that if the author of *A Lover's Complaint* was not the author of the Sonnets, he had read them, or some of them, when he wrote the poem.

Yet on a large view the style and evolution of *A Lover's Complaint* must be set down as not characteristically Shakespearian, and as in some respects characteristically un-Shakespearian. A certain labouriousness, a certain cramped, gritty, discontinuous quality, affects it subtly but vitally throughout.

On the general question, two things must be borne in

mind: other poets could write, for some distance together, very like Shakespeare; and Shakespeare could, if he chose, write very like other poets. This is what makes attribution often so uncertain. Instances in the plays are notorious. In *Henry VIII* it seems impossible to discriminate certainly what is Shakespeare from what is Fletcher; in Part I of *Henry VI*, what is Shakespeare from what is Marlowe or of the school of Marlowe. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* it is, I think myself, possible to separate Shakespeare's work; but other critics think it is not, or even say that none of it is Shakespeare at all. The Sonnets probably include some non-Shakespearian work.¹ Generally speaking, we have, in much of the mass of writing lumped together as Shakespeare's works, Shakespeare moving as it were on the face of the waters, touching, remodelling, vitalizing in greater and less degree, work which was not originally his own, and which here and there clearly never became wholly his own. Conversely, there are probable touches of Shakespeare's hand in *Edward III* and in other plays outside of the Canon.

One criterion of the work of a really great poet is the way in which he starts a poem. To fumble at the beginning, to strike the first notes uncertainly, to open stiffly or languidly, is the sign of an inferior artist. Shakespeare meets this test from the first. The wonderful speed and certainty with which he sets his plays going has often been commented on. And the same thing is true of his poems:

Even as the sun with purple-coloured face
Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn.

¹ This is a large question, and not immediately relevant to this paper. But I may mention that, while in my opinion Sonnets 1 to 126 are a continuous, ordered, and authentic collection, 127-54 are a miscellaneous and disordered appendix, in which 153 and 154 are pretty certainly not by Shakespeare, 128 and 145 are very doubtful, and a plausible case can be made out against 135, 136, and 143.

From the besieged Ardea all in post,
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire.

From fairest creatures we desire increase
That thereby beauty's rose might never die.

A Lover's Complaint hardly bears this test. Its opening,

From off a hill whose concave womb re-worded
A plaintful story from a sistingering vale,

bears a strong superficial likeness to the opening of *Lucrece*. In both there is the same grammatical and rhetorical evolution. In both the single epithet in the first line is followed and as it were reduplicated by the pair of epithets in the second; in both the middle epithet of the group of three, *trustless, plaintful*, has the same sort of preciousness in its quality. But one cannot but feel that the opening couplet in *A Lover's Complaint* drags and is over-worded. And *plaintful* is the sort of thing that Shakespeare would have parodied, as in fact he did where Falstaff in the character of the stage king says,

For God's sake, lords, convey my tristful queen;
though it is fair to add that in Hamlet's

With tristful visage as against the doom
we have an instance of the same word used seriously and with fine effect in a passage of high emotional tension.

Of course Shakespeare often parodied himself as well as others: and such lines in *A Lover's Complaint* as

Her grievance with his hearing to divide,

or

That maidens' eyes stuck over all his face,
are Shakespearian enough, though we may doubt whether Shakespeare would have written them without a smile.

We may now go back to the volume of 1609 and the circumstances of its production. It is generally held to have been printed from a surreptitiously obtained MS.

Analysis of the printed text of the Sonnets shows that their MS. was not all in the same hand. It is a probable inference that what reached Thorpe's printers was a bundle of copied MS., and that together with the rest there was a copied MS. of *A Lover's Complaint*. But there is no need to suppose that either this or any part of the MS. bore on it an express attribution of authorship. We do not know, and presumably never shall know, how the MS. reached Thorpe's hands. The simplest and likeliest way would be that it reached him, directly or indirectly, from the person to whom the Sonnets were addressed. It is not necessary to touch here on the vexed question how far the Sonnets embody or reflect Shakespeare's personal experience. In any event, the 'boy' of the Sonnets was an actual person; he was one who had poems addressed or dedicated to him by another poet besides Shakespeare; he was one who might very likely, a few years later, lose all the interest that he ever had in either set of poems, and toss them away, or give them to any one who wanted to have them. Thorpe's MS. was most likely a 'blank book' such as is mentioned in Sonnet 77, and may very well have been that actual book into which the contents of the printed volume of 1609 had been transcribed, either by the recipient of the poems, or by some one else for him, or partly by one and partly by the other.

The rival poet of the Sonnets is also admittedly an actual person. Let us put together what the Sonnets themselves tell us about him; this is the only clue we have to his identity.

In Sonnet 78, he had 'got my use': he could write like Shakespeare, or at least so like him as to be thought by others a poet of not inferior quality.¹ That Shakespeare

¹ So I interpret the phrase. But Mr. Bradley points out that 'my use' may only mean 'my intimacy' with the 'boy' of the Sonnets, and the inspiration thence derived.

himself knew the difference, we may judge from the compressed bitterness of the single haughty line in Sonnet 86, 'I was not sick of any fear from thence'. From Sonnet 78 we gather also that he was 'learned', that he had 'grace' and 'arts'. In Sonnet 80 he is a 'better spirit'—here again there is an accent of sarcasm—a ship 'of tall building and of goodly pride'. In Sonnet 82 his poetry is called a 'fresher stamp of the time-bettering days'. This has the note of bitterness again: it is what now a painter of the orthodox tradition might say of a post-impressionist or futurist. What Shakespeare really thought of this fresher stamp comes out pretty clearly where, in the same sonnet, he speaks of 'what strained touches rhetoric can lend'. In Sonnet 85, his work is 'richly compiled': its 'character' is 'reserved with golden quill and precious phrase by all the Muses filed'. He is an 'able spirit', who writes 'in polish'd form of well-refined pen'. Lastly, in Sonnet 86, his work, 'the proud full sail of his great verse', is described as ambitious and tumid: his compeers by night (whoever they may be) teach him 'to write above a mortal pitch': he fancies that his own poetry 'astonishes' Shakespeare's, eclipses and outdoes it.

Much of this applies curiously well to *A Lover's Complaint*, with its preciosity, its strained rhetoric, its parade of learned words. The criticism made by Shakespeare on the rival poet in the Sonnets is singularly like (even here and there to identity of phrase) the criticism of Holofernes on Don Adriano in *Love's Labour's Lost*. '*Novi hominem tanquam te*: his humour is lofty, his discourse peremptory, his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gait majestical, and his general behaviour vain, ridiculous, and thrasonical. He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too peregrinate, as I may call it. He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument.' This might stand, with hardly the change of a word, as a con-

demnatory judgement on *A Lover's Complaint*: yet, notwithstanding, there are bits of the poem in which the poet writes like Shakespeare—in which, we may even venture to say, he writes like Shakespeare at his best. It looks very like as if we had here either the rival poet imitating Shakespeare, or Shakespeare imitating the rival poet.

Shakespeare's power of assimilating almost any style he chose may be conceded. It is, if we think, just the formal or stylistic side of his wonderful dramatic gift; for he was as sensitive to language as he was to character. 'He had what is reported of Mirabeau, *le don terrible de la familiarité*. Shakespeare was like putty to everybody and everything: the willing slave, pulled out, patted down, squeezed anyhow, clay to every potter. But he knew by the plastic hand what the nature of the moulder was.'¹ Yet in this as in other respects he was an Elizabethan, though the greatest of the Elizabethans: in many of his contemporaries we can see, though in varying and inferior degree, something of the same power of what may be called stylistic impersonation. But if we have to choose, it seems easier to believe that a rival poet could catch, here and there, some reflection of Shakespeare's genius, than to believe that Shakespeare would deliberately and with no visible reason write down to the level of a rival's style. Where he does so write down to a style inferior to his own, it is either with a distinct accent of parody, or for a practical purpose—for the production, that is, of a play in which the style of the joint authors should not be too discrepant. He did so in *Henry VIII*, if he wrote the parts of *Henry VIII* which are usually attributed to him. But this latter condition does not arise here: and the former does not apply, for *A Lover's Complaint* is, both where it is good and where it is bad, perfectly serious.

¹ *Letters of James Smetham*, under date October 2, 1871.

Another point may be noted, though I do not press it. When we speak of a rival poet, we must remember that rivalry is mutual. In *A Lover's Complaint* there is a phrase about the 'deep-brain'd sonnets' received by Bel-Ami from other sources, which might almost be taken to be an oblique reflection on Shakespeare's Sonnets. And, more generally, the portraiture of this hero of the piece, if we may so call him, bears no small resemblance to that of the 'boy' of the Sonnets, seen from a different point of view. The resemblance even goes into particular detail. I would not lay much stress on this, for in both cases it may be mere Elizabethan common-form, the sort of touches 'whereto the inviting time our fashion calls'. But when, for instance, we read of Bel-Ami in *A Lover's Complaint* that 'his browny locks did hang in crooked curls', we are inevitably reminded of the 'buds of marjoram' in Sonnet 99.

The date of the Sonnets is a matter of dispute. Myself I see no reason to dissent from the view which places their composition approximately in the years from 1598 to 1604. If this be so, it involves the further conclusion (which is borne out by several passages in the Sonnets themselves) that Shakespeare was going on writing in the sonnet-form after it had gone out of fashion, and when a poet who sought the stamp of these time-bettering days would pretty certainly adopt some other form of verse.

Without having come to any certain conclusion, this discussion may have suggested lines of inquiry: and I could wish that some scholar would pursue the inquiry further, starting from the provisional working hypothesis I have sketched: namely, that *A Lover's Complaint* is a composition by the unknown rival poet of the Sonnets; that it got copied into the same blank book as the Sonnets; that this MS. book came into Thorpe's hands, with all its imperfections on its head; that he printed from it the quarto of 1609; that Shakespeare, as usual, took no interest in the

matter¹; that the original recipient of the Sonnets either had likewise become unconcerned in them, or (which is also possible) was a person whose concern did not matter; and that, at a time when the vogue of the Sonnet was already over, the volume consequently attracted little contemporary notice. Even if this hypothesis or conjecture has on fuller investigation to be abandoned, the investigation itself will not be uninteresting, and perhaps may not be fruitless.

J. W. MACKAIL.

¹ He had by that time cut himself pretty loose from London and become a resident of Stratford, though his cousin Thomas Greene was still living in New Place, and he may not himself have quitted London for good until a year or two later.

ARNOLD AND HOMER

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S lectures *On Translating Homer*, published so long ago as 1861, retain their freshness and are still frequently quoted. They can be had in a cheap 'popular' edition (Smith, Elder & Co.), which contains also the 'Last Words' added a year later in reply to some criticisms, especially those of Professor F. W. Newman. The original lectures had criticized Newman's translation of the *Iliad* with considerable severity, and it is amusing to find Arnold, at the beginning of his 'Last Words', professing disdain of literary controversy, and saying 'I never have replied, I never will reply, to any literary assailant'. Holders of such lofty views should refrain from criticizing other people. As a matter of fact, Arnold's next twenty or more pages are taken up with replies to Newman. Any one interested in the subject will do well to peruse Newman's remarks on Arnold, published as a pamphlet, entitled *Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice* (this is given, along with Arnold's lectures, in a cheap edition published by Messrs. Routledge). Even though we may feel Arnold to have been right in the main, it is desirable to see what can be said on the other side, and to realize how a good cause may be injured by supercilious persiflage. The duel between these two, however, occupies no very large part of the lectures, and it is not in virtue of it that they live. It is their teaching on the subject of translation in general, and translation of the Homeric poems in particular, that makes these lectures valuable still; and it is Arnold's own teaching, rather than his criticism of others, which will be examined in this paper.

The first question he discusses is what should be the aim of a translation, and for whom it is intended. The scholar does not need it, and will prefer to read the original; the unlearned reader needs it, but cannot tell whether it is faithful. Shall the aim be to produce a poem which shall impress English readers as the original poem impressed its hearers or readers? But we do not know with any exactness how the Homeric poems impressed a Greek; we know only how they impress ourselves. Arnold's solution of this difficulty is to say that the ideal version of Homer would be one which should affect a poetically minded scholar just as the original does. He names three such then living scholars, whose verdict he would accept. As a practical and preliminary test, this is probably as good a one as can be suggested, but it would argue a touching faith in human judgement to suppose that such a verdict can be final. No single opinion, even that of an Andrew Lang or a Gilbert Murray, can be decisive even for his own generation, and fashions change here as elsewhere. Yet, in the course of time, a general opinion does frame itself, to which the judgements of such scholars have without doubt made large contribution. We are all now agreed that Chapman's version is too Elizabethan, Pope's too artificial, Cowper's too tame, and so forth. *Securus iudicat orbis criticorum*. No new version can have its goodness finally assessed at first; obvious badness is somewhat more easily determined. The ideal of every translator, I imagine, is to produce what shall affect the best judges just as the original affects them; who the best judges are is a point less easy to decide. In the present case, at any rate, a judge of no mean capacity sets forth his views as to what is essential for an adequate translation of Homer, and we may profitably listen to his exposition of them.

Rapidity, directness, simplicity and yet nobleness of style—these are the qualities which Arnold pronounces to be

most characteristic of Homer, and therefore most important to reproduce in any translation from him. Few will differ from this pronouncement, in theory at least. It does not mean that Homer is never diffuse, or his personages long-winded, or that he does not repeat stock epithets and phrases. These last are characteristic of all recited poetry, as we believe his to have been; the reciter takes mental breath, so to say, and his hearers enjoy the opportunity of doing so too. Irish bards delighted in such repetitions on a much larger scale. Long speeches, again, and interpolated episodes would not be felt wearisome; the audience was in no hurry to reach the *dénouement*. But, while sharing these traditional characteristics, Homer is never felt to be slow. He gets over the ground rapidly, though his course may seem circuitous. Nor can there be two opinions about 'the simplicity with which Homer's thought is evolved and expressed'. It is not a laboured and studied simplicity; it is not weak, or bald, or fatuous. It is the simplicity of a style which goes straight to its mark, never tricked out with mere ornament nor showing the least self-consciousness, content to tell a tale in plain words, yet never becoming mean, however lowly be the thing described. And this brings us to Arnold's 'fourth fundamental proposition', on which he lays great stress, that 'Homer is noble'. Humble as may be his theme at the moment, plain and unadorned his language, he never becomes merely banal. So far most will agree, but can we follow his critic in saying that Homer 'does not rise and sink with his subject', but always 'invests his subject with nobleness'—that his 'work has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is *the grand style*' (his italics)? Without reopening the general question, so ably discussed in previous volumes of this series, we may usefully consider how far the italicized words can be predicated of Homer's language.

At first sight it certainly seems absurd to say that a poet's

style can remain the same whether he is dealing with gods and heroes or with domestic details, the washing of clothes or the preparation of a 'shake-down'. Language appropriate to the one, it will be said, must be turgid if applied, to the other. Professor Newman makes much play with this, insisting that Homer's language rises or falls with the occasion, and that even the tone of the speeches differs according as it is Zeus addressing Athene or Odysseus chatting with the herdsman. There is truth in this, and we must not forget the veil cast by an unfamiliar language. Descriptions of pig-killing or boat-launching can hardly have sounded so 'heroic' to a Greek hearer as they do to us. On the other hand, we have the testimony of Greek writers as to the place which Homer held in their estimation. He is not only, to them, the practical teacher, a better guide to the conduct of life than any philosopher; he is also the master-artist, to whom a critic like Dionysius of Halicarnassus pays almost idolizing homage, not merely for his thoughts, but for the magical perfection of his style. We can hardly be wrong, therefore, in believing that the unassuming majesty, the unforced 'nobleness', of Homer's language, recognized by readers in all ages, is not wholly the creation of our fancy, or of that removal to a distance which an alien tongue causes. Not for nothing were his works the Bible of the Greeks; not for nothing was he 'the mighty Homer' to our own Queen Anne's men. This does not, of course, mean that a dead level of style is maintained. Milton, the type *par excellence* of the Grand Style, has his somewhat clumsy attempts at humour, and his 'No fear lest dinner cool.' Besides, it is of *general effect* that Arnold speaks, and as to that there is hardly a dissentient voice.

