TEXT FLY WITHIN
THE BOOK ONLY


. . . AND HE WILL BE
YET WISER Proverbs 9:9

THE TEACH YOURSELF BOOKS
EDITED BY LEONARD CUTTS

ENGLISH LITERATURE

VOLUME V
1830-1880

The Teach Yourself
History of
English Literature

is complete in
six volumes

1. LITERARY APPRECIATION

2. TO THE ENGLISH RENASCENCE
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3. THE ENGLISH RENASCENCE TO
THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL
1650-1780

4. THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL
1780-1830

5. THE VICTORIAN AGE
1830-1880

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The Teach Yourself
History of
English Literature

THE VICTORIAN AGE
1830-1880

based on the original work of
Arthur Compton-Rickett, M.A., LL.D.
and edited throughout by
PETER WESTLAND

VOLUME V

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FOREWORD

THE six volumes of *The Teach Yourself History of English Literature* are planned so that they may form one complete work, with each volume complete in itself and yet connecting up with the lines of thought which begin in the first volume and are illustrated all the way through to the end of the series. Thus it is possible for a reader to concentrate on a single volume, for his own purposes, or to read the books in almost any order. The reader who wishes, however, to study the full course should begin with the first volume, since this lays down essential principles of literary appreciation and has been written as the key volume to this account of English literature.

The author of the first and last volumes has prepared the other volumes by condensing the excellent *A History of English Literature* by Dr. Arthur Compton-Rickett, to which summary he has added, both within the text and additionally to it, his own material and comment. In doing this he has tried to preserve as much of the author's style of narrative as possible, with its skilful sketching in of background, lively interest in biographical detail, and that remarkable faculty by which Dr. Compton-Rickett unfailingly interested his readers in the books and authors he discussed. In this last gift he was outstanding among really valuable critics of this century.

The final volume strikes a balance between critical selection of contemporary literature and the recording of works which the reading public and its critics have found notable. By writing it in this way it has been possible to give as much valuation of contemporary work as may be sensibly made, while at the same time indicating to readers books and movements and aspirations which, at this point, each of us must appraise for himself. A general picture of contemporary fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama is given in the text; the use of the index brings together the details given about particular authors.

For permission to use Dr. Compton-Rickett's work the kindness of his publishers, Messrs. Thos. Nelson & Sons, is gratefully acknowledged.

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I. POETRY

Chapter One

Tennyson and Others

(i) Alfred, Lord Tennyson

No better all-round picture of Tennyson has been drawn than by Carlyle, whose genius for literary portraiture, despite humorous exaggeration, was unsurpassed.

> " A man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos. . . . One of the finest looking men in the world—a great shock of rough dusky dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow, brown complexion, almost Indian looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe ! We shall see what he shall grow to."

Again, to his brother John, Carlyle sent the following :

> " A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusky, smoky, free-and-easy, who swims outwardly and inwardly, with great composure, in an articulate element as of tranquil chaos and tobacco-smoke; great now and then when he does emerge; a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man."

Born August 6, 1809, at Somersby Rectory, Lincolnshire, Alfred Tennyson was cradled in typical Lincolnshire country, and the spirit of the kndscape invaded some of his happiest scenic descriptions.

In 1828 he went up, with Charles, to Trinity College, Cambridge, where his brother Frederick had preceded him.

In 1829 he won the Chancellor's English medal, with his poem *Timbuctoo,* and in 1831 left Cambridge, to resume his quiet family life. His friendship with Arthur Hallam was one of the most precious things to him during these years. With Hallam he had gone to Spain in 1832. Hallam had become engaged to his sister Emily and was now reading for the Bar. Tennyson's occasional visits to London were made to see his friend.

But the sedentary life, combined with indiscretions of diet and excessive devotion to tobacco, played havoc with his health and, while he was in a state of dyspeptic hypochondria, the news of his friend's death came to him in September 1833.

Tennyson seemed stunned by the shock for a while; then, as an outlet for his grief, he began writing *In Memoriam.* Starting as an elegy for his friend, the work soon became a long philosophic poem dealing with universal questions of life, death, and the hereafter.

One of his most interesting friendships during these years was with Edward FitzGerald, to whom Tennyson read many of his poems out of a " little red book ".

FitzGerald's admiration for the early work of the poet is well known; another friendship was with Carlyle, who liked the man but had no patience with his versifying.

Meanwhile Tennyson continued to write a great deal, and to live a Bohemian existence that suited his temperament better than it did his constitution. With the publication of the two volumes of 1842, where much of his earlier work was revised, he established his reputation with a tolerably large circle of readers.

He had moved from Lincolnshire to Tunbridge Wells, which, did not suit him; thence to Bexley, near Maidstone. About this time he lost most of his money in an unfortunate investment and was glad to accept a Cvil List pension *of £200* a year in 1845.)

1850 proved a memorable year; in this year he made his happy marriage, published *In Memoriam* and, on Wordsworth's death, accepted the Laureateship. His wife was Emily Sarah Sellwood, whose sister had already been married to his brother Charles., His own comment on his marriage was, " The peace of God came into my life before the Altar when I married her". From this time his life ran smoothly and tranquilly to the end.

Everything that Tennyson now wrote commanded an audience growing in numbers; worldly honours poured in steadily upon him, starting with an honorary D.C.L. from Oxford in 1855, culminating in the peerage offered by Gladstone, 1883. The only serious

grief of his later years was the death of his gifted son, Lionel, in 1886.

The widely-read story of Tennyson's death in 1892, and burial in Westminster Abbey, is too well known to demand repetition here. It rounds off admirably a picturesque and impressive life.

It is significant that the first characteristic to strike the personal friends of Tennyson should have been his scientific perception rather than his poetic imagination, frowning often wrote like a poet with strong scientific predilections, Tennyson like a scientist with a marked aptitude for poetry. There is no poet who was more jealous of the form of a poem than he. Just as he would stop a story if there was the least inaccuracy of detail, so he would revise and revise a stanza to rectify the least ambiguity of statement. This scientific perception is, indeed, the source alike of his strength and weakness as a poet. It gave exquisite accuracy to his scenic pictures, form and balance to his craftsmanship, clarity to his utterance. On the other hand, its insistent presence clashed often with the poet's intuition and troubled his muse.

The poetry of the Romantic Revival, with one exception, had little influence on the poetic development of Tennyson. Byron's influence may be noticed in the volume of *Poems by Two Brothers*, but it is only a trace. Of Shelley there is nothing; with Wordsworth he has a certain spiritual affinity, but as artists they have scarcely anything in common. No doubt he owes a technical debt to the supreme skill of Cole-

ridge as a metrist; but, save in the imitative period of the early volume, Coleridge did nothing to shape Tennyson's art. Keats alone, whom the poet admired and revered above all his immediate predecessors, affected his poetic development. The sensuousness of Keats, the delicate sensitiveness to external impressions, the atmosphere of pensive beauty that hung over his scenic pictures—these matters appealed intensely to young Tennyson.

Yet we must not exaggerate this influence. The merits of Tennyson's first volume, *Poems, chiefly Lyrical,* lie in their grace and melody. Many of them were later revised by the poet almost out of recognition, but *The Recollection of the Arabian Nights, Mariana in the Moated Grange,* and the pretty vignettes of girlhood, remain to testify to the delicate artistry of the new writer.