Bold was the work, and proved the Master's fire.

No critic of any consequence has ever denied that the *Iliad*

and the *Odyssey* are great poems, by whomsoever they were composed; and a word upon this aspect of the matter—though it may seem concerned with a mere truism—will not be out of place.

A translation is often called faithful merely because it reproduces as nearly as possible the very words of the original. This is a poor and limited idea of faithfulness. Much more than that is needed for a rendering to be in any true sense 'faithful'. The effect, the atmosphere, the character of the original must be at least suggested before we can begin to talk about faithfulness. No version of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, it may be said with confidence, is at all 'faithful' if it does not give us the feeling that we are reading a great poem. In the preface to that admirable prose version of the *Odyssey* which we know as 'Butcher and Lang'—it was published before the correspondent version of the *Iliad*, and from its preface we have to gather what was aimed at by the translators of both poems—it is most truly pointed out that different ages call for different translations of Homer, because they regard his work from different points of view. 'Without Chapman's conceits, Homer's poems would hardly have been what the Elizabethans took for poetry; without Pope's smoothness, and Pope's points, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would have seemed tame, rude, and harsh in the age of Anne.' The Miltonic enthusiasts had their day; so had believers in the ballad theory; so had those who saw in Homer a great Romantic; each of these movements produced its version or versions. At the beginning of the third quarter of last century the Saga aspect of the poems had come to be recognized, and it was to bring out clearly this aspect, to give the 'historical truth' about the poems, that the versions above referred to were planned. How admirably the work was carried out, how well it has satisfied the needs of a whole generation, we all know. But no one, and the translators least of all,

would claim that these versions are final. They do not 'tell the whole truth' about Homer. A prose translation, however deft its workmanship, cannot give the effect which verse produces; if it could, why do poets take the trouble to write verse? Even if it be true that, as Arnold says, 'in a verse translation no original work is any longer recognizable', this holds good also, though in a different way, of a prose version. The original *movement* of the words is gone. We may be sure that in the future, as in the past, efforts will be made to render this aspect also of the poems.

Arnold's aim was to give hints which should be of use to a future translator, and with this end in view he criticizes previous versions. He makes his points well, but with perhaps hardly sufficient regard to the indispensable condition that has just been postulated. Chapman, with his Troy 'shedding her towers for tears of overthrow', is certainly too 'conceited' (in the old sense of that word); yet we cannot forget how his rendering appealed to Keats, as told in the well-known sonnet. Such a tribute from such a poet must be weighed against Arnold's undeniably just strictures. And Pope—with all his faults, has any subsequent translator, of the *Iliad* particularly, so succeeded in making us feel that we are reading a great poem? We know all about the weak side of his version; how Bentley said, or perhaps did not say, that 'you must not call it Homer'; how it substitutes pomp for simplicity, and endless antitheses for straightforward directness. In another than the ordinary sense, he touches nothing without adorning it; ostentation replaces dignity. Yet how fine he is in his great passages! Arnold recognizes this, admitting that 'in elevated passages he is powerful, as Homer is powerful, though not in the same way', but he does not quote any. He quotes only lines which show Pope's 'prodigious talent' and his 'literary artificial manner'; and the quotations justify his remarks. The passage about the Trojan watch-

fires throws the faults of Pope's style into relief, and compares unfavourably with Tennyson's rendering of the same lines. But take some of the great passages that come to mind; take the prayer of Ajax for light, and contrast the versions of other translators.

Here is Cowper :

Father of Heav'n and earth, deliver thou
Achaia's host from darkness; clear the skies;
Give day; and (since thy sov'reign will is such)
Destruction with it—but O give us day!

Here is Lord Derby:

O Father Jove, from o'er the sons of Greece
Remove this cloudy darkness; clear the sky,
That we may see our fate, and die at least,
If such thy will, in the open light of day.

And here is Pope:

Lord of earth and air!
Oh king! Oh father! hear my humble prayer:
Dispel this cloud, the light of heav'n restore;
Give me to see, and Ajax asks no more.
If Greece must perish, we thy will obey,
But let us perish in the face of day!

This is 'not Homer', perhaps, but at least it is poetry, while the others are but metrified prose: it thrills us as the original does, though 'not in the same way'. Any translation which does not give this thrill is so far unfaithful, however accurate its scholarship, however skilful its wording.

It is needless to multiply instances, though the mere mention of Ajax recalls many:

Ajax, to Peleus' son the second name,
In graceful stature next, and next in fame.

(What does it matter that the name is given in its Roman instead of its Greek form, as was the fashion of that day?). Take but one more example, from the fight over the body of Patroclus:

Already had stern Hector seized his head,
 And doom'd to Trojan dogs th' unhappy dead ;
 But soon as Ajax rear'd his tower-like shield,
 Sprang to his car, and measured back the field.

If I wanted to make a boy love Homer, I should give him Pope's in preference to any other verse translation. I should warn him what to expect, should repeat all that has here been said, and much more, about the vices of Pope's style, the 'extravagant freedom' of his renderings, the way he has transmogrified and bedizened and artificialized the original. I should prepare my pupil, too, to find a manner quite unlike that of to-day, just as I should do in the case of Scott's novels. But, having done this, I should confidently expect any boy with a spark of poetry in him to be thrilled as his predecessors were thrilled ; to read on—like them—as a pleasure and not a duty ; and I cannot think that Arnold has quite done justice to Pope in respect of this very important side of the question.

The same holds good with regard to the balladist translators. Arnold quotes from Maginn (*Homeric Ballads*, 1850) these lines referring to the nurse of Odysseus :

And scarcely had she begun to wash
 Ere she was aware of the grisly gash
 Above his knee that lay ;

and protests against the 'detestable dance' of the first two lines. It would have been fairer to choose stanzas which more nearly represent the average of Maginn's achievement, such as the following (from *Odyssey* XXIV) :

The flight was checked—and round thee came
 The maids of the Sea-god old,
 Sad weeping as they wrapt thy frame
 In vesture of heavenly fold.

By day and night for ten days' space,
 For ten days' space and seven,
 Wept we, the men of mortal race,
 And the deathless gods of heaven.

And when the eighteenth morning came,
 To the pile thy corse was borne;
 And many fat sheep were slain at the flame,
 And steers of twisted horn.

&c., &c.

This is 'not Homer', or at best is Homer balladised; but is there not more than mere verse-making in it? Observe, too, how easily the ballad manner accepts dates and facts, the seventeen days of mourning, the fat sheep and the 'steers of twisted horn'. Maginn's ballads, however, were hastily written for a magazine, and were posthumously published without having undergone revision; they can hardly be taken as representative. A better example, had Arnold been writing a few years later, would have been Professor Blackie's complete translation of the *Iliad* (Edinburgh, 1866), with its long swinging metre; and Arnold might not have found much amiss with the Edinburgh Professor's rendering of one of the oftenest quoted lines in Homer:

And silent he went by the billowy beach of the vast and
 voiceful sea.

William Morris's versions, again, at a later day, show distinct affinity to ballad style, and these have inspired several still more recent modifications. Altogether, it would seem that Arnold rather undervalued the poetic qualities of this metre, and was too easily repelled by its 'detestable dance' in some unfortunate specimens.

Maginn, curiously enough, advocated the Spenserian stanza for a complete translation of either *Iliad* or *Odyssey* (his 'ballads' being merely selected extracts), and this idea was independently taken up by Worsley in a translation of the *Odyssey*,¹ which Arnold saw only in time to mention with praise in a footnote to 'Last Words'. Few people, probably, would have predicted success for such an attempt;

¹ *Odyssey* (Books I-XII, 1861; rest 1862).

the complex structure, interwoven rhymes, and natural isolation of each stanza seem quite alien to the 'bright flow' of Homer's narrative. Yet, as Arnold readily admits, a very large measure of success is reached by this translator, and in regard of what we are now specially considering—poetic quality—it certainly ranks high. A single stanza will sufficiently illustrate this. The mother of Odysseus, or rather her spirit, is speaking to her son in the Land of the Dead :

So have I also perished ere my time ;
I too, thy mother, by such fate was slain ;
Nor arrows of the Huntress-queen sublime,
Silently falling in a sweet death-rain,
My life invaded, nor the lingering pain
Of sickness, that all strength drags to decay—
But love, my child, that cuts the heart in twain,
Thy love, thy dreamèd sweetness night and day,
Made bitterness my bread and reft my soul away.

We need not discuss whether this 'is Homer', nor compare Pope with his 'Hell's eternal dungeons', or Cowper with his 'right-aiming arch'ress'. The thought is a little too much dressed up and beautified, the expression too long drawn out ; there is nothing in the original about 'cuts the heart in twain'. But if some of Homer's noble simplicity disappears and is replaced by conscious art, yet the result has a beauty of its own. We feel that we are reading poetry. Enough has perhaps now been said about this side of the matter, but it will not have been said in vain if readers feel that poetic quality must count for much in estimating the worth of any translation, and that in all the above quotations something of this quality appears, though under different forms—that each in its own way thrills us as great poetry alone can do, as mere accomplished versifying usually fails to do.

Much of Arnold's lectures is taken up with protests against the use of ridiculous or too uncommon words, and here we can heartily agree with him. It may conceivably

be permissible when a horse's name is 'Xanthos' to English it as 'Chestnut', but it can never be right to call another 'Spry-foot' merely on grounds of etymology. Anything so grotesque as this is out of keeping. Newman tries to make out that the language of Homer was as archaic to an Athenian of the days of Pericles as pre-Chaucerian English is to us. Even if this were so, it affords no reason why we should put ourselves into a corresponding position. But surely it is not true. To an educated Athenian of the time named, Homer was archaic yet familiar, just as the Authorised Version of the Bible is to us. When we read in this latter that a certain woman 'all to brake his scull' with a stone, we may need a glossary, but the unfamiliar word is not at all grotesque. The Athenian had been brought up with Homer as part of his daily food; even phrases naturally unfamiliar would become familiar by frequent repetition. Some amount of archaic flavour will not be out of place in an English version, and it was a wise instinct which made the authors of the prose translation previously mentioned adopt somewhat of Biblical cadence and idiom. The Bible and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*—these may very well influence the Homeric translator, but even their authority should not be invoked to sanction anything that jars too harshly on modern ears. Even if a word or phrase in the original may seem somewhat grotesque, it does not follow that we shall be justified in copying it, or that a brand-new *plaisanterie* will fittingly represent it. This canon, if it is rightly stated, condemns a good deal more than the deliberate quaintness of Professor Newman. It vetoes any attempt to create a new English dialect. Nothing unnatural or affected is akin to Homer's style. A translator must not restrict himself to 'Saxo-Norman' words, as Newman tried to do, or to 'plain Saxon' words, as Morris set himself to do. How do Morris's lines strike us?

Tell me, O Muse, of the Shifty, the man who wandered afar,
After the Holy Burg, Troy-town, he had wasted with war.

'The Shifty' recalls Hans Andersen, or is it Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands*?—the 'Holy Burg' gives a mild shock of surprise. So do 'the Wights of the Whirlwind' and 'the Flitter, the Argus-bane'. One's attention is held by the words, instead of by the thing that is being told. Even 'the Damsel, the daughter of Zeus' is questionable, for though 'damsel' is a good Biblical word it has acquired a sub-comic flavour, which does not attach to 'maiden'; one thinks of 'to every man a damsel or two'. These *nuances* of idiom have to be studiously considered. Any thing that distracts us from the matter in hand is a hindrance rather than a help. Can the 'fleet-foot Shining One' of a later translator be altogether acquitted of doing so?

This suggests a further deduction. The ideal translator of Homer must not only know Greek well, he must also know English well. John Bright said of the New Testament Revisers that they might be excellent Greek scholars, but they were certainly not good English scholars. And even a consummate master of English may be led astray by false theories, so as to become 'precious' or pedantic or antiquarian overmuch. It is in this connexion that Arnold's lectures were and are so admirable. He holds up a standard to which every adequate translation must conform. Is it pitched impossibly high? Does he make too little account of human weakness, of inevitable shortcomings? Certainly, no rendering can be perfect; the Italian proverb says *Traduttori traditori*. There is another possible way of dealing with a great work, when a writer of original genius takes the material and deliberately pours its substance into a mould of his own, as FitzGerald did with the *Rubáiyat* of Omar Khayyám. That is not translation properly so called, and Arnold's teaching does not hold good for it. For *bona*

fidè translation it does. No translator of Homer can afford to neglect Arnold's injunctions; translators of any poet will profit by considering them. On some sides he may be vulnerable. His knowledge of Greek was that of a literary man rather than a scholar; his ideas about Greek prosody were decidedly crude. Even in estimating English writers he had his prejudices—what critic has not?—and was no more infallible than 'the youngest of us'. But on the main issues his sure taste keeps him right. There is strong common-sense under the provoking raillery, the disparagement of opponents, the assumption of intellectual superiority. Particular judgements¹ may show bias, but his general principles remain unchallengeably sound. He stands, beyond question or cavil, in the succession of great English critics.

Arnold's third lecture deals specially with a question in which he evidently took special interest, viz. which of our metres is best suited for Homeric translation? Ballad verse and the Spenserian stanza are set aside for reasons already stated, whose cogency he perhaps rather over-estimated; and the only other three forms that he deems worthy of consideration are Heroic Couplet, Blank Verse, and a metre not named at first, which turns out to be what is technically known as 'Hexameter' verse. Heroic couplet is dismissed through the unsuitability of rhyme, which not only imposes an additional burden on the translator, but tends to unnatural coupling of lines which ought to be separate. That this last difficulty can be at least partially avoided Arnold might have gathered from Keats's *Endymion* and other poems, but the first difficulty remains. Rhyme adds to the translator's task; it is as characteristically un-

¹ e.g. his depreciation of Scott, whose battle-scene in *Marmion* is surely the most Homeric thing written since Homer; and his scorn of Macaulay's *Lays*. These only show how little the poetry of action appealed to Arnold. He does not even quote Macaulay correctly.

Greek as it is characteristically English and modern; therefore if it can be discarded without loss it obviously should be discarded. Unrhymed heroic verse Arnold discusses only as used by Milton and Tennyson, and rejects accordingly; it is strange that he leaves Shakespeare's blank verse so much out of account. In one passage, indeed, he says that it would be interesting to see such blank verse as is found in Shakespeare's most rapid passages applied to translation from Homer, but this hint is not followed up. Tennyson's verse he pronounces quite unsuitable for the purpose, and he must have been surprised when Tennyson answered the challenge by producing that superb fragment of Homeric translation already referred to, a fragment which one would fain have seen enlarged. But, despite the high authority of Tennyson (as good a judge of both Greek and English verse as Arnold), it is impossible not to feel that our heroic verse differs widely from Greek heroic on account of its much slower movement—though it is paradoxical to say with Arnold that three lines of Tennyson's 'take up nearly as much time as a whole book of the *Iliad*'! On account of this difference, if for no other reason, we may turn to consider the metre to which Arnold accords his preference.

It is often claimed for this metre that it is an exact reproduction of the Homeric line. How far Arnold would have accepted this claim may be doubtful; he speaks only of its keeping 'more nearly than any other metre to Homer's movement'. At any rate the claim is quite inadmissible. Greek verse depended on the *duration* of syllables, ours on their *accentuation*, and this involves here an essential difference of 'movement'. Homer's line is in 'even metre', each foot dividing equally, the duration of the first half of each foot being identical with that of the second half; if we do not so read it, we ignore the express statements of every ancient critic. Our line, as is now

almost universally acknowledged, is in 'uneven' metre, being (to use modern terms) set to triple time instead of common time. That scholars have not realized this till recently is due to the fact that they habitually read Homer and Virgil to our English measure, making accentuation do duty for duration, perhaps under the influence of the popular delusion that accentuating a syllable necessarily lengthens it. Our line, therefore, as ordinarily written, cannot be an exact replica of the Greek line; but it may be a good enough line for all that, and the nearest approach to Homer's 'movement' that the principles of English verse allow.

Attempts have indeed been made, in former times and also recently, to write lines in which the duration instead of the accentuation of syllables is taken as the basis. Arnold touches lightly on these, and we may follow his example. For, if such experiments could succeed, they would entail a complete revolution which would make the verse to which we are accustomed unreadable, would take generations to become known and accepted, and therefore may be left for consideration by future critics. Any one who wishes to see the attempt systematically made should examine the *Iliad homometrically translated* of Charles Bagot Cayley (1877). Similar attempts have been often made, before as since. Spenser dallied with the idea, but soon abandoned it; Tennyson ultimately decided that such verse was 'only fit for comic purposes'. In what remains of this article, therefore, attention will be confined to verse that is recognized as such by ordinary readers.

While scholars were denouncing the English Hexameter as a 'pestilent heresy', English readers were accepting and enjoying it, such a poem as Longfellow's *Evangeline*—by no means a satisfactory specimen of the metre—becoming widely popular. The reason is not far to seek. Such cadences are familiar to us already in prose and verse. It

has been often pointed out that lines of practically the same metre occur in the Bible, such as :

God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of
a trumpet,

and :

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the
Morning !

Similar cadences, in lines usually of shorter length, are perfectly common in our poetry. What should have been done, obviously, was to study the use made of these cadences by our chief poets, and so work out a line constructed in accordance with the true principles of English prosody.

This, however, has seldom or never been done. With scarcely an exception, those who tried this metre have done so with an eye on Greek and Latin verse, and have sought to imitate, on an accentual basis, the *six feet* of Classic quantitative metre. But good English verse is not constructed in that way, as may be shown by a single illustration. No English hexameters have been more praised than those by Dr. Hawtrey of Eton, quoted by Arnold as by others. Their first line, which is usually pronounced ideally perfect, runs thus :

Clearly the rest I behold of the dark-eyed sons of Achaia.

Yet this line, judged by the standard of strict feet, contains as evident a fault as if Virgil had written ‘*Arma virum quae cano*’. The fact that this is not felt to be a blemish, that the line not only passes muster but is adjudged exceptionally admirable, is proof enough—if proof were needed—that the merit of English verse does not depend on its containing rigidly accurate syllabic feet.

The right way of handling English verse must be gathered from observing the practice of English poets when writing from native inspiration. Had Arnold remembered this, we should have been spared the feeble and halting

lines which he put forward as samples, of which Newman said with justice that it was difficult to believe some of them intended for verse at all. There were models enough and to spare. There were the shorter lines of many singers, only needing prolongation. There were lines in Tennyson's *Maud*, which wanted but slight alteration to make them fit, such as :

Peace in her vineyard, yes, but a company forges the wine.

There were actual lines by Browning, as for example :

Beggars can scarcely be choosers, but still, ah the pity, the
pity!

Of such lines, written without any thought of imitating alien metres, there was no lack even in 1860. But to us at the present day a far wider field of comparison is open. Not only have trisyllabic metres been largely favoured by recent singers, but length of line has markedly increased. We have now many lines as long as or longer than the hexameter, such as this from Tennyson's *Kapiolani* :

Dance in a fountain of flame with her devils, and shake
with her thunders and shatter the island.

Swinburne has verse of seven and eight 'stresses', while lines in his *Hesperia* make perfect accentual hexameters, for example :

Sudden and steady the music, as eight hoofs trample and
thunder.

Lines like this do not often occur successively: English love of rhyme and of alternation produces something which approximates rather to 'hexameter and pentameter', the so-called 'elegiac' metre of Greeks and Romans. *Hesperia* illustrates this, and still better does a later poem by the same singer, *Evening on the Broads*. We may leave out of account designed imitations of Classic verse, such as Browning's *Ixion* and Mr. William Watson's *Hymn of the*

Sea. But how nearly do lines in *Abt Vogler* recall the same type :

Would that the structuræ brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work.

It is in pieces like this last and very many others, written from free inspiration without any thought of pseudo-Classic structure, that we can gather the laws which shape English verse, and see how far they are consistent with those of an alien prosody. What Arnold might have done half a century ago, we can do with much greater certainty to-day.

Space permits only brief and partial illustration of this. Take a specimen of the shorter lines above referred to, from a youthful poem of Byron's :

Shades of the dead, have I not heard your voices
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the gale ?
Surely the soul of the hero rejoices,
And rides on the wind o'er his own Highland vale.

This is rough verse. In the first line the natural accentuation of 'háve I not héard' is violently altered to 'have I nó heard' for the sake of metre ; and compare 'ówn Highland'. But the point to observe is how easily the little word 'And' slips in before the first beat in the fourth line. That this is no mere accident will appear from examining other lines by the same poet in the maturity of his powers :

Warriors and chiefs ! should the shaft or the sword
Pierce me in leading the hosts of the Lord,
Heed not the corse, though a king's, in your path ;
Bury your steel in the bosoms of Gath.

Thou who art bearing my buckler and bow,
Should the soldiers of Saul look away from the foe,
Stretch me that moment in blood at thy feet !
Mine be the doom which they dared not to meet.

It will be seen how, in the sixth of these lines, the words 'Should the' come in before the first beat ; and it may be

said at once that this is a common occurrence in English verse of this pattern.

But foot-scansionists will say, this is to change dactylic verse into anapaestic. Not at all. Byron contrives that these redundant syllables shall be felt to be a mere *anacrusis*, not altering the pattern of the verse. If hexameter writers cannot do the same, they have imperfectly mastered their metre. Whether the terms dactylic and anapaestic have any real meaning when applied to English verse—whether there is any actual difference between the two, apart from one beginning on the down-beat and the other on the up-beat—need not be here debated. It is enough to claim for the writer of hexameters the same freedom that English poets have always used in dealing with similar verse.

Investigations pursued in this way will reveal, among other things, the convertibility of silence and sound in metre of this kind. Any period which is only partially filled with sound in one line may be completely filled by it in another. If Browning has in one line

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his king,

he may in the next write :

Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing,

where *crop-headed* evidently fills the same time-space as *Byng* + *pause* (the pause being either *on* the syllable or *after* it at the reader's option). This prepares us to find that the medial break in such a line as the so-called 'pentameter' above mentioned will sometimes be filled up, making the line an evident hexameter; and so Swinburne treats it. We may also conclude that, in all verse of this kind, it is not essential that every disyllabic cadence shall be filled out with sound—shall be a spondee and not a trochee. In the first Biblical line already quoted, how finely the caesural pause after 'shout' comes in to fill up the period.

And perhaps, after sufficiently wide examination, we may be inclined to doubt whether the successful hexameter of the future will be predominantly trisyllabic. Few, indeed, have been the poets who could maintain an unbroken succession of such cadences without becoming wearisome; does even Swinburne not sometimes overdo the effect? In weaker hands, at any rate, it gives that *hoppety-hoppety-hop* rhythm which so many critics find objectionable in hexameters as usually written. Still worse, however, would it be if, like Professor Newman, we elected to make our metre unbrokenly disyllabic. He carried this so far as not even to allow a word like 'Danai' or 'victory' to occupy the normal time of two syllables, and this is one thing that makes his verse so wooden. Our ideal hexameter must be flexible, as Homer is flexible, though details of scansion may differ; and it will not obtrude the anatomy of its construction, any more than do our other familiar metres. So much may without rashness be predicted.

In the history of English verse, however, it has never been the case that critics showed the way and poets followed it; always the opposite happens. What is wanted here, therefore, is that some master-poet should take up this metre and make trial of its capabilities as other singers have done with other metres, as Milton and Tennyson did with blank verse. This has never yet been done. Kingsley might have essayed it, if he had worked on other lines; his *Andromeda* remains about the best specimen of would-be-Classic hexameters. *Evangeline* follows too closely its German models in rough-riding over syllabic quantity. Clough's *Bothie* and *Amours de Voyage* show originality of metre as of matter, but with a touch of burlesque which puts them out of court as models for serious verse. Swinburne confined himself to the alternating verse already mentioned; Mr. Watson was content to echo Swinburnian cadences. Very many other verse-writers, among whom

the late Mr. Munby may be favourably mentioned, have failed to attain real mastery of this metre, to naturalize and acclimatize it in our language. The hexameter still awaits development. We, like it, must await the master-singer's possible advent; till he shows the way little progress can be made. Yet we may wait hopefully, noting the signs of the times, seeing how large a part of recent verse approximates to this particular type, and recognizing in this the fulfilment of Arnold's prediction that our poetry will not always be content to forgo the movement of this metre. Whether development will come no one can say for certain, but of one thing we may be sure, if the past of English poetry is any guide to its future: development will come, if at all, on lines already familiar otherwise; syllable-quantity will be 'counterpointed' to accent, remaining ancillary and subordinate, as in all our native verse; in a word, this metre will be developed in accordance with the laws of English prosody, not in fancied mimicry of the measures belonging to a language totally different from ours.

T. S. OMOND.

KEATS'S EPITHETS

It would be a waste of time to insist on the importance of epithets in the mechanism, or, rather, the living tissue, of poetic expression. Yet, before we scrutinize the epithets of one particular poet, we may do well to remind ourselves of the nature of epithets in general, and of one at least of the causes of their importance.

According to the *New English Dictionary*, an epithet is 'an adjective indicating some quality or attribute which the speaker or writer regards as characteristic of the person or thing described'. The poet, therefore (we are here concerned with poetry only), when he uses an epithet, is choosing, out of an indefinite number of qualities which may be affirmed of somebody or something, that one which is, in his judgement, and relatively to the purpose with which he is characterizing, characteristic of the person or thing. Such right of choice confers very large, and often arbitrary, powers. A characteristic, an essential, is often some quality which the poet seems to discover, and to announce for the first time. Many epithets are revelations, revelations made by imagination to educated sensibility, and at first, it may be, surprising or startling to it. It is for the poet to justify himself, and to show that his insight is no freak of individuality, but human and rational.

(That Keats's epithets are on the whole remarkable must strike the most superficial reader; and closer inspection confirms the impression.) Further, if we compare them as a whole with those of notably idealistic poets such as Spenser and Shelley, or those of great masters of verbal choice such as Tennyson and Swinburne, we shall still be

struck by Keats's individuality and range. Spenser's epithets (with very few exceptions) are remarkably simple and obvious. Shelley's are abundant and often remarkable; but he is less a poet of adjectives than Keats. His world is one of incessant movement; he knows nothing of outline; you cannot paint his scenery or mould his figures: *his angels are spirits; his ministers a flame of fire*. In the style of such a poet epithet is subordinate; for the function of epithet is to fix and determine; the quality which I distinguish by an epithet is a *characteristic*, a quality which will stay to be looked at and named, which will tarry the painter's or sculptor's leisure. Tennyson's adjectives, though always showing the utmost felicity of choice and delicacy of insight, are felt as parts in a general harmony of expression rather than as triumphs of vision. The vigour of Swinburne's dynamic, and the restlessness of his movement, prevent him, as they prevent Shelley, from being characteristically a poet of epithets. What an object does is for Swinburne more important than what it is. While, therefore, he scatters adjectives with the profuseness of the confirmed alliterator, he seldom really pauses to characterize vitally; his glory is a glory of line, not of word; he sings rather than paints. His epithets seldom arrest us as Keats's do.

In examining Keats's epithets I intend to take little heed of origin. Neither the suspicion nor the certainty of derivation goes far towards determining the presence or absence of true originality in a poet's work. Originality, like genius itself, is a complex mystery; it is not—we sometimes write and speak as if we thought it was—a pretentious claim to absolute initiation, which can, in most cases, be easily exploded by learned evidence to the contrary. Whatever originality may consist in, it is certainly present when a poet has an individuality so marked and so pervasive as that of Keats, an individuality sending its living

pulse through every fibre of the diction as well as the thought. For such a poet, all words, however often used before, are raw material to be wrought anew. The words may be found elsewhere, but the art is Keats's art; it was never seen before; it will never be seen again. Neither the interest nor the importance of Keats's epithets would be lessened if it could be shown that most or all of them could be found among the Elizabethans or in Leigh Hunt or anywhere else. If Keats has stamped the words, they are henceforth his.

I will attempt to classify Keats's epithets, in order to find out what light they may throw on the working of his imagination. Exigencies of space will compel me to be content with specimens instead of exhaustive lists.

I will first deal briefly with three classes, important on formal grounds.

① There is the large number ending with what Coleridge called the 'vile and barbarous' *ed*; past participles formed from nouns. Even Coleridge admitted that 'a very peculiar felicity' might excuse this form; and it is certainly one which lends itself to the determining of characteristics. You first mark out and name your quality as a *thing*; and then you stereotype it as a characteristic (for your immediate purpose, as the essential—almost the only—characteristic) by adding two letters. Whatever may be the relative value of the past participial epithet, it is abundant in Keats, and quite as abundant in his mature as in his early work.

② Cognate with the epithet ending in *ed*, is the epithet ending in *y*. How common this is in Keats his commentators have abundantly shown; and Mr. de Sélincourt has called attention to the fact that epithets with the *y* ending are much more numerous in the early than in the later poems. That Keats often abused both these classes of adjective, that both abound in poetry of the second rank,

and that both are snares to eloquent young poets, it is beyond question.

③ There is the compound or hyphened epithet, which abounds in Keats's poetry, late as well as early. Such epithets are of two sorts, those which are participial, and end in *ed* or *ing*:

Now, tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth. (*Hyperion* ii. 68.)

That well-wooing sun. (*Endymion* i. 101);

and those which are not, e.g.:

Dew-sweet eglantine. } (*Endymion* iv. 701, 708.)
A taper silver-clear. }

Of non-participial hyphened epithets (which are a small minority) a few end in *y*, e.g.:

From thy sea-foamy cradle. (*Endymion* ii. 701.)

All are efforts of condensation. 'Tiger-passion'd' is short for 'with such passions as those of a tiger'; 'dew-sweet' is short for 'sweet with dew'. Most are efforts of specification:

The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
(*Lamia*, ii. 121.)

(where we seem to be told that the grace of the room depended not only on its having arches but wide arches); some, like 'tiger-passion'd', are condensed similes.

The ease with which, given some verbal ingenuity, compound epithets can be made up, gives them a comparatively low value in poetry. Condensation, if it involves any impatience of beautiful and lucid detail, is more of a vice than a virtue in poetry. It seems certainly true that Keats, for so great an artist, with such a vision and such a vocabulary, was too fond of the hyphen, and the short cuts and often cheap ingenuities to which it lends itself. Yet there are compounds and compounds, and we must not carelessly lump them together in our estimate of Keats's epithets.

We come now to classes which are more important.

1. The first I will call *neological* or *quasi-neological*. This class includes those adjectives which Keats seems to have actually coined; those which, though used before, have been used so seldom that Keats's use constitutes their practical literary origination; and those to which, though well known, he has attached a special signification. The neological tendency is very marked throughout Keats's vocabulary, and its results are of various merit. Many adjectives ending in *ed* and *y*—e.g. 'lavendered', 'mouthed', 'pipy', 'rooty', 'sluicy'—are but a more or less endurable poetic slang, set on foot or kept going by an adventurous individual. But it is far otherwise with others which Keats seems to have either invented, or picked up in desultory reading, or honoured with a meaning and context of his own. A large number of these are striking efforts of fancy or imagination, expressing efforts to escape from verbal platitude or routine, and to characterize afresh, with a beauty-seeking instinct. Take, for instance, the word *pettish*¹ (common enough in non-poetic contexts), used by Keats for the first time to characterize (what we know he felt so vividly) the close neighbourhood and shifting boundaries of pleasure and pain. By calling these boundaries 'pettish', the poet gives us, in one word, the philosophy of his *Ode on Melancholy*. The value of *slabbed* and *throated*² depends on the value of the first syllables. In both cases the poet wishes to give emphatic or intense characterization of the object. In the first he wishes to characterize marble steps, and to do so (as the whole context shows) with an

¹ Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain,
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain,
Define their pettish limits. (*Lamia*, i. 192.)

² Phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbed steps below. (*Ibid.* 381.)

The thrush
Began, calm-throated. (*Hyperion*, iii. 38.)

artistic realization of marble so intense as makes the word *marble* itself, e.g. (with which, as an adjective, many poets would have been content in the circumstances) wholly inadequate. By choosing (or rather inventing) the word 'slabbed', he tells us that the steps were of marble, not as a mineralogical or architectural fact, but as a pictorial revelation, which the following lines amplify. Similarly, in the second instance, and in the 'full-throated ease' in which the nightingale sang of summer, the syllable *throat* gives emphasis to that which the poet wished to express, namely, the singing (and nothing else) of the bird. Both may therefore be pronounced free from the laziness or vulgarity so often discernible in *ed* epithets.

It is difficult to like or to praise *soft-conchèd*¹; it is not euphonious, and the hardness of 'conchèd' seems to be made worse rather than better by the softness of 'soft'. Its best defence is one that must be set up for many of Keats's words, that it is an attempt to stereotype with vivid clearness and yet without commonplace, an artistically beautiful object.

Pictorial intensity explains the application of *globèd* to the peony.² Its application to brain, in a line from the *Fall of Hyperion*³, is not quite clear. Moneta, who is suffering infinite anguish because of the overthrow of the Titans, feels and shows her pain chiefly in the aspect of her head and face; the poet, looking at her, looks to see

What high tragedy
In the dark secret chambers of her skull
Was acting.

¹ Pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conchèd ear.
(*Ode to Psyche*, 4.)

² . . . on the rainbow of the salt sand-waves,
Or on the wealth of globèd peonies.
(*Ode on Melancholy*, v. 2.)

³ 'The scenes
Still swooning through my globèd brain.
(*Fall of Hyperion*, 245.)

'But for her eyes', he says, 'I should have fled away'; and even her eyes had but a 'blank splendour'. Moneta herself refers to her cerebral suffering with physical intensity. She could not rid her brain of what she had seen; she felt it, in fact, as a kind of circular chamber round which fearful images moved in endless recurrence and with the swift intensity of lightning. They were

Scenes
Still swooning vivid through my globèd brain
With an electral changing misery.

Vineyarded, in the context in which it occurs,¹ is very characteristic of Keats's pictorial imagination. The whole stanza expresses in a series of far-fetched (in the best sense) similes the inmost essence of unscrupulous self-regarding commercialism, the very heart of 'ledger-men'. The poet compares the two Florentines to Jews; the image of Jews suggests the image of the Bible; and then comes the image of the vineyard—one of the chief forms of wealth familiar to Bible-characters and Bible-readers. And so he is not content with imagining the Florentines as Jews; anybody might do that. He sees them and their riches as a vineyard, fenced not only against theft but vision; and what he sees he conveys suggestively in one word.

Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies.

Disanointing, applied to an oil poured by Fate on the head of the overthrown Saturn ('disanointing poison'),² expresses, with an imaginative force much helped by the rarity of the word, the completeness of the overthrow and the utter reversal of greatness.

The two adjectives *piazzian* and *psalterian*, both of which seem to have been coined by Keats, are characteristic of one phase of his fancy, which he shares with other romantic poets—a fondness for objects merely because they

¹ *Isabella*, 17.

² *Hyperion*, ii. 98.

are far-fetched. The commonplace Italian word *piazza* has had this kind of attraction for English speech, and has been pressed into connexions alien from its native use. We must admit that Keats's 'piazzian', applied to Mulciber's columns,

Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line,¹

sounds and looks worse than even 'piazza' in American or English prose. The meaning of *psalterian* is doubtful: is it with a sound like that of a psalter, or with the solemnity of a psalm? In either case, it is made the climax of a very vivid characterization:

Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.²

It is the oath of an amorous god that is characterized; and we hear in the whole line an attempt to blend the two ideas of human passion and divinity; the first two epithets expressing the former; 'devout' marking a kind of transition; and the last, whatever its exact meaning, raising the whole to a superhuman level.

We must not fail to notice, among Keats's quasi-neologisms, the use, apparently unique, of *gaunt* to express an aspect of colour or light. Among the portents ushering in Endymion's vision of Circe:

Groanings swell'd
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew
The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue,
That glar'd before me through a thorny brake.³

Here 'gaunt' would seem to be quite indefinitely suggestive, and to mean, perhaps, ghastly or weird. 'Blue' itself, in the same phrase, is not wholly unambiguous. Does it mean blue in the ordinary sense, or in the sense (of tone rather than colour, cf. Scots *blae* and see *New English Dictionary*) in which it is used e.g. by Shakespeare: 'The lights burn blue' (*Richard III*, V. iii. 180); by Carlyle in

¹ *Lamia*, i. 212.

² *Ibid.* i. 114.

³ *Endymion*, iii. 493-5.

Here the word emphasizes by contrast the warmth of actual passion. Madeline was no nun: the legends in whose lap she slept were amorous legends, and she was on the outlook for a lover. But it was all in the ideal; and Porphyro's heart was astir with a most actual passion.

We cannot forget how, in *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, the epithet seems to gather up the whole atmosphere of the poem, physical and spiritual, in itself:—

And then she lulled me asleep
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dreams I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

.
I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.¹

Pale is, perhaps, the prime favourite among the epithets of Keats. It is with him a late rather than an early word. In *Lamia* it gives tenderness to a beautiful phrase about the nymph beloved of Hermes (harassed by her many suitors):

Pale grew her immortality, for woe
Of all these lovers.

It is an intimate word in the expression of passion.² As such, and also as an epithet of moonlit colour, it is one of the keywords of the *Eve of St. Agnes*. But, in Keats's use, the epithet has its apotheosis in *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. Who could ever forget the effect of the adverb in the second line:

Oh, what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and *palely* loitering?

¹ The correlative characteristic of warmth is, naturally, much insisted on by Keats as epithet-giver.

² *Lamia*, i. 145, 289.

In the awful tenth stanza, the stanza of climax, the adjective seems to monopolize the expression :

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!

Akin to pale in its beautiful vagueness is 'wan', with its humming sound. This, too, may be classed as one of Keats's favourites.¹

Lush, as characterizing vegetation, is a favourite in Keats's early work. The origin of the word is clear, but its meaning is not without dubiety. It is mainly an Elizabethan word. Shakespeare uses it once in *The Tempest*, where (II. i. 50) Gonzalo exclaims :

How lush and lusty the grass looks! how green!

Here it is explained (Caxton Shakespeare) as 'succulent, juicy, luxuriant'.

Keats seized on the word and introduced it into modern poetry. Though in its extra-poetic use it probably, like 'lash', means only flaccid and watery, Keats's instinct divined the onomatopoeitic value of the *sh* sound for expressing a combination of luxuriance and moisture. Woodhouse has suggested that lush means dark-coloured; but no context really bears this out.² In Keats's later and greater work the word is not to be found.

The last favourite I mention here is *rich*. It does not occur often, but when it does it is instinct with character and significance. By four uses³ Keats has done as much as

¹ See *Endymion*, iii. 82, 506; 'wannish' (cf. Tennyson, *Maud*, Pt. I, vi. 1) *Lamia*, i. 57. *Isabella*, 55. *Hyperion*, ii. 113-14.

² 'I stood tip-toe', 17. *Sonnet to T. Wells*, 3. *Endymion*, i. 46, 631, 941; ii. 53.

³ *Endymion*, ii. 316. *Eve of St. Agnes*, v. *Ode to a Nightingale*, vi. *Ode on Melancholy*, ii.

any modern poet (and many modern poets, e.g. Coleridge, Byron, Tennyson, have done a great deal) to make the suggestiveness of the epithet noble and imaginative.

The most striking use is in the *Ode to a Nightingale* :

Now, more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!

The suggestion here is purely pagan ; the rich death is not that of the Christian or other believer in a life beyond ; it is a mere falling asleep into oblivion, even of the beauty which makes the oblivion desired :

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod !

Rich' is fitting in the context of the Ode, because the whole poem expresses sensational fullness, dependent on the moonlight and bird-music, in contrast with the meagre attenuation of daylight experience without illusions. Better infinitely to die into nothingness (the poet implies) while this fullness is felt, than to be called back, when *forlorn* ! is struck upon the bell, to the poor life of to-morrow on which the sun shines.

3. I notice, thirdly, the very large and important class of epithets which may be called *figurative*. The majority of Keats's adjectives are of this class. With him the literal descriptive epithet (good enough for Homer, Spenser, Landor, Matthew Arnold) is comparatively rare ; and, when it does occur, it is sometimes rather commonplace and conventional. It was not one of Keats's gifts to be able to feel and convey the poetry of common life in this sense—the infinity in characteristics expressed by common, though beautiful, literal words. His imagination worked by comparison rather than penetration.

Among Keats's figurative epithets the place of honour

should probably be given to the rare and wonderful prolepsis in *Isabella* (27):

So the two brothers and their *murdered* man
Rode past fair Florence.

Such dramatic intensity is hardly characteristic.

The simile-like or metaphorical epithet ('star-like eyes', 'craggy brow') is too near literality to be favoured by Keats; indeed, I doubt whether, in its purity, it occurs anywhere in his poems. *Starlight*, in 'the starlight hand of Hebe' (*Endymion*, iv. 421), just escapes being a pure simile-epithet. As indicating a celestial tincture, it is almost as literal as *moonlight* in 'the little moonlight room' of the *Eve of St. Agnes*. The hand of the divine cup-bearer is made of starlight, or lit by stars, rather than *of the colour of stars*.

The paradoxical epithet is rare: Keats is not a poet of paradox, nor does he aim at succeeding by surprise. A strong exceptional instance is the *aching pleasure* of the *Ode on Melancholy*. In the expression *sweet-shaped lightnings*¹ there is, no doubt, a paradoxical element; for sweetness is a quality one would hardly attribute to the most harmless summer lightning. But Keats probably did not *intend* paradox; the whole passage is a rendering of the inexpressible glories of sunrise, and lightnings are thought of, not as electricity, but as flashes or gleamings of mere light.

Nor does the epithet of personification play—quantitatively, at least—a much larger part, though instances of it are remarkable and beautiful. Personification is apt to involve what Ruskin called 'pathetic fallacy'—a phrase not only somewhat unhappy in itself, but misleading, as tending to depreciate not only harmless but noble expressional effects. All symbolism is fallacy, if we choose to call it so. Symbolism or emblem is the noblest motive of per-

¹ *Hyperion*, i. 276.

sonification; and the criterion by which we judge emblematic epithets is not the presence or absence of fallacy, but the fitness of the emblem chosen to receive the attributed qualities. Keats's two finest emblematic epithets are *earnest* and *patient*, applied to the stars, both in *Hyperion* :

As when, upon a tranced summer night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream . . .¹;

and :

Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifts his curved lids, and kept them wide ;
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.²

In such personification there is surely no 'fallacy'. If the stars are to be treated as emblems (and they have been so treated from Genesis onwards) they could hardly be credited with fitter attributes. And neither epithet, it is remarkable, is determined by the context: the stars, the poet makes us feel, are *always* earnest and patient, just as they are always bright.

The largest and most interesting class of Keats's figurative epithets is that which may be called *metonymical* or transferred. Such epithets are a stock-in-trade of versifiers, and are often platitudinous enough. In Keats, the obliquity, the contiguity, implied by his epithets of this class, greatly vary. Some of the adjectives are in no way distinguished. *Silver* is sometimes beautifully transferred.³ So fond is Keats of making 'silver' relative to sound, that he uses the very rare adverb *silverly*, which he had already (*Endymion* i. 541) used of the appearance of a stream :

harmonious, stopped short,
Leave the din'd air vibrating silverly.⁴

¹ *Hyperion*, i. 74.

² *Ibid.* i. 353. Cf. 'the most patient brilliance of the moon', *ibid.* iii. 98.

³ *Endymion*, iv. 197. *Hyperion*, ii. 356.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 128.

The uses of *gold* and *golden* are more noteworthy. Perhaps the most splendid use of the glorious word gold is in 'gold Hyperion'¹, where the monosyllable seems to sum up all the attributes of the God of the Sun. Almost as fine is the application to hope :

A shine of hope
Came gold around me.²

Keats uses the word of sound ; and here, so far as I know, he is unique. Already in an early poem³ we have :

So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won.

Another instance is in *Hyperion*, in the speech of Clymene :

I threw my shell away upon the sand,
And a wave filled it, as my sense was filled
With that new blissful golden melody.⁴

Lamia yields one or two remarkable transferences, e.g. :

the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips⁵ ;

and :

Now when the wine has done its rosy deed.⁶

The poet's keen sense of colour, which explains these metonymies, explains also the 'scarlet pain' of *Lamia* ; and, in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, the 'purple riot' made by Porphyro's 'thought' in his 'pained heart'.

Ah, desperate mortal ! I ev'n dared to press
Her very cheek against my crowned lip⁷

involves a bold transference ; since, whatever you do with a lip, you cannot crown it. Keats, however, feels that no otherwise can he express the *culminating* force of the kiss he is painting ; and so he uses 'crowned' as, perhaps, it was never used before.

¹ *Hyperion*, i. 95.

² *Endymion*, iii. 690.

³ 'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill.'

⁴ *Hyperion*, ii. 280.

⁵ *Lamia*, i. 40.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii. 209.

⁷ *Endymion*, i. 662.

'Realmless eyes', in the description of Saturn at the beginning of *Hyperion*¹, is one of Keats's most impressive metonymies in epithet. The word is of the poet's invention; and never, surely, was there a more immediately self-justifying neologism. The whole sentence in which it occurs is magnificent, both in melody and harmony. Every epithet deserves careful study; and no one can fail to notice the effect of 'realmless' (suggested, no doubt, by *unsceptred*) among the others, and the part it plays in expressing the utter abnegation of royalty, the utter depression of power. The boldness of calling eyes realmless is striking. We may take the word as meaning either the opposite of kingly (an epithet which might well be used of eyes), or as suggesting that Saturn's vision had been only for his kingdom, and that, the kingdom gone, there was nothing for the eyes but to close. On either interpretation it is original and charged with significance.

Two more epithets of this kind we may select for notice:

On he flared
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of *fragrant* and enwreathed light.²

'Fragrant light' is in strict analogy with the 'embalmed darkness' of the *Ode to a Nightingale*. But what is 'enwreathed light'? Can light be spoken of literally as either entwined *with* something, or surrounded *by* something as a wreath? The answer must be that with such a conception of the sun-god and his dwelling as Keats transmits to us here, anything may happen, at all events to and by light. As in earthly bowers wreaths and garlands are of flowers and leaves, so in the heaven of Hyperion they must be of light. And the idea of light woven into wreaths is, like 'sweet-shaped lightnings', the poet's own.

In order to feel the force of Keats's epithets in his poetry

¹ *Hyperion*, i. 19.

² *Ibid.* i. 217-19.

we must not be content with considering them singly. Much of their power is in their mere abundance; and we shall never realize what Keats could do with adjectives until we hear or see them, so to say, in mass. Every reader knows how much the poet relies on plural effects of epithet—on repetition, multiplication, and accumulation:

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed¹, &c.