The chief defect of this early work is a thinness of inspiration. There is too much sugar and too little flour in these literary confections. The volume of 1833 strikes at once a stronger and more varied note : *Fatima* has a fire about it that is lacking not merely in his earlier efforts but in a good deal of his later verse: we have *The Lady of Shalott,* not so lovely a piece of mediaeval magic as she appeared after his final revision, but beautiful none the less; above all, there is *The Lotos-caters,* a tone-picture of exceeding charm, that was to shape as one of Tennyson's most enchanting poems.

In 1842 he published two slight volumes largely

consisting of winnowings from the earlier volumes, made with scrupulous care, and some new *English Idylls.* The nature of the revision showed how keen a self-critic the poet was, and how wisely he had taken to heart the wisdom of his reviewers.

In the opinion of some critics—Edward FitzGerald, for instance—Tennyson never again reached so high a standard as in the volume of 1842. Certainly a volume that gave us the prevised *Lotos-Eaters* and *Lady of Shalott,* the exquisite *Day Dream,* such perfect essays in classic art as *Ulysses* and *Morte d' Arthur,* such lovely songs as *Break, Break, Break,* and *Come not, when I am Dead,* is one that exhibits some of the best representative work of Tennyson. In some respects he never bettered it. But rich as this volume is in those characteristics that individualise his best work—clarity, melody, dignity—one cannot accept it as representing the high-water mark of the poet's genius. His lyric note is ampler and more varied in the lovely songs that decorate *The Princess,* and more passionate and more ecstatic in *Maud.*

Thus far Tennyson's work had been touched only slightly by the thought of his day. But in *Locksley Hall* were indications that social problems had begun to stir him, and in 1847 he published his first long poem, *The Princess,* which deals frankly with a problem of the day, the " Woman Question ". This " Medley " shows a fine command of Blank Verse, and contains passages of great beauty. Yet the most attractive part of the poem lay in Tennyson's afterthought of

inserting " short swallow flights of song " between the various parts.

Meanwhile Tennyson had been working at what one of his friends called " the Memorial poems ", carefully revising and elaborating them; though few realised that the monumental elegy, *In Memoriam,* published in 1850, was the outcome of nearly twenty years' thought and craftsmanship.

In the same year as saw the publication of *In Memoriam* the poet wrote his great *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.* Then a few years later, in 1855, came *Maud.* Considered as an organic whole, *Maud* is even less satisfactory than *The Princess,* and is decidedly inferior to *In Memoriam.*

Following *Maud* came the *Idylls of the King* (1859). Here he treated of the Arthurian Legend, in four episodes—the Welsh story of Geraint and Enid, the tale of Merlin and Vivien, one of Lancelot's adventures, and the parting of Arthur and Guenevere. Gradually the other stories were added until the Arthurian story had grown into matter for twelve books. Technically, the *Idylls* are a great achievement. Tennyson's Blank Verse is inexpressibly finer in quality than any attempted by the poets of the Romantic Revival; to rival it one must go back to Milton. (Previous to these Arthurian stories he made various essays in Blank Verse with notable results—e.g. *Ulysses, Lucretius, Aylmr's Field*—but he had never used it on so large a scale as in the *Idylls;* and if he cannot match the majestic organ notes of

Milton, his verse has a grace, a flexibility, a notable cadence, and what is peculiarly Tennyson's, a delicate and caressing tenderness.

In reviewing the whole of Tennyson's work we cannot but feel that he is at his happiest and best when actualising for us the beauty of the visible world. It is here that his dominant characteristics—clarity, melody, and dignity—are exhibited in their amplest power. None could excel him in lines of limpid lucidity such as these :

The league of grass wash'd by a slow, broad stream.

. . . . .

The little speedwell's darling blue.

. . . . .

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

. . . . .

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

. . . . .

None like her, none.
Just now the dry-tongued laurel's pattering talk
Seem'd her light foot along the garden walk,
And shook my heart to think she comes once more;
But even then I heard her close the door,
The gates of Heaven are closed, and she is gone.

. . . . .

The long day wanes, the slow moon climbs, the deep
Moans with many voices.

Nowhere is the scientific perception to which I have alluded more clearly shown than here. Nature's

most august moods are better interpreted by Wordsworth; her ecstasies more subtly felt by Shelley; but the varying and complex spell of her multitudinous moods as a whole has found no finer artistic expression than is given us in the verse of Tennyson. Accurate observation and delicate poetic feeling are happily blended. He can give us large effects, as in this epitome of an autumn storm :

> The last red leaf is whirled away,
> The rooks are blown about the sky;

and the superb image of

> Such a tide as moving seems asleep,
> Too full for sound and foam;

or this, expressive of desolation :

> He is not here; but far away
> The noise of life begins again,
> And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain,
> On the bald street breaks the blank day.

And he can impress us also with microscopic effects. Indeed, excepting Crabbe, no poet ever dealt with the " minutiae " of Nature so well as Tennyson. Nothing could be more apt for combined accuracy of perception and beauty of delineation than touches such as these:

Of the dragon fly :

> A living flash of light he flew;

Of the sunflower, that

> Rays round with flames her disc of seed;

Of the blasts

That blow the poplars white;

Of dark hair

More black than ash buds in the front of March.

Everywhere, indeed, the observation of the scientist is glorified by the sensibility of the artist, the stark fact is clad in lovely imagery. Thus, Tennyson's landscapes are never vague; they are visualised with an almost preternatural clarity. And if the objective scientific touch is one feature of his Nature poetry, another feature lies in its atmospheric subjectivity. Tennyson never paints Nature with Wordsworth, or even Byron, as something outside of Man, with a life-spirit purpose of its own. Nature for him is always a background for reflecting some human emotion; it carries no message or benison of its own, but harmonises with delicate adaptability to the mood of the man.

Tennyson's attitude towards men and women is that of a quiet, deliberate, steady, self-restrained nature keenly alive to the slightest fluctuation of mood, yet averse from tidal impulses and the insurgent aspects of human life. He presents here a striking contrast with his great contemporary, Browning, who was always stirred to his depths by the high, impossible things of life—and who thrilled to passions from which Tennyson shrank away in alarm.

With whom does Tennyson chiefly treat? With

princes, princesses, men and women of intellectual power and delicate refinement. He has no flunkey regard for rank as rank but, like Thackeray, he is drawn to an environment of culture and good lineage. King Arthur is obviously his ideal of manhood, strong, calm and self-contained; while the women he loves best are gentle, patient, enduring souls. When he touches the lives of the poor there is just a suspicion of the average well-meaning district visitor about his tone. He is gracious and kindly and gently patronising.

The sheer ecstasy of passion, despite an occasional shrillness of the note, has never been expressed better in our poetry than in *Maud*\ and although the *Idylls* refines almost to vanishing point the hot tumult of passion that surges through Malory's story, there is one passage where the poet shows how finely he could have painted this, had he so wished :

> Passion pale they met
> And greeted. Hands in hands and eye to eye,
> Low on the border of her couch they sat,
> Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
> A madness of farewells.

Turning to his method of drawing men and women, it will be seen that, as a rule, Tennyson deals with types rather than individuals; with the characteristics of average humanity rather than with the idiosyncrasies of particular personalities. This, again, explains the popularity of his appeal. His miller's daughter and gardener's daughter are like hundreds

of charming girls; Merlin stands for wisdom, Vivien for the deceitful wanton, Sir Galahad for chastity, Arthur for the ideal of manly virtue. Thus the very feature that weakens the poem dramatically intensifies its appeal to the general reader.