When the whole stanza is carefully read, it is evident that the sixfold repetition of 'happy' is meant to express, by strong and subtle rhythmical emphasis, the wholesome purity of the emotion portrayed on the urn, in contrast with the inferior emotion of acted experience, the comparative unwholesomeness of which is, in turn, expressed by a little group of noteworthy epithets:

All breathing human passion far above,
And leaves a heart *high-sorrowful* and *cloyed*,
A *burning* forehead and a *parching* tongue.

Multiplied epithets, threefold, fourfold, or more, are common, e.g.:

She took an airy range,
And then towards me, like a very maid,
Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid²—

where the words express the moodiness and 'infinite variety' of love, especially feminine love.

¹ *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, 3. Keats evidently loved the reduplication of 'happy' for its sound. Cf.

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree;

and from the *Ode to Psyche*:

The winged boy I knew,
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove? His Psyche true!

² *Endymion*, i. 635.

In the *Eve of St. Agnes* (13) a multiplication (practically fivefold, if not sixfold) makes a carefully complete picture in Keats's most characteristic manner :

He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.

In the line from the *Ode to a Nightingale* (3) :

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last, grey hairs,
the monosyllables follow one another like strokes on a passing-bell.

No view of Keats's ways with epithets would be complete which left out his effects of accumulation ; his massing of adjectives in a passage, and jewelling it with them. Here, however, it is not necessary to spend time on this aspect of Keats's style, since accumulation is an agency, not of characterization, but of verbal effect in general. It is a decorative or pictorial, rather than an analytic or intellectual agency. In the following stanza, e.g. :

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez ; and spiced dainties every one
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon¹—

the verbal delight given by the whole is given equally by adjectives and nouns. Characterization is at its minimum of importance ; we accept the attributed qualities, as we accept the dainties, on the poet's word. It is well worth notice, however, that there is in Keats little or none of the verbosity into which lovers of beautiful words, whether in verse or prose, are apt to fall. Even in the early poems, including *Endymion*, the plethora is of images rather than

¹ *Eve of St. Agnes*, 30.

words. And, in the supreme poems, the epithets are often most heavily massed where the interest is spiritual, and the effect is entirely chaste; e.g. in the lines (one of which has been already quoted):

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.

We may now register the results we have obtained, and we may best do so by trying to answer the question: What light do Keats's epithets throw on the working of his imagination; i.e. on his efforts to express the beautiful or powerful truth of things in an interrelated world?

We may begin by making two negative generalizations.

1. Keats's epithets are collectively novel, striking, and indicative of the most careful verbal option and even invention; and yet we cannot describe them as making any strong appeal to the imagination. Their suggestiveness is limited; they arrest, without surprising or puzzling us. Nor are they unfailingly distinguished; sometimes they are conventional or imitative; sometimes objectionable to the verge of ugliness. They are the epithets of a great artist, but not of a fastidious or finicking one.

2. They show constant regard for beauty of sound and archaic picturesqueness, yet that is not their chief characteristic. They are not the epithets of a poet much given to alliteration; they are not otiose, or rhetorical, or (in the invidious sense) 'aesthetic'; most of them, doubtless, are beautiful for both ear and eye; but their chief interest lies in their meaning, in their success for characterization.

We come now to what is more positive.

3. Keats's epithets, we cannot fail to see, are statical; i.e. they characterize objects in repose rather than move-

ment ; they express effects rather than powers. We prepare ourselves for the recognition of this by recognizing that Keats's subject-matter, expressed by his nouns, is concrete rather than abstract. His characteristic themes are, not God, but this god or that god ; not spirit, or nature, or life or death—not even night or day, storm or light, darkness or air ; but men and women and anthropomorphic powers ; the sun and moon and stars ; the leaves and fruits of trees ; scents and jewels, and all that is pleasant to eye, or ear, or nostril, or touch. A world of such things is a world chiefly in repose ; a world not of infinite potentiality and endless process, but of achieved and satisfying results.¹ It follows naturally that Keats's epithets are material and sensuous rather than spiritual. They are epithets of vision, hearing, scent, and touch ; and for the most part, though not invariably, they aim at definite, rather than vague, characterization, such characterization as satisfies the senses. In the opening stanza of the great *Endymion* lyric ('O Sorrow!') Keats is as abstract and spiritual as he ever is ; but how concrete and sensuous, on the whole, are the imagery and epithets ! And it is the same with the spiritualities and humanities, the 'moral ideas', as Matthew Arnold reckoned them, of the great Odes. Now and again a personified abstraction, a vague word, a figure of indeterminate suggestion ; but, on the whole, objects in sharp relief in a clear air ; objects with outline and human or animal characteristics, objects recognizably constituted and of fixed and lasting presence.

So far as vision is concerned, they are epithets of tone rather than colour. Keats's world, unlike Shelley's, is not

¹ Cf. in this connexion the passage in *Sleep and Poetry* (96-162), in which Keats distinguishes between lower and higher worlds of imagination, and notice how concrete and physical is his imagery for the latter. Contrast Wordsworth's imagery in the fragment from *The Recluse* beginning :

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life.

one of intense or subtle hues. He is fond of the romantic and rather conventional 'vermeil', and he likes white and blue; but he prefers silver and gold and sapphire and diamond, and still more, things that are 'wan', or 'flushed', or 'faint', or 'pale', 'bright' or 'hoar', 'rosy' or 'dusky' or 'cloudy'. He cannot be said to be rich in epithets expressing either sound or scent, though, as regards the latter, in the *Eve of St. Agnes* 'fragrant bodice' clings to the memory; and by the two phrases, 'spiced dainties' and 'perfume light', Keats seems to fill the whole poem with winning odours.

It is to touch and taste that he makes his chief sensuous appeals; and epithets of touch and taste are numerous, characteristic, and important. In considering his use of 'cold' and 'warm', we have already seen how much he thinks about the temperature of his world and the objects in it; but it is only when we remember his epithets of temperature as literal rather than metaphorical, and notice, along with them, his adjectives appealing otherwise to touch and to gustatory experience and suggestion, that we realize how powerfully Keats's imagination was moved by those sides of things.

4. We are now ready to make our last reflection on Keats's epithets, namely, that they are distinctly the epithets of an artist of the type to which painters and sculptors belong. If, for the moment, we choose to divide poets into three classes, those who paint (or carve), those who sing, and those who prophesy, we must unhesitatingly place Keats in the first class. His genius is not predominantly lyrical: he had not the lyrist's spontaneity and flow, which make epithets seem inevitable, in a world as living and moving as the verse. Nor has he as his special gift the genius of a prophetic poet like Wordsworth, whose world is of common things and persons, testifying of infinite heights and depths; and whose epithets seem often to reach into

eternity. Keats's world is detached from him, and its contents are detached from each other; they are concrete, reposeful, may be visualized, heard, smelt, tasted, touched, moulded, painted. If we say that Wordsworth's objects reveal imagination's infinite, may we not say that those of Keats *are* that infinite, and that, as with the great poet or sculptor, the clearness of the vision, the sensitiveness, firmness and boldness of the touch, are the index of the imaginative power?

However that may be, we must not part from Keats as from a poet who could not occasionally triumph in pure, vague suggestion.

It is true that, when he wrote those three lines of the *Ode to a Nightingale*, he was thinking of a picture he had seen; but the power of the poetry lies wholly in its untranslatable message of the unseen—a message concentrated in an epithet:

The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn!—The very word is like a bell,
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

DAVID WATSON RANNIE.

DANTE AND THE GRAND STYLE

(An Address to the Dante Society, May 3, 1905)

I MUST ask your permission to begin with a very few words of explanation as to the title which I have chosen for this paper. 'The Grand Style' is an expression of uncertain origin; but, in English at least, it is now almost indissolubly associated with the name of the late Mr. Matthew Arnold, who, as is known to almost everybody, used it as one of his favourite weapons of argumentative iteration and classification. Having had some occasion to consider not only Mr. Arnold's use of it, but its general application and signification in criticism, I have been more and more forced to conclude that Mr. Arnold's own definition of the thing—and still more the sense in which that definition really answers to the thing itself—applies to Dante more than to either of the two other writers to whom alone Mr. Arnold grudgingly granted it—namely, Homer and Milton. Nay, I think that without too much narrowness one might even say that Dante is the only writer whom it thoroughly fits, and the only one who can really have suggested it. I should myself apply the term much more widely—though no less jealously—than Mr. Arnold did: I should make it coincide with (and perhaps extend even a little beyond) the 'Sublime' of Longinus so as to apply it to any 'peak in Darien'—to anything which at varying heights and in different circumstances and positions distinctly stands up and out against the sky of literature. I think even (and perhaps I may say something later on this point) that Dante deserves it in other senses than that to which Mr. Arnold would have limited it. But I wish chiefly, at this moment, to consider the application to that

part of the Arnoldian dictum—vouchsafed not without a certain recalcitrance—that ‘the Grand Style arises when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject’. And, further, it will be possible to limit the treatment of this very considerably, even as it stands.

You will hardly expect from me a demonstration that Dante’s is a noble nature poetically gifted—we can safely here, I think, ‘leave the Creation and pass to the Deluge’ in regard to that matter. Nor will you imagine that I am shirking a difficulty if I do not argue at very great length that the subject of the *Divina Commedia* is a serious subject, though I am, I think, entitled to point out in passing that the ‘seriousness’ of the subject in this consummate example of the Grand Style may have made the critic a little excessive in insisting on it as a necessary condition of any work that shall have that style. And, yet further, I shall I am sure have your leave not to chicanery in the least degree about the expression ‘simplicity or severity’. In fact, I shall have but rare occasion to return to Mr. Arnold at all. What I wish to do to-night is to indicate a few results of my own study of the manner in which this noble and poetically gifted nature, dealing with its serious subject simply and severely or otherwise, has developed, exemplified, provided for us and for all time, that palpable-elusive thing, the Grand Style in literature. Everything that I shall say will be no doubt familiar to somebody, much to many, something to everybody here present: but it is all at any rate based on a continuous reading of the whole poem for this special purpose, and a subsequent comparison of the passages noted specially as bearing on the matter *in* that reading. When I have to write about an author I generally read him first; and I seldom find that, with any author of any greatness, even repeated readings fail to give some result, fresh to the reader if not to other people.

For the central quality of the grandeur of Dante's style I do not find any word in the above definition which to my mind exactly and positively fits. For 'nobility' is too general; 'simplicity' does not fit him as it fits Homer; and 'severity' seldom, to my fancy, fits him as it not seldom does Milton. 'Dignity' has a treacherous comic *aura* about it: and 'grandeur' would be mere tautology. What Spenser doubtless meant by magnificence—that is to say, a combination of the Aristotelian *μεγαλοπρέπεια* and the Aristotelian *μεγαλοψυχία*, transposed to the key of literature—comes nearest. But Aristotle himself, in the dawn of criticism, empowered everybody to use the inestimable method of defining by negatives: and therefore there need be no shame in using it, while we take reinforcement from some positive words which, if not adequate individually, help to make out something not quite inadequate. However often I read Dante I never can resist a fresh and increasing astonishment at the 'quietness and confidence' in which, as the Biblical phrase has it, is the strength of his style. Part of this, of course, comes from the very nature of the Italian hendecasyllable, and of his special arrangement of it in *terza rima* with, as one of his best followers in English, the late Canon Dixon, has said, 'the playing of the structure round the stanza, corrected somewhat at the end'. That hurry which, though not quite fatal to all sublimity, is always fatal to this particular kind, cannot touch it. The fall of the trochaic cadence is not a 'dying fall' by any means; there is nothing languishing in it; it is as much alive as fire; and yet there is not the slightest agitation about it. Nobody ever, for a constancy, has the much-spoken-of gift of 'inevitableness', in style at least, as Dante has. In passages of course—especially in passages of the best-known part of his work—the Inevitable becomes the Inexorable: but this is by no means always so. What the touch of the wand of his style always does is to make

the expression—whether for beauty, awe, or what not—*final*. ‘There is no more to seyn’, to use a favourite catch-word with our first, and not far from our greatest, English Dantist, Chaucer. There is nothing to add with any possibility of improvement: and seldom anything to add with any real necessity of explanation. Dante’s phrase is of course sometimes obscure, but it is then rarely of his very greatest; if it is, the removal of the obscurity is only a work of supererogation; the general impression, to any reasonably intelligent person, is sufficient and right.

Take, for instance, one of his most famous—one even of his most hackneyed phrases—*dove il sol tace*. You may, as a commentator, quite properly explain that this is a transference of imagery from one sense to another, and that parallels occur to it in the same author and in others. And there may be persons to whom such a proceeding is helpful, persons to whom even it is necessary—though for my part I would rather not talk of or to them. But to anybody who is old enough—I had almost said who ever will be old enough—to understand Dante at all, this is entirely superfluous; and any really competent student will see at once that the absence of expansion in the original, and this superfluity of the comment, *make* the grandeur. The sun which speaks in the silence of noonday; which suggests its speech by moon and stars in the silence of midnight; is silent, simply and *sans phrase*, in hell. There could not be a more triumphant illustration of Mr. Arnold’s definition of the Grand Style; nor, I think, a more complete one of a definition that should be more complete than Mr. Arnold’s.

But such ‘a jewel *four* words long’ cannot be expected very often even in the greatest writers. Less concise but very interesting examples of the Grand Style, and that which is not the Grand Style, will be found in the famous interchange of self-introductions between Virgil and Dante in the Second Canto, and in Dante’s description of his

change of purpose in the Third. There is hardly a line of the first passage (which extends in its very best part to at least twenty) that does not contain these final phrases, reduced to the very lowest terms in compass and apparatus, charged to the very highest with meaning, yet never over-reduced or overcharged. In the second, though it is a fine passage and true to nature, the expression does not equally *collect* itself; it wanders and rests itself with the repetition of the mood it gives, and so does not quite give that mood in transcendence. The transcendence recurs in another famous passage on the wretches who 'made refusal'—the 'caitiff' choir'. Even these everlastingly quoted words do not seem to me quite so 'grand' in the combination of perfection of expression with pregnancy of meaning as the five simple words that come later, *che mai non fur vivi*—they who had never dared to live, and therefore could never hope to die.

But I had rather, in so brief a survey, avoid the universally known and quoted things, Francesca and Ugolino and Ulysses. There is a less commonly cited passage (but one which struck Mr. Pater long enough ago) in the description (VII. 121) of the victims of that mysterious sin of Accidia which is so insufficiently translated by 'Sloth', and for which some whom the world certainly would not regard as slothful might have trouble in Purgatory, if not, let us hope, elsewhere. This passage suffers, to an English eye, from the fact that it contains the in our language now unpardonable, but in others and in our own of old, hardly even venial, fault of identical rhymes; but that is not essential:

Tristi fummo
 Nell' aer dolce che dal sol s' allegra
 Portando dentro accidioso fummo.
 Or ci attristiam nella belletta negra.

That seems to me a perfect minor example, if I may say so,

of the Grand Style, in its formulation of the outward conditions in the present and the fatal inward conditions precedent in the past. And I do not think the next two lines, which some would call conceit, inferior:

Quest' inno si gorgoglian nella strozza
Che dir nol posson con parola integra;

even clear, resolute articulation being denied them for their indolence past and present. But here comes in that dispute at which I have hinted, as to the compatibility of conceit and the Grand Style, between those who hold conceit to be an accursed thing and those who hold, as I do, that the Grand Style can transmute conceit and everything else, and that Dante does here, and elsewhere, so transmute it. So, too, all may not see grandeur in the few words on Caiaphas:

disteso in croce
Tanto vilmente nel eterno esilio,

with their silent indignation of comparison and contrast in every word to the glorious cross of Christ. But one of the main, if not even one of the constant, marks of the Grand Style seems to me to be this suggestion of things that are *not* said—this evidence of things not seen. It would take too long, though it is rather tempting, to compare the great Fame passage in Canto XXIV with that in *Lycidas*, which it undoubtedly suggested; for here we should have to settle that matter of Dante's familiar, and as some think even shockingly familiar imagery, which, though closely connected with our subject, would overweight the present treatment of it. And I must also only indicate a comparison between the remarkable last line of Canto XXVIII,

Così s' osserva in me lo contrapasso,

with Shakespeare's

The wheel is come full circle: I am here.

But this, like everything that I am quoting, will illustrate the way in which Dante attains grandeur by an infinitely

varied use of the old figure *meiosis*, saying constantly less than he means, but in such a fashion as brings the full meaning home with double force to the reader. This is the true literary interpretation and bearing of the still older saying that the half is greater than the whole; and it will be found constantly applicable to this Grand Style of ours, and especially to our poet in his exemplifications thereof. In this sense the 'sincerity or severity' cannot be denied, though, as some of my hearers will know very well, there are occasions where Dante allows himself, and seems rather to rejoice in, a copious complication and, to speak familiarly, 'roundaboutation', of phrase. I have sometimes been tempted to think this an almost deliberate set-off to the commoner terseness, but perhaps that is fanciful.†

No place is fuller of our evidence than the opening of the *Purgatorio*; indeed, the first two cantos are almost compact of it. The immense sense of *relief* which the poet has managed to communicate to his readers expresses itself in no relaxation of style, but only in a greater glow and brightness. Some people, no doubt, would think it mere trifling if one pointed out at length the extraordinary skill with which the varying *o* sounds of the first half of

Dolce color d' oriental zaffiro

are exchanged for the dominant *a*'s of the last, with the *e* to bridge them and the final *o* to serve as a *coda* of return. But I am not ashamed to confess absolute belief in these 'trifling' things; and in their connexion with the grandeur as well as with the sweetness of style. And for the combined fascination of the grand and the sweet I do not know where to look for anything to surpass the passage of the appearance of the boat, from the line

Per li grossi vapor Marte rosseggia

onwards. It is perhaps not unworthy of note that similes, despite the pride of place justly assigned to them in all

poetry from Homer downwards, are apt to be rather dangerous implements for the Grand Style, owing to their tendency to encourage frittering and filigree rather than massive effects. But nobody gets over this danger better than Dante, precisely because of his unfailing hold on the Grand. You may find an instance of it in the description, just below, of the angel's wings :

l' eterne penna
Che non si mutan come mortal pelo.

Dante, let it be observed, never throws away the word 'eternal' or any other of the greater gold coins of speech, whereas our modern 'stylists' are apt to play chuck-farthing, or try to play it, with them, till they are as common as the farthing itself. But he is also rather sparing of explanations, as we have seen; he likes to leave his *grandeurs* to make their own effect. Yet he achieves one here by the explanation itself, and why? Because at first sight the epithet may *seem* otiose. Everything about the angel is immortal: why specially his wings? And then the suggestion drops—in the old, simple, inevitable manner—that that change and refreshing of plumage which is so noteworthy and so beautiful in the mortal bird is unnecessary, and would be a blemish, in the bird of God: that there is no need for *him* to mew his mighty and eternal youth. There is an almost more striking instance of this, after a different fashion, in III. 122, where Manfred, acknowledging the heinousness of his sins, says :

Ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
Che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.

At the very first sight, or hearing, a not quite foolish person may regard the second line as an anti-climax; but *rivolge* has here the full virtue of *grandeur*. The Arms are so wide that they will even receive what *returns*—that is to say, what has at first scorned them and turned from them. This canto, in fact, is very full of great places; and I can only wonder

at any Dantist being in the least surprised at such a one as *del cammin la mente*, 'the riddle of the painful road'. The Sordello passage and the Valley of the Kings and others I drop on the same principle as before—as well as (though not without regret) the incomparable opening of Canto VIII., *Era già l' ora*, which speaks with equal appeal to the merest novice and to the past master in critical appreciation. I shall only observe of this latter that nothing could better exemplify the power of the Grand Style itself on those sentimental commonplaces which are the most treacherous of material. For it is an old saying and a true one, that nothing shows a poet's power more than his dealing with these: and, to particularize this generality, nothing shows Dante's power over the Grand Style more than the uncommonness of his commonplaces. The very next canto presents a pendant exemplification of this in the simile of the swallow at morning.

But nothing in the whole poem can surpass, for adequate and accurate magnificence of expression, the description of the Steps of Purgatory. Contrasted verbalizations of the three great colours, red, white, and blue, are innumerable in poetry: an invalid, with his or her mind not too much affected, might make an innocent diversion of collecting them. But surely there is none so intense as this, with its symbolism open and yet unenforced, its picture-effect clear to the mind's eye like the greatest sight of nature or art to the bodily, and accompanied by the most astonishing word music. Hardly anything shows the prowess of Italian in the less soft words of this so well as the *petrina ruvida ed arsiccia* and as the single verb *ammassiccia* for the *porfiro fiammeggiante* of the third step. Perhaps, indeed, the thing is *the* example of the Grand Style of the more elaborate and sterner kind. And, as I have just noted the effect in the palette of the Grand Style of these mighty words, let me note another where Dante avails himself as marvellously of

another single vocable as Shakespeare does of 'multitudinous' and 'incarnadine' in a famous triumph of his. I speak as absolutely no Italian scholar at all (in fact I apologize very heartily for mangling my citations with what has always been the most English of mouths), but I suppose that no reader of the language who has been accustomed to read any language minutely, while he may notice the absence of compound words in Italian, can have failed to notice the curious developments and amplifications of single words which it boasts. One of these Dante has made a thing to marvel at, just below the place to which we had got, where he says of the graven history of the act that freed Trajan from Hell:

che dietro a Micol mi biancheggiava.

This single word for the gleaming white and gold companion picture is great enough. But remember to *what* and *whom* it was a companion picture—to that not too well-treated wife of David who has been portrayed as

Sì come donna dispettosa e trista,

and observe the contrast provided. And this cunning manipulation of the dictionary is shown again a little lower in the use of the word *disviticchia*, 'peers through the vines', of Dante trying to distinguish individuals in the tangled crowd of those who stoop under the burden of Pride.

If I am not teasing you too much with these detailed references, I should like to note (Canto XIII), at the beginning of the description of the pass of livid rock that admits to the Circle of Envy, the singularly and characteristically pregnant use of *livido* itself, uncommented, undwelt upon, and all the more forcible. So again, to make great strides, not for dearth of matter but for want of time, those words of Mark the Lombard in the angry smoke, where the belief

(noblest, surely, of all will-worships !) in the stars is corrected by the words

A maggior forza ed a miglior natura
Liberi soggiacete,

where the amplification and precision at once given by the three adjectives and the verb to the substantives is a very opal of style. And the wonderful description of the Siren in the dream of Canto XIX, and passage after passage in the introductory scene with Statius ; and the curious illustration of that fancy for *litotes*, 'lessening', which we have noticed (and which sometimes, to readers accustomed to more superlative and gesticulatory styles, seems an anti-climax or a bareness) in the poet's modest boast that when Diocletian persecuted the Christians, 'they came to seem so holy to him that their cries were not without his tears'.

As for the last six or seven cantos of this *cantica* the difficulty is what example not to quote. I doubt whether, in any place of any poet, there can be found such an astonishing concentration and combination of poetic thought with expression of the highest order as that which fills the whole space between the passage through the fire and the draught from the waters of Eunoe. There must be about a thousand lines in all ; and it is of the rarest to find a single passage that descends even to medium excellence in point of phrase. The very opening of the Twenty-seventh Canto has one of those 'grand-style conceits', as I have called them, which are so interesting, in the amplification of 'sanguine sunrise' by the notion of the sun making his rays quiver when his Maker shed His blood. And the baptism of fire itself ; and the elaborate and beautiful comparison of the three pilgrims' sleep on the mountain-side, with its unforced (even unmentioned) contrast of the cool dark rest with the burning glow of the fiery cincture, join this set of illustrations ; and everything continues it. The Leah-Rachel dream ; the resignation of his guideship by Virgil ;—each of these is enshrined in this same

crystal (rather than amber) coating of style, which does not merely give access to every shred and speck of meaning, does not merely magnify it and make it more easily acceptable, but adds lustre and iridescence without detracting from clearness and veracity.

But it would be almost sufficient to take the cantos of the Earthly Paradise alone for our special purposes of illustration, at least on the milder side. The subject has been—and naturally enough—a favourite one with poets. To tell the honest truth, it, I fear, appeals to most of us a good deal more closely than the Heavenly; let us at any rate say, if this seems shocking, that we are much better furnished with ideas and images wherewith to depict and adorn it. But, for this very reason, there are certain dangers attending its description—dangers of a glorified land of Cocaigne, or (according to time and idiosyncrasy) a glorified International Exhibition. That Dante entirely avoids both is due, not merely to his careful selection of subjects, but (and still more) to those very peculiarities of his expression which we are here discussing. Any child must of course notice the opening contrast of the forest—the *divina foresta spessa e viva*—with the evil wood where the whole *Commedia* begins. But the poet justifies his mastery by things much less obvious than this. The passage of breeze and foliage and birds which follows is great enough, but not, I think, quite equal to that on Lethe—the brown stream beneath the sunproof and moonproof trees, which ‘hides nothing’ and yet after the drinking hides everything but good from the memory. Whether either is equal or superior to the picture of Matilda which comes next must be, I suppose, very much a matter of individual taste.

It is possible that some one may here say—may have already felt inclined to say—‘Yes, these things are beautiful, and we know them very well; but there are plenty of beautiful things in other poets; and, even as Dante’s, they

have no special connexion with the grand style.' Well; that is the question. My point is that if you will compare them with other beautiful passages of other poets you will find certain peculiarities, some of which I have endeavoured to point out, differentiating them from these; and for what causes the differentiation I can find no better phrase than that which forms our title. I think it is Southey who tells us that a friend of his used to say of a thing as his highest term of encomium that it was 'necessary, and voluptuous, and right'. It is an excellent combination, and I do not know of any which better expresses the Grand Style itself. There are some poets of the greatest kind—I suppose most people would take Ariosto as a representative of these, though I am not sure that I do—who are 'voluptuous' beyond dispute and in a manner 'right', but not exactly 'necessary'. There are others, of whom Wordsworth most naturally suggests himself, who are often 'right' enough and sometimes quite 'necessary', but too seldom 'voluptuous'. In hardly any poet do the three qualities meet so constantly and unite so firmly as in Dante; and in no part of Dante is the trinity more constantly obvious than here. Its union poetizes the long and somewhat unpromising Pageant of the Grifon, with all its historico-politico-controversial meanings. This union, as it alone could be, is worthy to give in words the apparition of Beatrice and the disparition of Virgil. It enforces the marvellous 'convincing of sin' which the poet receives from his lady, and it is equal to their baptism in Lethe. In particular, what I have called the apparition of Beatrice is one of the most miraculous word-miracles known to me. A painter could not do it at all; a stage-spectacle maker, availing himself of all devices and tricks of stage carpentry and stage chemistry, could only make a base mechanic travesty of it. It is pure magic: the white magic of style, and of Grand Style.

I have sometimes ventured to think that the comparative

neglect of the *Paradiso*, as well as that bafflement which so many honest though not neglectful students have confessed, and which I myself felt till a very recent period, is due, not merely to the greater abstruseness of much of the subject-matter, but to the fact that this abstruseness comes in the way of the appreciation of the special mastery of style here displayed. When 'the *pikes* are past', as the old Elizabethan phrase has it—when the unfamiliarity and the frequent scholasticism of matter are left on one side, the extraordinary quality of this can hardly be missed. The terror and the pity, the variety and the stimulus, of the *Inferno* could—though they do not—dispense with style; the intense personal interest of the *Purgatory*, the most engrossing and intimately insisting of the three, and that which comes most home to the soul, might almost dispense with it. But the *Paradiso* would be almost the faulty faultlessness, the unvaried perfection which it is charged with being, if it were not for the consummate expression which everywhere clothes it with beauties like its own glories of colour, and light, and harmony. I have never been able to think that the famous line which Mr. Arnold singled out, and which many, if not most, English-writing critics have obediently followed him in selecting—

In la sua volontade è nostra pace—

is really the greatest example of this, magnificent as it is. The greatness of meaning is rather tyrannous: it imposes on itself. And the exquisite leonine assonance (if I may be pardoned the pedantry) of *volontade* and *pace* is too much a matter of course:—it is the dictionary, not Dante, that does it for us. Elsewhere there is no possibility of such (I duly admit the impeachment) irreligious cavilling. Everything has been done with Dante, and therefore, though I do not know, I suppose that some one may have collected separately what we may call 'the Passages of the Eyes'—the prodigious

and almost unbelievable variations of the one idea of the virtue and beauty of the glance of Beatrice which Dante has scattered over the poem—never repeating himself, never condescending to a mere conceit, and yet never failing, any more than the eyes themselves, to satisfy the almost incredulous expectation of the astonished observer.

And this may bring me afresh to a point glanced at already—the point of Dante and the Grand Style in reference to *conceit*, to far-fetched and eccentric expression. We know that according to some ideas of the Grand Style—to those of the ancients almost always, except in the case of Longinus, and in his case sometimes—these two things are irreconcilable. Where Conceit comes in, the Grand Style, say they, goes out and Frigidity takes its place. Some of us who most honour the ancients are not of that opinion; I certainly am not. The Grand Style is sovereign here, as it can confer *grandeeship* on any expression to which it gives its hand to kiss and its garment to touch. Shakespeare does this of course as well as Dante: much lesser men than Shakespeare and Dante (such as Donne) can do it sometimes. But these latter cannot always do it, and Shakespeare, though he always can, does not always care to do it. I will not say that Dante never fails, but he very seldom does; and a list of his conceits, which in other hands might have merely been the king's jesters and in his are paladins and peers, would not be a difficult thing to draw up, and would be a curious thing to study. If you will permit me, I will specify one or two.

In the first place, I am not quite sure that the extreme scholasticism which has frequently been charged against the *Paradiso*, and which often gives the appearance of conceit, has not in Dante's hands—though it may be admitted that there are very few hands in which it could have had the effect—proved a positive assistance by communicating that precision of expression which, as we have seen, has so much

to do with grandeur of style. The very first three lines exhibit this quality in an almost startling manner. They are from one point of view a truism, a mere commonplace, something to which you say 'Agreed! Agreed!'

La gloria di Colui che tutto muove
Per l'universo penetra, e risplende
In una parte più, e meno altrove.

And yet this truism, this commonplace, gives—perhaps as nothing else could give, pretty certainly as nothing else could give better—the keynote to the whole *cantica*—the differing manifestations of the glory of God. How different and yet how similar is the phrase at line 95 of the same canto respecting the

sorrise parolette brevi,

'the little words rather smiled than spoken' with which Beatrice puts an end to his doubt. Less austere than the first, and less reticent and sedate than the second, is the magnificent opening of Canto V, where we have the Grand Style in full pomp of phrase and prodigality of vowel-music and ambient atmosphere of sound—a splendour, in short, almost as dazzling as the accompanying glances of the eyes themselves, before which the mortal lover—and sinner—quails:

S' io ti fiammeggio nel caldo d'amore
Di là dal modo che intra si vede,
. Sì che degl' occhi tuoi vinco il valore,
Non ti maravigliar.