Tennyson's development coincides with the expansion of the democratic ideal and the growth and diffusion of modern scientific ideas, and both of these matters impressed his work, though in somewhat different degrees.

In the first *Locksley Hall* he reflects the current enthusiasm of the era of the Great Exhibition of 1851, when dreams of a universal brotherhood were in the air and a kind of commercial millennium occupied men's minds. On the whole, Tennyson's influence on national politics was a wholesome and tonic one. He helped to foster that love of country that should animate a people, by dwelling on the finer qualities of national character and insisting on the value of ancient forms and traditions.

When we turn to Tennyson's views on domestic politics we find the trumpet sounding a far less certain note. He saw, as indeed he could not help seeing, a vast amount of social misery, and there is a good deal in his poetry about the sorrows and hardships of the poor.

But genuine as his sympathies may have been, there is an air of unreality about their expression. This is due partly to the fact that they are put usually into the mouths of his weaker characters—the dismal

young prig in *Lacksley Hall,* or the neurotic hero of *Maud.*

Tennyson's exclusion from the world during the later years of his life put him more and more out of touch with concrete realities. This, added to the natural conservatism of age, makes his utterances on social subjects practically negligible.

In one direction alone did Tennyson really contribute suggestive ideas, and that was when dealing with the Woman's Movement. In *The Princess* he was for the first and last time really in advance of his age. There is a healthy progressive note in this poem, and reactionary as it may seem to many modern minds, it is a just and sympathetic presentment in poetic form of the problem connected with woman's place in society.

No poet was more exercised by religious problems than Tennyson; and no poet was more sensitive to scientific thought than he. But his attitude is an attitude of compromise; he propounds a *via media* between the materialistic science of his day and dogmatic Christianity. His solution for the heart-searching and uncertitudes of the time was an undogmatic religion that was at bottom intuitional. Historic Christianity scarcely weighed with him at all.

The philosophy of *In Memoriam* sums up Tennyson's religious position. It is not a philosophy of faith so much as a philosophy of hope; after all, he can trust only that " somehow good will be the final

goal of ill". Yet the faint-hearted certitude of the poet, though it has repelled some and disgusted others, assuredly made for immense popularity, and there are many today to whom Tennyson's solution seems the only satisfactory one.

Tennyson's ethical thought inspires him more happily as a poet than does his metaphysics, for it takes him into a clearer and saner atmosphere; and his insistence on self-control, formulated in his beautiful poem *Oenone,* recurs again and again in his serious poetry. The categorical imperative in the soul of man meant for him precisely what natural laws meant for phenomena in the world of Nature. Law and order are for him rules of conduct: disorder is the antithesis of rational existence. He saw it disturbing the life around him, and loathed it. And so he also held fast to those elements in life that made for stability. A quiet, dignified, orderly existence—such was Tennyson's ideal—and he used all the resources of his gracious art to impress its value on men's minds.

If his philosophy of life is not a great and inspiring one, yet it has its place in the scheme of things; and we may supplement its message by the more tonic teaching of Browning and Meredith; while of Tennyson's work as a literary artist and as a painter of English life no lover of beautiful verse could speak too highly. As a word-painter of typical English scenery, as the exponent of the simple emotions *of* everyday life, he holds a treasured and honourable

place. His delicacy and crystalline charm, his dignified and melodious utterance, will always endear him to English men and women.

(ii) Minor Poets

The first to concern us is John Clare (1793-1864), a writer of considerable power and charm. The son of a broken-down labourer, he was compelled from very early years to work in the fields for a living. Happening to chance upon a verse-loving old woman who could quote poetry for hours together, he got some introduction to literature; his own observations of rural life and his genuine love of rustic scenes served as his main inspiration.

Little encouragement came from his ignorant companions, but at last, through the instrumentality of some people of culture, he managed to get his first volume, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life* published in 1820. The book attracted notice. Southey spoke kindly of it in the *Quarterly Rjeview,* and the youth was brought to London.

Sufficient money was raised to keep him from want; and when he returned to the country which he loved, this sum, together with what he might have saved, should have proved sufficient to enable him to develop his powers. Unhappily, the quality of brain which gave this unusual sensibility to verse fostered also great mental instability. Drink, that hastened the tragic end of Burns, hurried Clare to a disastrous breakdown; yet, as in Burns's case, it did not kill his

power of verse. Indeed, when in the County Asylum of Northamptonshire, where he lived for over twenty years, he did some of his best work.

His early work was written in dialect; his later in classical English : and in each class he did excellently well. He had the lyric faculty, and the temper of his mind is more allied to Blake's than to that of any other contemporary.

In addition to the earlier volume, he published *The Village Minstrel* (1821) and *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1827).

Another uncultured poet was Ebenezer Elliott (1781-1849), the " Corn-Law-Rhymer ". His life was spent in the neighbourhood of Sheffield, and his verses reflect alike the grinding lives of the industrial poor and the rich beauty of the moorland. Thomson's *Seasons* impressed him much as they had impressed Clare but, like Clare's, the merit of his work is independent of any strong literary inspiration. In the same years as saw *The Lyrical Ballads,* Elliott wrote his first piece, *A Vernal Walk.* Then came silence for twenty years while Elliott strove with the workers in the town; and when next he wrote, having attained some worldly competence, the human element predominated in his writing. Poems came now in quick succession : *Love* (1823), *The Ranter* (1827), *The Village Patriarch* (1829), *Corn-Law Rhymes* (1831).

There are a few verse-writers who, though of less account than Ebenezer Elliott, belonged to his school and derived their inspiration from the industrial un-

rest of the day. Of these the best were Capell Lofft (1806-73), the social reformer whose father had been a friend of Godwin's, and Ebenezer Jones (1820-60), another of the toilers, who devoted his scanty leisure to the cause he held so dear—Chartism. Lofft's rural epic, *Ernest, or Political Regeneration* (1839), is a frank bid for direct democratic government and for the nationalisation of the land.

Jones wrote some stirring songs, such as 'the " Song of the Kings of Gold ", the " Song of Gold Getters ", and their crude violence may be condoned by reason of his youthful years when they were written.

The name of Hartley Coleridge (1796-1849) links us again with the great poets of the early century. Brought up in an atmosphere of noble verse and with the protecting kindness and sympathy of Wordsworth about him, the boy suffered from the desultory education he received from his father, who accounted it the best thing for him " to wander like a breeze by lakes and sandy shores ". He was as a youth richly endowed with intellectual and artistic gifts, with something of his father's fine ghostly imagination and a very large measure of his metaphysical powers, but intemperance spoilt a brilliant prospect at Oxford, and he became a genial and irresponsible wanderer in the Lake District.

A few of his songs are excellent, notably " She is not fair to outward view "; the sonnets are nearly all admirable and a few are really great.

November

The mellow year is hastening to its close;
The little birds have almost sung their last,
Their small notes twitter in the dreary blast—
That shrill-piped harbinger of early snows;
The patient beauty of the scentless rose,
Oft with the morn's hoar crystal quaintly glassed,
Hangs, a pale mourner for the summer past,
And makes a little summer where it grows :
In the chill sunbeam of the faint brief day
The dusky waters shudder as they shine.
The russet leaves obstruct the straggling way
Of oozy brooks, which no deep banks define,
And the gaunt woods, in ragged scant array,
Wrap their old limbs with sombre ivy-twine.