Only the grandest of grand styles could suit that bold and somewhat perilous passage of Folco's where he says that those who, though pardoned, have sinned for love, repent not but smile—not for their fault, of which Lethe has taken away the very memory, but for the blissful order of the world which they too blindly abused; and only the same could befit the companion passage where the glory of Rahab

is likened to that of sunlight in pure water. Very exemplary, too, is the single line (XIV. 27):

Lo refrigerio dell' eterna ploia,

where, as often happens in the two latter *cantiche*, the sting of the beauty lies in the suggestion—not dwelt on, not even indicated in words, but *there*—of the contrast of the other eternal rains, not refreshing but torturing, of fire and of water in Hell. Perhaps we may lay stress again on this feature of grandeur of style—allusiveness that is not laboured, that permits brevity and at the same time extends meaning. Canto XIV contains a strikingly different but strikingly complementary passage, the great description of the Cross in the Heaven of Mars with the wonderful device of the word *Cristo* thrice rhyming to itself only, and as it were bracing two tercets into a single quintet tipped trident-fashion with the sacred sound. Almost as many know the last line of the Fifteenth, though it has been less quoted, as those who know Mr. Arnold's favourite: and his own acknowledgement of its perfection,

E venni dal martirio in questa pace,

can, I think, be even better justified without any qualification. Less splendid, but when examined not less consummate perhaps, is a phrase early in the Sixteenth—

Dove appetito non si torce—

with once more, as in all these great short phrases, its unexpressed suggestion that appetite is not bad; that it is good, if only care be taken to keep it 'untwisted' and directed to the proper objects. In XVIII. 21, by good luck, one of Dante's most delectable lines falls naturally into no bad English equivalent,

Not only in my eyes is Paradise.

The whole of the imagery of the Eagle in this context deserves to be studied by those who care to follow out

what I have said of the marriage of the Grand Style with Conceit; and its speech in the next two cantos is nearly as full of places for us, despite the abstract character of much of the substance. Perhaps the three or four words,

E quella non ridea,

at the beginning of the Twenty-first are Dante's tersest and most concentrated triumph, and I hardly know another poet, except Shakespeare, who would have been able to refrain from hurting their effect by interposing something about his own feelings between the announcement of this eclipse and Beatrice's explanation of its reason. And then comes the return of the smile in the Twenty-third, a canto so full of beauties of this kind that it would serve as a text by itself, with its shower of similes, the most abundant anywhere, as the poet strives to master his new privileges. Even the 'Examination Cantos'—as we may call them, in a phrase which I can assure any part of my audience who have doubts on the matter is quite as disagreeable in association to Professors as it can possibly be to others—do not spare the spell. Who but Dante would have thought of the phrase '*La grazia che donnea con la tua mente*', 'the grace which rules in thy mind as lady', with its double application? For there is a Grand Style in compliment and in gallantry, and in everything, just as we have seen it in conceit. I must pass rapidly over the beautiful simile of the doves in Twenty-five, and the marvellous close of this same when he has lost sight of his mistress, and passage after passage in the third examination by St. John, and the strange audacious simplicity of the image when Adam is introduced, to a passage famous but extraordinarily interesting, the great denunciation of his successors by St. Peter. It is almost needless to say that hardly any English reader can avoid thinking of that other passage in *Lycidas* which it suggested. Dante will scarcely be

acquitted of party spirit by any but the blindest worshippers; but how petty and parochial is Milton's expression of it in comparison with his! and how poor the imagery and machinery of the later poet in comparison with the blushing of the whole sphere of heaven in sympathy with the apostle's indignation! Nor can I agree with an excellent critic that one of the phrases for this is in any way 'cumbersome', a fault which would at once unfit it for being called 'grand'. When Dante says that St. Peter's torch

tal nella sembianza sua divenne
Qual diverrebbe Giove s' egli e Marte
Fossero augelli e cambiassersi penne,

it must be remembered that the first thing that has struck him in the sphere of the Fixed Stars (where all this happens) was the motion of the planets beneath. He has Jupiter and Mars in their natural colours, revolving beneath and before him, as he speaks, and the exchange of the colours is a natural and telling suggestion, recalling at the same time the grandeur and vastness of the whole scene and situation. As I have tried to point out, this suggestiveness, this inclusion as it were, of any amount of comment *with* the text, yet without any cumbersome innuendo, is one of the *differentiae* of the Grand Style in general and of Dante's in particular.

I know, however, that these minute illustrations are wearisome to many, and that the critic is wiser who consults his hearers' or readers' ease (happening also to consult his own at the same time) by indulgence in generalities; and I shall only trouble you with one or two more. One of these must be the final Passage of the Smile in Canto XXX, with its wonderful fancy of the mind severed from itself by memory:

La mente mia da se medesima scema—

the memory still able to record, but the plastic and repre-

sentative faculties vanquished by perfection from reproducing. And the River of Light (where as an exception he brings the sense of smell *sub specie aeternitatis*, in spite of Aristotelian prudery)—nearly fifty lines of the most gorgeous imagery that any poet ever poured forth, saved everywhere from the least touch of tawdriness—and the Picture of the Rose itself, remain uncommented, uncommentable. Only the grandest style, here and in the final canto, could keep matter of such intensity and such altitude from being either unintelligible, or jejune, or frigid in expression: yet it is so kept. And I am not aware of any more remarkable example of the transforming powers of such a style than the lines in reference to Beatrice:

E che soffristi per la mia salute
In Inferno lasciar le tue vestige.

Only the strictest verity of meaning in reference to the summoning of Virgil to be his guide could avoid here the suspicion of blasphemy, and only the strictest accuracy as well as beauty of expression could save it from the objection of bad taste. It will incur neither, save from those of whose disapproval Dante would have been disdainfully glad in his more unregenerate condition, and calmly neglectful after Lethe and Eunoë had completed the preparation of the Seven Letters.

And now I have done with these citations in detail, and very nearly with all that I have to say on the subject; but a little summing-up is good fashion, and to be followed whenever possible. I have already quoted Chaucer (whose own Dante-citations and allusions are the more surprising in number and character the more one looks into them), and I shall venture to quote him once more in his most remarkable reference (that of the *Monk's Tale*) to

the grete poete of Itaille,
That highte Dant, for he can al devyse
Fro point to point, nat o word wol he faille.

It is possible, of course, to take this peculiar eulogy, 'not one word will he fail', as merely concerning the matter, as referring to Dante's well-known minuteness and correctness of detail. I do not think, however, that it is absolutely preposterous—especially when we remember what a master of style Chaucer himself was; how his own countrymen and contemporaries recognized the 'gold dewdrops of speech', which they were unluckily unable to imitate—to extend or concentrate the eulogy upon those characteristics of Dante's style to which I have been, however inadequately, endeavouring to call your attention. That this style is nobly poetic we shall all agree; that it has at least very often a singular simplicity and not seldom something that may be called severity as well, will not be commonly denied; perhaps my own belief that Mr. Arnold had these special notes of the special style principally (and perhaps almost too principally) before him when he defined the Grand Style in general may seem to some not quite gratuitous or preposterous. But I think this phrase of Chaucer's about 'not failing in one word' is a happier as well as briefer description of Dante's style than Mr. Arnold's would be if it were avowedly directed to Dante; and, what is more, that it is a happier definition of the Grand Style in general than Mr. Arnold's own. Not to fail in one word means to be perfectly adequate—to hit the mark, and nothing else but the mark, and the mark itself full and home. Where there is too large excursion, too great abundance, or too great extravagance of diction or of imagery, the Grand Style escapes before the writer has finished; where there is too great economy and poverty of either—even where there is not an atmosphere and *aura* of suggestion as well as positive statement—the writer has fallen short of the Grand Style, and finished before he has attained it. It will itself admit, as we have seen, of extreme complexity—nay, of positive conceit—as I have endeavoured to argue; it will admit like-

wise, and as is less likely to be argued against, of extremest conciseness, of a terseness which is simply the reduction of speech to its lowest terms. But always the two functions of speech itself, the accomplished conveyance of the meaning as such, and the conveyance of it beautifully and individually, must be achieved to the uttermost; in both these functions the old requirement of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, must be paid to the uttermost farthing. I could enter into due refinements on this, if I thought it advisable or tolerable; I could point out that that myriad-sidedness of great expression which the best critics have noticed—that fact that it means this to me, and that to thee—is, so far from being an evasion or falsification of this law, an exact fulfilment of it, inasmuch as the capacity of the individual in receiving depth of meaning and beauty of expression varies. But this would be, for the moment at any rate, superfluous. Let me end by repeating once more, with our first great poet of England, that this great poet of Italy ‘will not fail one word’ in any trial that you may set him of the Grand Style in poetry.

GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

BLAKE'S RELIGIOUS LYRICS

THE most religious of all the English poets, since the seventeenth century, is one who has exercised less influence than any other upon the rank and file of Englishmen. Partly this is due to the fact that he chose to wrap up much of what he had to say in a symbolic language to which he alone possessed the key. 'Allegory', he once wrote to his friend and patron, Mr. Butts, 'addressed to the intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the corporeal understanding, is my definition of the most sublime poetry.' It is a definition which will not cover the poetry which Blake himself held to be 'most sublime'. How, for example, could he have translated into form and colour the 'sublime poetry' of the Book of Job, if its meaning had been altogether hidden from his 'corporeal understanding'? Blake had great reverence for the Bible, and an intimate knowledge of its contents; and it is rather surprising that he had not been struck by the close parallel between his own allegorical writings and that 'speaking with tongues' in the Corinthian Church which, unless it was interpreted, was but 'speaking into the air'. Any one who will turn to the verses sent by Blake to Mr. Butts in a letter dated November 22, 1802, and notice the entire want of congruity between the simple problem he was revolving in his mind, that of a return from Felpham to London, and the convulsions of nature, and signs in the sun and moon, which were its visionary accompaniment, will have a measure of the impossibility of attaching any coherent ideas to the catastrophic portions of the Prophetical Books. Indeed, even

in the lyrics we find tears, and fire, and blood used as vague symbols of every sort of emotion.

But it may be said that without a knowledge of Blake's mythological system it is impossible to comprehend even his apparently most simple lyric. This is the view taken by Messrs. Ellis and Yeats in their elaborate edition of Blake's works (1893). It may be allowed that in the case of some of the later poems, disinterred from Blake's commonplace books, a thought given there somewhat too concisely will be found expanded to great length in the *Prophecies*: and so these may serve a useful purpose as commentary. Mr. Sampson, in his standard edition of Blake's *Poems*, has put them to this profitable use. But then these later poems themselves, with very few exceptions, make no appeal except to the psychologist. They are not lyrics, though their form is lyrical. Of the true lyrics, it is no paradox to say that they are the best commentary upon the *Prophetical Books*, because they show us which were the ideas that really mattered to Blake, and kindled his heart and his imagination; for in all the fluent extemporizing of the *Prophecies* the reader rarely comes upon a line that quickens the pulse. All is equally emphatic, and with well-marked exceptions¹ equally tedious, take it where you will.

The sky is an immortal tent built by the Sons of Los :
And every space that a man views around his dwelling-place,
Standing on his own roof, or in his garden on a mount
Of twenty-five cubits in height, such space is his Universe :
And on its verge the sun rises and sets, &c.

The stones are pity, and the bricks well-wrought affections,
Enamelled with love and tenderness, and the tiles engraven
gold,
Labour of merciful hands; the beams and rafters are for-
givenness ;
The mortar and cement of the work, tears of honesty ; the
nails

¹ The best passages were extracted by Mr. Swinburne in his 'Critical Essay'.

And the screws and iron braces are well-wrought blandishments,
 And well-contrivèd words, firm fixing, never forgotten,
 Always comforting the remembrance ; the floors, humility ;
 The ceilings, devotion, &c.

However, in order that the reader may decide for himself whether the symbolic commentary, supplied by Messrs. Ellis and Yeats, lets in any light upon the Songs, or whether it does not rather resemble Feste's famous 'clerestory to the south-north' in being 'as lustrous as ebony', we may select for a sample of the method a pair of poems from the *Songs of Innocence*, which most readers would be content to interpret in their superficial sense, as written to persuade little children of the reality of the divine care.

THE LITTLE BOY LOST.

'Father, father, where are you going ?
 Oh, do not walk so fast !
 Speak, father, speak to your little boy,
 Or else I shall be lost.'

The night was dark, no father was there,
 The child was wet with dew ;
 The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
 And away the vapour flew.

THE LITTLE BOY FOUND.

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
 Led by the wandering light,
 Began to cry, but God, ever nigh,
 Appeared like his father, in white.
 He kissed the child, and by the hand led,
 And to his mother brought,
 Who in sorrow pale, through the lonely dale,
 The little boy weeping sought.

Messrs. Ellis and Yeats thus interpret :

The little boy is lost, for a while, because the movement of the Light, as the 'Father', is too swift for the mind clogged with body to follow. He does not at best see the Father otherwise than as a vapour, and even this flies from

him, and leaves him in the darkness of fleshly growth, which becomes increasingly 'opaque', to use Blake's later term. The region of the darkened West, the shadowy Female, is indicated by the signs *night*, and *dew*, as the Adamic Red Earth is by the *mire*. In the 'Little Boy Found' the flying vapour is separated from the Father and shown to be, when alone, only the fen-light 'wandering'—the 'false morning' as it is afterwards called in 'Vala.' God appears in the human form, which to the little boy seems that of his father, and leads him to his mother. Mnetha has become Enion, who loses her own children in her own element. The Father gives back to her those who are not advanced enough to leave her, for until the experience of the lower nature, or senses, is completely matured the higher should not be permitted to separate, lest empty abstraction, and the solitude of the Spectre in Entuthon Benythion and Udan Adan be the result, and not the ultimate unity only to be reached through experience and brotherhood.

We are reminded again of Feste, and his profound discourse about 'Pigrogromitus and the Vapians passing the equinoctial of Queubus.' But this apart, it is evident that the latter half of the interpretation forgets the former. For if the child is lost because he is 'in the darkness of fleshly growth', how can his finding consist in handing him back to 'the experience of the lower nature, or senses', which is only the 'fleshly growth' under another name?

It will be well, at this point, to state as simply as possible the leading ideas which Blake conceived it to be his mission to promulgate, as they can be gathered from his more prosaic utterances. His psychology was, it would seem, based upon that of the Pauline Epistles. Man has a double nature, or rather, he has a nature so contrived that he may live in a part or in the whole. The whole is the spirit; the part is the sensuous frame. It is therefore possible for him to live the life of the senses, not what is ordinarily called a 'sensual' life, but a life limited to the interests which the senses open to him, becoming a merchant, or engineer, or man of science; or he may live in the whole of his nature, and by so doing hold

communion with the Spirit of the Universe from whom his spirit derives its being. Blake has grasped firmly the Pauline idea that the 'flesh' and the 'world' are not evil in themselves, but become dangerous to man when they are regarded as independent existences apart from the Spirit in whom they consist: as such we find him attributing them to the devil. Considered as spiritual, Man and the World are the work of the Divine Spirit. 'Let it be remembered', he writes in a note on Lavater, 'that creation is God descending according to the weakness of man: our Lord is the Word of God, and everything on earth is the Word of God, and in its essence is God.' On the other hand, when criticizing Wordsworth's poetry, he pointed to its eloquent descriptions of Nature as proof of the poet's atheism. 'Whoever believes in Nature, disbelieves in God; for Nature is the work of the devil.' Similarly he said, 'Every man has a devil in himself; and the conflict between this self and God perpetually carrying on.' A less picturesque writer might have been content to say that Nature looked at apart from the Divine Spirit was a false abstraction, just as Man looked at in the same way was a false abstraction. That this is what Blake meant is pretty clear from what he said to Crabb Robinson, that 'the devil is externally created, not by God, but by God's permission.'

On the other hand, Blake is equally emphatic that man's sensuous nature is a part of reality. 'Energy', he says, which is 'eternal delight', 'is the only life, and is from the body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of energy.' By means of these 'contraries', as he calls them, passive and active, man lives his life and makes progress; or would do so, if his life were lived 'in the Spirit'. Many of his proverbs are in praise of 'energy'.

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.
He who desires, but acts not, breeds pestilence.

The cistern contains, the fountain overflows.
Exuberance is beauty.

This fullness of life, lived in communion with God, is what man was made for. Unhappily, it is not the life which all men live, because they have not all the vision of God. In the world about them, they see not God, but phenomena.