Along with Hartley may be mentioned his gifted sister, Sara. She married another brilliant member of the family, a cousin, Henry Nelson, who was preparing his father's literary remains for publication. His early death threw upon his wife the labours of an editress and distracted her from original work on her own account. Despite this, her fairy story *Phantasmion* (1837), with its delightful songs, serves to show what imaginative power she possessed. Given ampler opportunity, she might have accomplished much.

Thomas Hood (1799-1845) is one of the most considerable and original influences among the minor poets of the age. His earlier literary work included *Lycus the Centaur* (1822), a striking piece of imaginative writing, the *flea of the Midsummer Fairies,* a graceful and charming work, and the grimly powerful *Eugene*

Aranfs Dream. Such poems as *The Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs* exhibit a gift of dealing with human problems in a popular manner. *The Haunted House* shows, moreover, that Hood had a really high order of imagination; it is a pity that the necessities of bread and butter compelled him to work too diligently in his lighter vein. Sometimes, as in *Miss Kilwansegg,* he could jest with an underlying yet easily discernible vein of serious purpose, but as a rule his whims and oddities are merely cracklings of the pot. Happily for us, his struggle with adverse fortunes met with success before he died, thus enabling the writer to work for a while in serious vein. Some of his strongest work belongs to his later years. Starting as poetry in the classical vein, popular at the time, his verse soon catches the humanitarian fire that marks the poetry of the earlier Victorian era. He is a poet of the new democracy.

The Haunted House

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted !

Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
Jarr'd by the rusty gales of many winters,
That from its crumpled pedestal had flung
One marble globe in splinters.

No dog was at the threshold, great or small;
No pigeon on the roof—no household creature—
No cat demurely dozing on the wall—
Not one domestic feature.

No human figure stirred, to go or come,
No face looked forth from shut or open casement;
No chimney smoked—there was no sign of home
From parapet to basement.

With shattered panes the grassy court was starr'd;
The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after !
And through the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd
With naked beam and rafter.

Henry Taylor (1800-86) was an accomplished man of letters who led a quiet and easy life which revolved agreeably round a comfortable Government appointment at the Colonial Office. Taylor strove for lucidity and self-restraint and for a greater body of thought than he found in the current verse of his day. His views are formulated in his best piece of work—his drama, *Philip Van Artevelde* (1834). He wrote a number of other dramas and a prose volume, *The Statesman* (1836), but never reached the level of excellence attained in *Philip.*

His limitations are obvious. Lacking the imaginative power and beauty of the classical Landor on the one side and the splendid vitality and melodious charm of the greater romantics on the other, his verse too often reminds one of the taunt flung by her lover at Maud: it is " faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null".

Philip James Bailey (1816-1902) is another poet to prefer the claims of the intellect in verse, without clearly realising that in all great poetry intellectual matters must be expressed in terms of metrical

beauty, and that a poet may exhibit a philosophy without explicitly philosophising. Bailey's work, *Festus,* was a life-long labour, and proved extremely popular in its day.

If only Bailey had possessed the critical faculty and a sense of style, *Festus* might have been an important philosophical poem. Great it could never have been, for there is no freshness and depth in Bailey's thought, but the writer trembles often enough on the verge of poetic distinction to make us regret the faulty artistry that never carried him over.

Certainly more interesting in his work than Bailey is Richard Hengist Home (1803-84). His life was a varied one. He had passed through vicissitudes in America, seen something of the battle-field, and tasted adventure in the Australian Bush, before he settled down to a life of letters. His early tragic dramas, *Cosmo de Medici* and the *Death of Marlowe,* were published in 1837, but he is best known for his epic *Orion, "* intended ... to work out a special design " (the contrast between the intellect and the senses) " by means of antique or classical imagery and associations ".

Home's thought is fresh and vigorous, and his discipleship to Keats as a model served him in good stead. Undoubtedly he is at his best in epic verse, for, though there is power and feeling in his drama, he had little visualising faculty.

Among his other writings perhaps the most interesting is *The New Spirit of the Age* (1844), where he collaborated with Elizabeth Barrett.

Unlike Home and other literary dramatists of the day, James Sheridan Knowles (1784-1862) had considerable knowledge of stage technique; and if he had only been blessed with Home's intellect and vigour, or even with the polished culture of Taylor, his dramas might have had a high place. But his imagination is poor and, excepting some scenes in *Virginius* (1820), he is woefully deficient in passion. In method and intention he belonged to the eighteenth-century school, and it is scarcely surprising that he should have done better in comedy than in tragedy. His most successful experiment in this direction was *The Hunchback* (1832); there is merit also in *The Love Chase* (1837) and *Old Maids* (1841).

Charles Tennyson Turner (1808-79), the elder brother of Alfred Tennyson, was not only a man of ripe culture but also a fine literary artist. Limited in his range, the form of the sonnet suited admirably well his artistic power, and he is at his best when dealing with the homely and tranquil aspects of those rural scenes where he spent the greater portion of his life, as Vicar of Grasby, Lincolnshire.

Letty's Globe

When Letty had scarce pass'd her third glad year,
And her young artless words began to flow,
One day we gave the child a coloured sphere
Of the wide earth, that she mieht mark and know,
By tint and outline, all its sea and land.
She patted all the world; old empires peep'd
Between her baby fingers; her soft hand

Was welcome at all frontiers. How she leap'd
And laugh'd and prattled in her world-wide bliss;
But when we turn'd her sweet unlearned eye
On our own isle, she raised a joyous cry—
" Oh ! yes, I see it, Letty's home is there ! "
And while she hid all England with a kiss,
Bright over Europe fell her golden hair.

The work of Frederick Tennyson (1807-98) belongs strictly to the later years of the Victorian era, for his first volume was not published until 1854. Yet he had a share in the *Poems by Two Brothers,* where Alfred found expression, and in its content and inspiration Frederick's work is of the early Victorian age. It exhibits less force and originality than that of Charles, with something of the same gentleness and delicacy.

Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton (1803-73), achieved more distinction as a novelist than as a poet or dramatist. But his earliest literary efforts were in the direction of verse, such as *Ismael and other Poems* (1820), where he showed some lyric skill; while his dramas, belonging to a later period, are certainly clever, and showed marked aptitude in stage effects. *The Lady of Lyons,* fustian though much of it is, has extraordinary vitality; so also have *Richelieu* (1838) and *Money* (1840). These plays have been revived repeatedly, sometimes with remarkable success. As in his verse much of it is poor enough, much of it is fully over-accentuated, but there is sufficient genuine sensibility and imagination to give the author of *The First Violets* and *Absent yet Present* a niche among the minor poets of the era.

Two other poets in the domain of dramatic verse deserve mention. Sir Aubrey de Vere (1788-1841) started his literary career with *Julian the Apostate* (1822) and *The Duke of Mercia* (1823).

After these plays he withdrew from authorship until the very close of his life, when he composed *Mary Tudor,* intended as part of a trilogy, *The Daughters of Tudor.* This drama is remarkable for its force and passion and compares favourably with Tennyson's play on the same subject.

Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868) is better known as an historian than as a poet; but his prize poem *Apollo 'Belvedere* (1812) is greatly above the level of official productions, so often tedious and unprofitable, while he was an excellent hymn-writer. Among his plays were his first very successful *Fazio* (1815) and *The Fall of Jerusalem* (1820), rich in effective verse though weak in dramatic power. In his later plays the dramatic weakness is even more conspicuous, but there is good rhetorical matter even in these, notably *Belshazzar* (1822) and *Anne Boleyn* (1826).

(iii) **Religious Verse**

The earlier impulse to religious verse had come from the leaders of the Evangelical Movement, and the individualistic note that characterised Protestant theology penetrated the work of the Presbyterian Pollok and the Moravian James Montgomery. The Evangelical note dies down with them and, in Heber's somewhat flamboyant muse, there is certainly a

change in the religious atmosphere. The " Church " is more insistent than personal experiences and the way is thus prepared for the poetry of the Oxford Movement and the Catholic Revival. There is no better representative of the delicate piety of the Oxford Movement than Keble. The graciousness and sweetness of the poet's nature permeate *The Christian Year* and, despite a monotony largely inherent in the very design of the volume, there is much artistic sensibility and imaginative beauty about the verse. John Keble (1792-1866) was not merely a hymn-writer; he was also a poet.

Greater in imaginative endowment than Keble, John Henry Newman (1801-1890) might, had he elected, taken Keble's place. But he had other interests, and indeed thought little of poetry as an art.

Newman's poetical output, consequently, is slight and belongs chiefly to his earlier years. But the quality is high, and there is distinction and power in all that he wrote. His most considerable poem, *The Dream of Gerontius,* was written many years before its publication in 1865 but was thrown aside and forgotten. The blank verse is forceful and impressive, and the entire poem exhibits a mysticism as sensitive as Keble's, with a bolder range of imagination.

Frederick William Faber (1814-63) is much inferior, as a religious poet, to his great contemporary, though some of his hymns are extremely popular. He lacks the restraint of Newman and the simplicity of Keble,

and his gushing propensities certainly do not make for good poetry.

John Mason Neale (1818-66), a tolerable historian and a good though variable writer of hymns, has greater ckim upon our attention. He achieved some excellent translations and occasionally, as in " Art thou weary, art thou languid ", sounded a really high note of devotional beauty. His translation of the *Rhythm* of Bernard of Morlaix is one of the finest things in our language.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826), a devoted Churchman, was also a scholar and wit; while Bishop of Calcutta he wrote the well-known " From Greenland's icy mountains ", and is also the author of a *"Life of Jeremy Taylor.*

Last of this band is the ballad-writer, Robert Stephen Hawker (1803-75). For forty years he lived and worked in a lonely Cornish parish, and his humanising influence bore valuable fruit. His ballad poetry bears the impress of the rugged scenery of the west and it is infused with old Celtic legends and superstitions. In *The Quest of the Sangraal* (1864), his brooding mind found congenial material, for the mystical side of the legendary lore attracted him irresistibly.

Our bark is on the waters ! wide around
The wandering wave; above, the lonely sky :
Hush ! a young sea-bird floats, and that quick cry
Shrieks to the levelled weapon's echoing sound :
Grasp its lank wing, and on, with reckless bound I
Yet, creatures of the surf, a sheltering breast
To-night shall haunt in vain thy far-off nest,
A call unanswered search the rocky ground.

Lord of Leviathan ! when Ocean heard
Thy gathering voice, and sought his native breeze;
When whales first plunged with life, and the proud deep
Felt unborn tempest heave in troubled sleep,
Thou didst provide, even for this nameless bird,
Home and a natural love amid the surging seas.

(iv) Patriotism

Ireland, hitherto represented in our verse by the facile melodies of More and the passion of George Darley, finds expression during this era in the romantic fervour of James Clarence Mangan (1803-49).

Mangan was one of those highly sensitive and imaginative temperaments that seem predestined for tragedy. His life was a constant struggle against poverty and to blunt the scourgings of circumstance he had recourse to opium and alcohol. His early death, therefore, was not to be wondered at. He translated and freely adapted Erse poetry, one of his best-known pieces being *My Dark Rosaleen*; he wrote patriotic songs for the Young Ireland Party.

It is interesting to note that one of Mangan's Oriental songs, *The Karamanian Exile*, suggested to the American writer, J. R. Randall, the better-known lyric *Maryland, my Maryland.* This is Mangan :

I see thee ever in my dreams,
Karaman !
Thy hundred hills, thy thousand streams,
Karaman, O Karaman I
As when the gold-bright morning gleams,
As when the deepening sunset seams
With lines of light thy hills and streams,
Karaman ! ...

This account of earlier Victorian verse may fittingly conclude with mention of three volumes of ballad verse by writers who will be dealt with at greater length in other sections—Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rowe* (1842) and *English Ballads ;* and Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* (1848). These volumes are in direct descent from Scott and from Percy's *Reliques,* and while they lack the poignancy and warmth of imagination that fire the best of these, they are of their kind admirable. The historical spirit, expressed in clear, vigorous verse, may serve as a summing up of Macaulay's work, whether as a singer of English glory or of Roman renown. Aytoun's verses lack perhaps the sparkle of Macaulay, but are rich in national sentiment and are worthy contributions to the poetry of chivalry.

(v) Robert Browning

Browning was born at Camberwell on May 7, 1812. Such early education as he received came from his mother, who could recite Greek poetry to him, so that he quickly developed into a precocious infant who showed interest in music, drawing, and classical mythology. After several disappointing experiences of private schools, he finished his education by further study at home and lectures at University College. He entered Guy's to study medicine, but soon abandoned that interest and became rapt in the poetry of Byron. Shelley and Keats were successive influences. All three can be seen in his first poem,

Pauline, written when he was nineteen. In 1834 he travelled in Russia, riding 1500 miles of the journey (one result of this was embodied in the breathlessness of *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent),* and becoming interested in science and philosophy (a result of this development was the writing of *Paracelsus).* Returning to London, he met some of the literary men of the day, and wrote *The Pied Piper* for the son of the actor Macready. In 1838 he visited Italy, and on his return met and fell in love with Elizabeth, the invalid daughter of Edward Moulton Barrett. To complete one of the most romantic stories of our literature, they defied the parental displeasure by secretly marrying and running away to Italy in 1845. Mrs. Browning's health speedily came back to her. A son was born in 1849. Mrs. Browning's poetry is referred to later in this book. Robert Browning's work was given little credit in England, but he refused to be discouraged. After eleven years of ideally happy married life, his wife died, and Browning shortly afterwards returned to London with his son. He had by now published *Sordello, Sells and Pomegranates, Dramatic Lyrics,* and *Men and Women.* Yet in 1860 not one copy of his works was sold in six months. *Dramatis Persona* appeared in 1864, and *The Ring and the Book* in 1868. When *Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau* was published, in 1871, 1400 copies were sold in five days. Recognition came late, but generously. Browning continued to publish his books, to enjoy London society, and to

make regular visits to Italy. He had gone there to try to buy the old Manzoni Palace in Venice, when the chill Adriatic wind caught him and he died, on December 12, 1889—the day on which his *Asolando* was published in London. Since it was found impractical to give him burial beside his wife in Florence, his remains were brought to England and interred in Westminster Abbey.

Browning's development as a writer may be divided into four periods :

(1) From 1832 to 1846. This is the experimental period, when he is seeking for his true medium as an artist. He essays various forms, then finds in the dramatic lyric his most satisfying expression.

(2) From 1846 to 1869. This is the period of his best and most varied work. Sometimes the intellectual side dominates, sometimes the emotional. He is at his happiest when they blend, and at the close of the period we have the noblest blend in *The Ring and the Book.*

(3) From 1869 to 1876. After *The Ring and the Book* the intellectual side of Browning gets the upper hand. This period is rich in casuistic and dialectic verse, but is lacking in imaginative beauty. We admire Browning the thinker and lament the decline of the artist.

(4) From 1869 to 1889. Once again the artist in Browning awakens; not perhaps with the force and beauty of the earlier years, but sufficiently to delight

us with some measure of the old magic, sufficiently to soften and mellow the untiring intellectual vagaries of the thinker. Finally we have the swan song of *Asolando.*

(a) *The Development of his Art*

Pauline (1833) was written when the poet was nineteen. It interests us mainly as a human document, from the light it throws on Browning himself. Many of the familiar traits are traits that were to develop later into fine maturity : the religious idealism; the individualistic note; the lifelong enthusiasm for Shelley. The poem is an agreeable one to read, but the influence of Shelley and of Keats broods over its form and texture.

In *Paracelsus* (1835) the poet begins to find his own speech. The subject is one dear to Browning's heart —the development of a soul thirsting for knowlede. Paracelsus fails in his search because he ignores love. How often was that to be the burden of Browning's verse!

Sordello (1840) makes no advance from the artistic point of view; in fact, it is as a work of art distinctly inferior to *Paracelsus*—" A derelict in the ocean of poetry " it has been not unhappily called. But the derelict is certainly worth a visit if you can get near her. There is an immense amount of fundamental brain-work in the poem; indeed, it has become a derelict because over-weighted with ballast.

Small wonder that Tennyson said about the poem that he only understood two lines—the first line :

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told,

and the last line :

Who would, has heard Sordello's story told.

But in his next venture Browning finds himself. The *Dramatic Lyrics,* covering a period of ten years (1836-46), exhibits every side of Browning's genius : tenderness in *Evelyn Hope;* passion in *In a Gondola;* subtlety in *Porphyria's Lovers;* intellectual brilliance in *My Last Duchess;* quaint kindliness in *Waring;* genial extravaganza in *The Pied Piper.* And, above all, the volume contains those two perfect little pieces of poetic impressionism, *Meeting at Night* and *Parting at Morning,* where, with a few superb touches, Browning flashes upon our imagination a picture of love and life that for comprehensive sympathy and imaginative beauty is among the choicest and finest verses from his pen.

Meeting at Night

I

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow
And quench its speed i* the slushy sand.

11

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, a quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Then the two hearts beating each to each !

Parting at Morning

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

And the method is as fresh and attractive as are the themes. There is a note of realism new to English verse, and destined to play an important part in the poetry of the late Victorian era and in the verse of today. The explosive violence of *The Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister* and the rough vigour of *Count Gismond* serve as a prelude to the colloquial realism of Rudyard Kipling and John Mascfield.,

Good as are the *Dramatic Lyrics,* the *Dramatic Romances* (1848) are, on the whole, even better. The method is similar, the material is much the same; but the scope is wider and the treatment exhibits an added ease as well as a deeper power.

In lyric sweetness and fire the volume holds its own with its predecessor—in quality if not in quantity. Have we not *The Lost Leader* and *How They brought the Good News* ?—but the superiority is shown especially in the psychological insight and dramatic strength of

such pieces as that masterly study of the decadent Renascence, *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's.* Ruskin praised it for its historical accuracy; its vital accuracy is even more remarkable. Add to this *The Flight of the Duchess,* Meredithian in its romantic realism; *The Boy and the Angel,* with its simple humanity; and the power and beauty of *Saul.*

Following this volume came *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* (1850), where, if we mark no fresh advance, we see the poet applying his previously developed faculties to the problem of religion.

Of wider interest and more-varied charm is the volume entitled *Men and Women* (1855), on the same lines as the *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Romances.* The volume is a worthy pendant to these earlier volumes : some may prefer the readier music, the simpler themes that we found there; to others the greater unconventionality, the subtler flavour that characterise this volume as a whole may prove more attractive; for here we have those memorable poems on art, *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Andrea del Sarto;* the satiric apologia of Bishop Blougram, and the delicately passionate *One Word More;* to mention a few of a score of well-known poems.

There is more emphasis in this volume on the ironies of life than in its predecessors. The splendour of passion, the benison of sympathy, the stimulus of a courageous front in life—these have been illustrated fully as well before, but now for the first time we see Browning dealing with the obverse side : with vacil-

lating wills, with flabby sympathies, with the shallows and shoals of human nature.

(b) *His Dramas*

So far I have dealt with his development as a poet, passing on one side the dramas. These are, in order : *Strafford* (1837), *Pippa Passes* (1841), *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), *A. Blot on the Scutcheon* (1843), *Colombo's birthday* (1844), *A. Soul's Tragedy* (1846), *Luria* (1846), *In a Balcony* (1853).

The extraordinary insight into character, the power of actualising the fleeting moods, is so marked in Browning, that it may be wondered how it is that he has not fared better as a dramatist.

Drama may be defined as an articulate story presented in action. The story we have; it is articulate also; but it is not given—or given only spasmodically —in " action ". Browning is far too interested in the effect of the drama on the character. But in a play which is to be seen, and where the " doing " not the " thinking " has to affect us, this is a serious drawback. Browning is not a dramatist, but a dramatic philosopher. Accept this standpoint, and his plays are interesting enough—some intensely interesting; but it is at its best the interest of the study rather than of the theatre.

The best test of such criticism lies in the super-excellence of *Pippa Passes*, which none would dispute and which is the most unactable of Browning's plays.

Yet it would be hard to find a play more charming for its lyric beauty, insight, and passion.

(c) *His Later Poems*

In the *Dramatis Persona* (1864) Browning continues those studies of men and women that he had first started in the *Dramatic Lyrics*. The volume came nine years after *Men and Women* and his dramatic experiments are reflected here.

The Ring and the Book (1869) shows Browning at once as an observer and a critic of life. Here the thinker and the poet join hands in a work of lengthy and sustained importance. It is psychological, pictorial, analytical, dramatic, satiric, tragic; and the only side of Browning that finds no expression is the purely lyrical side. But to compensate for this there is the superb apostrophe to " Lyric Love, half angel and half bird, and all a wonder and a wild desire "; a passionate recollection of the wife he had lost.

The story—a Roman murder case—is told in twelve books and from nine points of view. It was found one stormy night in Florence (1865) in " a square old yellow book " which was picked up for eightpence on a bookstall. And from this rough ore he wrought a ring of pure gold.

In Browning's next work, *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871), there is less dramatic interest and passion, less fpe poetry also.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau (1871), on the other hand, has little claim to be ranked as poetry at all.

Fifine at the Fair (1872) is a very different piece of work, despite the fact that here, too, there is overmuch special pleading. But there is fantasy and pathos in it, as well as satiric and ingenious quibbling. It is by no means easy to construe and it has proved a stumbling-block to many Browning lovers.