This life's five windows of the soul
Distort the heavens from pole to pole,
And lead you to believe a lie
When you see *with*, not *through*, the eye.

Whereas, 'if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.' 'Oh', he cries, 'that men would *seek* immortal moments, that they would converse with God!' From such truth of perception would spring truth in conduct. For if all men were animated with the same Divine Spirit, they would recognize their kindred in other men, and work in harmony with them, like the limbs of a body to which selfishness is impossible. Such a life of mutual love, to Blake as to St. Paul, is the only life that can be called Christian.

Blake thoroughly agreed with Wordsworth in saying that 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy'. In the *Songs of Innocence* he has sketched for us his ideal world, in which children, and those who have the hearts of children, look up to God with love and joy, and feel the same love and joy in the presence of each other. The fall from this state of innocence arises, in Blake's view, from the materialistic education in vogue; which limits the child's interest to the visible universe and as a consequence kills joy and love, because it withdraws from notice the divine element in men and things. The way of recovery lay in the use of the imagination, which Blake regarded as a mystical power, equivalent to St. Paul's 'faith'. The crucifixion of Jesus, to him as to St. Paul, represented an eternal death to sin, or 'annihilation' of 'selfhood', and a consequent 'life in the

Spirit'. So that in his poem to Tirzah,—'Thou mother of my mortal part',—he adopts almost St. Paul's language, and writes

The death of Jesus set me free :
Then what have I to do with thee ?

It was undoubtedly through the imagination that Blake himself recovered or preserved his communion with the Divine Spirit, and the visions which he saw were, in his judgement, the ordinary accompaniment of life 'in the Spirit'. He said to Crabb Robinson that the faculty of vision could be cultivated. But even if we think he was mistaken in the spiritual value he attached to his visions, we can recognize that what he called 'imagination' is precisely what does constitute the essence of religion.

One result of a limitation of view to the material universe, according to Blake, is that Reason and Energy, instead of being, as they were meant to be, the 'contraries' by which life proceeds under the guidance of an illuminated will, become contradictions. Reason usurps the throne of the Spirit, and enslaves the human energies, replacing religion by morality. Reason thus becomes 'an abstract, objecting power that negatives everything'. It does not guide the energies of life, but cramps them, with a persistent 'Thou shalt not'.

This is the spectre of man, the holy Reasoning Power ;
And in its holiness is closed the abomination of desolation.

This contrast between Religion and Morality which pervades so much of Blake's thought is, of course, nothing but St. Paul's contrast between the life 'in the Spirit' and the life 'under Law' with which everybody is familiar. When St. Paul said 'the letter killeth' he must have shocked the orthodox of his day, quite as much as Blake shocked those who conversed with him by his attacks upon 'moral law'. Both were condemning an inferior substitute for a great

principle. St. Paul points out that the whole moral law is comprehended in the command to love; and Blake is never tired of repeating the same wholesome doctrine.

Jehovah's fingers wrote the Law :
He wept ! then rose in zeal and awe,
And in the midst of Sinai's heat
Hid it beneath his Mercy-Seat.
O Christians, Christians, tell me why
You rear it on your altars high ?

With this brief statement of Blake's fundamental doctrines, we may pass to the poems in which he gave them imaginative expression.

The *Songs of Innocence* were first issued in 1789; the *Songs of Experience* followed in 1794; the two series being then joined together with an additional title-page, bearing the inscription 'Songs of Innocence and Experience, showing the two contrary States of the Human Soul.' What, it must be asked, are these two contrary states? Is the word 'contrary' used in Blake's technical sense? The whole passage referred to above, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, runs as follows :

Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passion that obeys Reason. Evil is the action springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

The two contrary states chiefly represented in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* are love and hate; and a systematizer of Blake's writings might be excused for asserting that, as hell in Blake's nomenclature is a term of respect, implying energy or passion, the poems in the *Songs of Experience* dealing with evil passions are intended by him as pictures of states equally necessary to human progress with those states of love and joy described in the *Songs of Inno-*

cence. Happily, Blake himself in this same prophecy speaks with scorn of the 'confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning'. And it should ever be a principle with the student of Blake, that the general intention of any book or poem, which is usually not difficult to discover, must govern the interpretation of the terms employed in it; for Blake's terms are not many in number, and they are used in his various books with different shades of meaning.

We may fairly assume, then, that when he speaks on his title-page of 'contrary states of the human soul', Blake is using the word 'contrary' in a general sense. He may mean, incidentally, those 'contrary' states of 'heaven and hell', or reason and energy, which when 'married' result in progress; but he means far more often those of the 'just man' and the 'villain', whom he speaks of in the 'Argument' to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; and by the 'villain' he means the Pharisee or hypocrite. It would not be far from the mark to say that Blake's object in writing the *Songs of Innocence* was to set forth, and impress upon children, his idea of true religion, and in the *Songs of Experience* to expose, for the sake of their elders, its common counterfeit. But the contrast is, of course, presented not in a formal and didactic way, but imaginatively, and from many points of view.

The ideal is set forth in the Song of Innocence called 'The Divine Image':

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness;

while its parody appears in the Song of Experience originally named 'The Human Image', but later 'The Human Abstract':

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody poor;

And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings Peace
Till the selfish Loves increase, &c.

Then these notes of true religion and their opposites are illustrated in detail. 'The Clod and the Pebble' gives the two contrasted ideas of love. 'On Another's Sorrow' is a lesson in pity. In 'The Little Black Boy' and 'A Dream' the child's imagination is stimulated and its sympathies drawn out towards a lower civilization and the lower animals; and correspondingly in the *Songs of Experience* there are pictures of selfish wrath and jealousy in 'The Poison Tree' and 'My pretty Rose-tree'. In three cases the intended contrast is plainly marked by the presence of a poem upon the same subject in each book of songs. The two nurses' songs contrast very simply the genuine affection of the true nurse with the selfish jealousy of the other, masquerading under the cloak of solicitude. 'The Chimney Sweeper' and 'Holy Thursday' in the *Songs of Innocence* illustrate for children the divine virtue of pity, while their parallels in the *Songs of Experience* are a stern rebuke to such of their elders as think it an ordinance of the Creator that their foul chimneys should be swept by little boys, and orphans be herded together in joyless asylums. Or, if we take these two Songs of Innocence to be written for the poor children themselves, we may regard the poet as opening for them a door out of their misery into the eternal world of joy, while in the corresponding Songs of Experience he is calling upon Christian people to abolish the misery altogether. There is yet another pair of contrasts, the 'Little Boy Lost' and 'Little Boy Found' of the *Songs of Innocence*, and the 'Little Girl Lost' and 'Little Girl Found' of the *Songs of Experience*. The intention in this case is not so clear. But the fact that the latter poems were originally included in the *Songs of Innocence* forbids us to regard them

as parallel with the other contrasts. The key to the poet's meaning is probably to be found in the opening lines of the 'Little Girl Lost':

In futurity
I, prophetic, see
That the earth from sleep
(Grave the sentence deep)
Shall arise and seek
For her Maker meek :
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

That is to say, the 'Little Girl' poems are an imaginative picture of a regenerate earth, in which the beasts of prey become friends of man.

Again, we find contrasts in the two books of songs which answer more directly to their titles; contrasts between the world of Nature which innocence imagines for itself (and which, as we have seen, is to Blake, as to Isaiah, a type of the new heaven and earth) and the Nature 'red in tooth and claw' which experience reveals. Of this sort the finest of the songs are 'The Lamb' and 'The Tiger', each, in its own way, sublime; the latter gaining in sublimity from contrast with the other:

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

Death also is a subject which, as we should expect, receives different treatment in the two books according to deepening experience. In the *Songs of Innocence* we have the dream coffin of the 'Chimney Sweeper' opened by the angel with a bright key; and we have also in 'Night' the angelic care for the lambs destroyed by wild beasts:

When wolves and tigers howl for prey
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep.

But if they rush dreadful,
 The angels, most heedful,
 Receive each mild spirit,
 New worlds to inherit.

In the *Songs of Experience* the place of 'The Happy Blossom' is taken by 'The Sick Rose'; the lost emmet and the benevolent glow-worm of 'A Dream' are replaced by 'The Fly' brushed away to death by a thoughtless hand, which suggests to the poet a speculation on what life itself may be for men as for insects; and the 'Sun Flower' and the 'Lily'¹ appear as emblems of the 'resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.'

There remain one or two poems in the *Songs of Experience* which require more detailed consideration. What is the significance of the lines called 'A Little Boy Lost', which describe the martyrdom of a child for heresy; the heresy consisting in a Cordelia-like refusal to repeat the required formula of filial affection?

Nought loves another as itself,
 Nor venerates another so,
 Nor is it possible to thought
 A greater than itself to know :
 And, father, how can I love you
 Or any of my brothers more?
 I love you like the little bird
 That picks up crumbs around the door.

Humility, in intellectual matters, was one of Blake's bugbears; he held it to be one of the vices of false religion, as tending to destroy proper self-respect and regard for truth. To understand his insistence upon the topic, it is necessary to remember that the line of art which he unswervingly pursued led him counter to all the fashionable doctrine of the day; so that the realization of a man's own ideal, as

¹ This use of the lily, as a pendent to the sunflower, would seem to have been a later inspiration of Blake's; for the poem in its original form, preserved in Blake's manuscript book, had a different significance. In other places the lily appears as the symbol of immortality.

opposed to a blind following of tradition, was apt to appear in his eyes the whole duty of man. He traces the evil, according to his wont, to the imposition upon the growing intelligence of the fetters of law. Here the fifth commandment comes in for attack, as expanded by the Catechism into a rule of submission to governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters. It is in this intellectual sense that we must understand the many attacks, in Blake's writings, upon humility; as the 'Everlasting Gospel' makes plain:

Was Jesus humble? or did he
 Give any proofs of humility?
 When but a child he ran away,
 And left his parents in dismay.
 When they had wandered three days long,
 These were the words upon his tongue:
 'No earthly parents I confess;
 I am doing my Father's business.'

He was too proud to take a bribe;
 He spoke with authority, not like a Scribe.

Humility is only doubt,
 And does the sun and moon blot out.

It seems, then, that 'A Little Boy Lost' is an allegory of the sacrifice of personal inspiration to the traditional schools in art or theology. Allied with this poem in sentiment is that of 'The School Boy', a much more charming piece of work. It originally formed one of the *Songs of Innocence*, and we may regret that Blake did not leave it there; for it puts into fine poetry what the truant in every man has vaguely felt on many a summer morning. As an attack, however, upon education generally, which is what Blake meant it to be, the argument is unconvincing:

I love to rise on a summer morn
 When the birds sing on every tree;
 The distant huntsman winds his horn
 And the skylark sings with me.
 O! what sweet company.

But to go to school on a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

O! father and mother, if buds are nip'd
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay,

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear?

We remember that, acting on this theory, Blake always refused to prune the vine that grew in his garden, with consequences which did not recommend the theory to others.

'A Little Girl Lost' and the 'Garden of Love' carry Blake's doctrine of the cruelty of law and the divinity of impulse into the relations of the sexes; and his speculations in this region do not strike a modern reader as any wiser than those in the sphere of education. The spirit of the French Revolution was blowing hard through England at the time, and Blake himself donned the red cap of liberty. All institutions which could not give a clear and immediate justification of themselves were to be destroyed, and nothing was to fetter the free play of instinct. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, written in 1790 between the two books of songs, concludes with a Song of Liberty which describes the fall of the 'Jealous King' (the 'selfish father of men' to whom Earth makes her appeal in the Introduction to the *Songs of Experience*), and his 'stony law' is stamped to dust 'by the Son of Fire in his eastern cloud.' Blake, who founded his teaching on Scripture, would no doubt have defended his doctrine of free love by the text 'in heaven

they do not marry'; for heaven to him meant the state of perfection in which

Love was an unerring light
And joy its own security.

But Blake must have recognized, as Wordsworth recognized in the *Ode to Duty*, that his countrymen were not yet in this state, and would not be helped to it by licence to follow their passions. Crabb Robinson once posed him with the question, whether if he were a father he would not be grieved if his son became vicious; and he answered, 'When I am endeavouring to think rightly I must not regard my own any more than other people's weaknesses.' If Blake had had a son he would probably have followed St. Paul in finding a pedagogic use in the 'stony law'.¹ But to understand Blake's antinomian outbreaks we must recognize that they arose from his elementary principle that feeling and impulse, inspiration and imagination, were man's highest endowment, by which alone he attained to truth; and that when he began to generalize, whether in science or art or religion, he fell into error.

It is a little remarkable that the *Songs of Experience* contain no reference to a doctrine of which Blake afterwards made much, that of forgiveness. To him the forgiveness of sin was not the sequel of accusation, but its antithesis. 'The three furies', he says, 'may be supposed clergymen in the pulpit scourging sin instead of forgiving it.' The fullest exposition of his view will be found in the Preface to chap. iii of *Jerusalem*; but it does not take one very far:

Man must and will have some religion; if he has not the religion of Jesus he will have the religion of Satan, and will erect the synagogue of Satan, calling the Prince of this

¹ In the notes on Lavater, quoted in Gilchrist, Blake uses the image of the law beneath the Mercy-Seat in a different way from that quoted above, p. 143. 'Man is the ark of God: the Mercy Seat is above upon the ark; cherubim guard it on either side, and in the midst is the holy law.'

world 'God', and destroying all who do not worship Satan under the name of God. Will any one say 'Where are those who worship Satan under the name of God?' Where are they? Listen! Every religion that preaches vengeance for sin is the religion of the enemy and avenger, and not of the forgiver of sin; and then God is Satan named by the divine name.

Rousseau thought men good by nature, he found them evil, and found no friend. Friendship cannot exist without forgiveness of sins continually. The book written by Rousseau, called his Confessions, is an apology and cloke for his sin, and not a confession.

Those who martyr others or who cause war are Deists, but can never be forgivers of sin. The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness.

It is not clear from this passage how Blake expected forgiveness to act. He says in his Notes on the Last Judgment that 'it is not because the angels are higher than men or devils that makes them angels, but because they do not expect holiness from one another.' And yet he does not confuse forgiveness with mere indifference: for his forgiveness implies confession. One wonders whether he thought he had forgiven Hayley and Cromek and Schofield, whom he flays in his epigrams and prophecies. Probably he would have said that it was not the 'individual' but the 'state' that roused his resentment. His main conviction seems to have been that punishment 'destroyed grace and repentance in the bosom of the injurer', while tenderness and patience produce compunction. The latter doctrine, in which he is at one with all the apostles and prophets, finds a perfect expression in the concluding stanza of the verses which follow his address to the Deist:

A tear is an intellectual thing;
 And a sigh is the sword of an angel king;
 And the bitter groan of a martyr's woe
 Is an arrow from the Almighty's bow.

We may notice also a well-written passage of blank verse

in *Jerusalem*, which contrasts on this point 'Natural Religion' with Christianity :

Jesus is the bright Preacher of life,
Creating Nature from this fiery law
By self-denial and forgiveness of sin.
Go therefore, cast out devils in Christ's name,
Heal thou the sick of spiritual disease,
Pity the evil ; for thou art not sent
To smite with terror and with punishments
Those that are sick, like to the Pharisees
Crucifying and encompassing sea and land
For proselytes to tyranny and wrath.
But to the Publicans and Harlots go :
Teach them true happiness, but let no curse
Go forth out of thy mouth to blight their peace :
For Hell is opened to Heaven ; thine eyes behold
The dungeons burst, and the Prisoners set free.

But whatever Blake's theory of forgiveness may have been, we are grateful to him for a few couplets in which he enforces the duty :

In Heaven the only art of living
Is forgetting and forgiving.

Mutual forgiveness of each vice,
Such are the gates of Paradise.

H. C. BEECHING.