Red-cotton Night-cap Country appeared in 1873, followed by *Aristophanes' Apology* (1875), *The Inn Album* (1875), *Pacchiarotto* (1876), *La Saisiaz* (1878), *Dramatic Idyls* (1880), *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), and *Parleyings with Certain People* (1887). In most of these books Browning returns again and again to insist on the necessity for fidelity to life and the human note in everything. Force and sincerity are essential to poetry, but, he declares, they must not exclude the touch of beauty and the transfiguration of passion. His doctrine was sound but, unfortunately, some of his later work is wanting in the beauty for which he pleads. Indeed, it is better to read some of it, for an understanding of his teaching, as if it were prose. This criticism can scarcely be brought against his shorter pieces, but the longer poems are, for all the variety and strength of their blank verse, occasionally prosaic. It is as if age had brought to Browning an urgency to express his message as strongly as possible. He wished to be the teacher, and not the lyrist. To appreciate many of these later poems this fact must be understood and his viewpoint must be grasped. Only thus is it possible to comprehend the whole Browning, the man and the poet.

Then with *Asolando* (1889) the youth and age of Browning meet. The philosopher is forgotten, the dialectics put aside; we have once again, and for the last time, the passionate singer and the poet of human hopes, fears, loves, and sorrows. It would be idle to pretend that there is all the old charm about it, but it is a fine volume with which to round *off* the poet's life, with a note of confident courage that gives us the dominant note of Browning at his best.

(d) *Criticism*

There are three Brownings : Browning the passionate singer of love and youth and the world of sense; Browning the curious investigator of the devious by-ways of human experience; Browning the intrepid fighter and valiant believer in the imperishable greatness of the soul of man.

Of the three Brownings, as revealed in his poetry, the first seems to me not merely of the greatest artistic value, but of the greatest human value; the other sides of him are interesting in a subsidiary sense, as giving body and subtlety to his superior gift of dramatic song and informing his lyric passion with virile courage and sunny radiance.

Let me emphasise here once again the most vital and compelling side of Browning's genius—Browning the " dramatic singer " of love and life.

We shall find a more delicate grace in Tennyson, a more voluptuous intensity in Rossetti, an easier sweep in Byron, a more ideal beauty in Shelley; but in no

one poet is there a more complete fusion of all these qualities than in Browning. The mystic side of passion is suggested tenderly and wistfully in *Evelyn Hope,* more fully in *Two in the Compagna.* The elusiveness of love is more fancifully dealt with in *Love in a Life* and *Life in a Love.*

Escape me ?
Never—
Beloved !
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both
Me the loving and you the loath,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.

Love in a Life

I

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together;
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume !
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door :
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance ! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares ?
But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune !

The lover is always seeking for the loved one throughout the rooms of the house, never finding, yet the pursuit itself gives a meaning and purpose to life.

Some have been surprised that one whose own love-story was so complete and satisfying should dwell in his poetry so often on thwarted and imperfect love. Why? Surely it was the consciousness of the dynamic splendour of love in life and character that gave him that keen perception of what is lost by debasing or trifling with love. And a motto for his love-poetry might be found in the beautiful stanza from *By the Fireside*—one of the noblest and truest he ever wrote :

> Oh, the little more and how much it is !
> And the little less, and what worlds away !
> How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
> Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
> And life be a proof of this 1

Certain aspects of love have been more finely rendered by other poets; but in range of matter Browning has no superior. There are abysses of tragic horror, agonies of sense and spirit, at which he took no more than a glimpse. It was not in his nature to dwell on them. His splendid vitality and buoyant hopefulness recoiled from them. His art as a poet of love suffers limitation to that extent, but the underlying inspiration is the greater. For his outlook on love is the outlook of a man who puts it before any other thing in life, as a force for sanctifying and strengthening the soul.

As the psychological critic of the complexities of experience, let it frankly be conceded that here he has not always chosen the best means of expression, that the verse hampers the exposition and obscures the criticism; yet the matter is strong and stimulating enough—if we care to get at it.

The psychologist is at work in the early poems, not with complete success; in the dramas with finer insight and mastery; in *The Ring and the Book* his power as psychologist is supreme. What gives him this insight ? Once again it is his belief in love that gives the touch of greatness to these studies. When passion is absent, or put aside, the insight into character is less profound, less illuminating. This may be seen by glancing at his poems on art. Their importance does not lie in the poet's sensibility to beauty. Response to what is beautiful in life is the guerdon of every poet worth his salt. Some, like Spenser and Keats and Rossetti, made it their creed, their religion.

Browning ignored the senses no more than didKeats. He gloried in the form of things : he revelled in the delights of sound, sight, and touch—but he went farther.

We approach the truth of things by way of enjoyment; and, having gained insight by sheer enjoyment of the outward show, we intensify our vision by relating enjoyment to character, by relating the beautiful thing with the soul of the man who made it a beautiful thing.

Art is no abstraction—thin, arid, and theoretic. It must be warmed by life; that is the burden of *Fra*

Lippo Lippi. Clearly with Browning there is no art for art's sake but art for life's sake; and in art as elsewhere love and self-surrender are essentials for success.

In each of the full-length studies of artists he has made he hints at something lacking. Pictor Ignotus needed human affection; Lippo needed life and experience to give fulness to his work; Andrea some great impulse of generous emotion. In art, as elsewhere, Browning is jealous of the individual, and the art is judged for its reaction on the character of the artist as well as for its expression of his nature.

No consideration of Browning's psychology of art can neglect the poems relating to music. Browning was a musician, and had therefore the advantage of thoroughly understanding the technique of the art as well as valuing its emotional content. Music more than painting appeals to the emotions.

To take two of the most important: *Master Hugues of Saxe Gotha* and *Abt Vogler.* In the first, dealing with a fugue, life itself is criticised from the standpoint of the fugue. Now, the fugue is a form of music constructed on logical lines; the various parts are elaborated from a simple theme, where they answer one another, pursue one another, contrast with one another.

Such a type of music is music on its least emotional side. It is the only side where intellectual content seems to dominate purely emotional values. It is the mathematics of the art, rather than its poetry. What relation has the great fugue to life? What does it answer? Well, take it as a symbol of life.

The simple, elemental start, the growing variations, the clashing implications, the bewildering convolutions and the finis—death. It suggests life has no meaning. Give us, then, less technical cleverness, more passion, says the poet—read some meaning into life.

Abt Vogler is a greater work. It is Browning's fullest exposition of music in its relation to life; it has a musical cadence lacking in its fellow. The Alexandrines, with their rich swell, suggest the organ.

I have dwelt purposely on the matter rather than the manner of Browning, as singer and psychologist, because it is always the " matter " that he puts first and foremost. But it will be found on examination that although he is a " poetic artist only by accident " —because he could not help himself—he is at his best when he is faithful to the art of poetry; at his best when he is the singer of love and life; at his worst when he is concerned with the intellectual and ethical aspects of his subject and roughly neglects the artistic shaping.

In his great poems Browning the singer, the thinker, and the fighter join hands. We touch each side of him. As a fighter and a moralist, then, we may leave him; that is his last word as a poet. And he is best appreciated here, when we do not divorce the teacher from the singer and the psychologist. His message is part of his song, the burden of his insight. He has no formal message—" no church, no philosophy "—in the technical sense. Making an allowance for his dramatic exposition of other people's

point of view, there can be little question, from what we know of the man, that in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* we have the most explicit statement of Browning's philosophy of life.

Rabbi Bex Ezra is an epitome of many poems : it is life from the standpoint of age. In youth we gain experience; in age we use it to control our nature. What use has youth been—with its heats, its mistakes, its strivings ? It has helped us to forge our spiritual weapons. It has shown us that not accomplishment but intention, not the outward result but the inward aim, is the real test of worth. The pitcher is now shaped on the wheel—and is ready for what ? For a future that is beyond this life. For can death waste all our experience ? This leads to a discussion of immortality, beyond our scope here.

Briefly, his position is this : Nature offers no solution; she is both good and bad. She is unmoral. Destiny give no help; for goodness suffers neglect and the evil are often rewarded. Look outside and see only the great enigmas. There is no certainty anywhere. Revelation provides no passport—for religions are various, and there are more discords than harmonies in the Church.

No : for a reading of life go to your own soul. Your faith, if it is worth anything, must be your own intuition; it must be the voice of your own soul speaking. Distrust your own soul and you are a rudderless boat, drifting out to sea.

Browning's philosophy of life is essentially what

we would call today pragmatic. Is your view a sound one ? Act as if it were; put it to the test of practical experience : that is the only reliable criterion. This roughly is what he says in effect. For the rest, Browning's sanguine temperament led him naturally to look at the brighter side of things. Unlike some spiritual voyagers in our literature, he never hugged the shore but sailed for the open, loving the salt sting of the buffeting waves. A courageous soul, he is a vigorous and vital comrade for those suffering from spiritual anaemia.

A Face

If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers !
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft.
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this,
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts !
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel face, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb :
But these are only massed there, I should think
Waiting to see some wonder momently
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

Chapter Two

Pre-Raphaelites and Others

(i) Dante Gabriel Rossetti

GABRIEL CHARLES DANTE ROSSETTI was born in Portland Place, London, on May 12, 1828. His father was a sensitive, amiable, and richly cultured man, and "a high-principled patriot", who was proscribed by the Bourbon king, Ferdinand I, in 1821, escaped to England, and obtained an appointment as Professor of Italian in King's College, London, 1831. The mother was fond of literature, deeply religious, gentle and devoted to husband and children.

The first distinct picture of Rossetti that presents itself is that of an affectionate, generous lad, with a partiality for rough, simple folk and a dreamy, somewhat indolent nature; but at no period in his life was there anything effeminate about him. Nothing is farther from the truth than the old popular notion of Rossetti and Keats, as men given up to the sensuous impressions of life. Both poets suffered from ill-health and disease sapped their power of volition; but each had virility, grit, and splendid capacity for work. The vapid emotionalism of the aesthetic school received no encouragement from Rossetti, who always insisted on the fundamental brain-work in poetry.

Before chloral had shadowed his life, Rossetti was a breezy, genial, and delightful companion, as simple and unaffected as William Morris, and with a strain of rich humour in his nature that Morris never possessed.

Bent on becoming an artist, he was sent in 1842 to a drawing academy in Bloomsbury; afterwards to the Antique School of the Royal Academy, in 1846.

The second picture that detaches itself from Rossetti's biography is that of the earnest young art student, with masses of brown hair, a fine forehead, deep-set, blue, flashing eyes, and an imperious chin. This is the young enthusiast who wrote in 1848 to that queer-tempered man of genius, Ford Madox Brown, begging to be a pupil. Brown accepted him with a few laconic words but damped his ardour by setting him to paint pickle-jars. It was characteristic of Rossetti that he should have worked hard during three years but was impatient of instruction, following out his own methods.

During the year 1848, however, he became acquainted with two academy students, Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, and this acquaintanceship proved the starting point of the famous Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848.

As the name suggests, this brotherhood identified itself artistically with the painters before Raphael, the Early Florentines—e.g. Giotto, Bellini, Fra Angelico—for it found in the work of these artists an individuality and sincerity alien to the art of Raphael's

successors. Even the faults of this earlier school had for the brotherhood a special charm, and the crude drawing and faulty perspective enchanted them just as the *naivete* and roughness of the old ballads enchant the scholar.

About this time Ruskin, in his *Modem Painters,* had protested against the academic traditions which kept young artists making school copies of Raphael. Pre-Raphaelitism put this protest into a practical form. Madox Brown, who was not in the movement, none the Jess was of it and worked according to its principles.

The Pre-Raphaelites painted their pictures as in frescoes or mosaic work, finishing each portion with elaborate care. This unflinching realism characterises the earlier work of Rossetti but later on he gave fuller scope to his imagination.

Another characteristic of the movement was its love of symbolism. This is a mediaeval note, and Rossetti learned its secret from Dante. In *Dante's Dream* the strewn poppies are emblematic of sleep and death; an expiring lamb symbolises the extinction of life, while a white cloud borne away by angels—the departing soul of Beatrice.

While Rossetti, the master and mind of the movement, was challenging public criticism of his novel methods, he was at the same time writing a good deal of his best poetry, notably *The Bride's Prelude, Sister Helen, A Last Confession, Jenny,* and *The Burden of Nineveb.* This divided occupation, however interesting

artistically, had serious practical drawbacks, for it encumbered Rossetti in his professional work as a painter, and in 1852 we find him declaring that he had abandoned poetry. Some of his verse was published in the magazine of the Brotherhood—another of Rossetti's ideas. This was called *The Germ;* it was published monthly, contained contributions from Coventry Patmore, Christina Rossetti, and others; and in its columns Rossetti's *blessed Damozel* first saw the light.

At this moment, when the obscure artist was becoming a well-known personality, the figure of Elizabeth Siddall struck across his path. Few famous attachments are better known than that of the tall, beautiful shop-girl, with pale blue eyes and copperygolden hair, and the ardent young painter.

Rossetti was in no position to marry her at the time, and the engagement dragged on in a somewhat unsatisfactory way. In 1860, his circumstances improving, he married her at Hastings, but she steadily declined in health and her death, owing to an overdose of laudanum, probably anticipated by only a few months what must have happened.

Keenly affected by his wife's tragic death, his burial of his manuscript poems in his wife's grave was an act sufficiently significant of Rossetti's state of mind. The poems, he told his friends, had often been written when she was suffering and when he might have been attending to her; and he felt—what was certainly true—that his artistic preoccupation had

taken him away from bis home far more than was right and necessary. There was something peculiarly fitting in this passionate act of self-abnegation, when he placed the work of his imagination between the cheek and the hair of his dead wife.

Between 1860 and 1870 he was at his prime. He took 16, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, and had first for his tenants—for the house was a large, old-fashioned one —Swinburne, George Meredith, and William Rossetti. This remarkable partnership soon came to an end for, however delightful in a companion, Rossetti's Bohemian habits were trying in a house-mate. Among his friends were Burne-Jones, who regarded him with affection and awe, and William Morris, whose strong personality was for a time almost obsessed by Rossetti.

In 1870 the famous painter became the famous poet. To many his poems had been familiar for a long time; men like Swinburne and Morris had been impressed by their distinctive individuality. During the late 'sixties the poetic impulse came strongly upon him and, although his health was beginning to fail at this time, his imagination had never been more active. He wrote *The Stream's Secret,* a haunting piece of melody, re-wrote from memory some of his earlier poems, and, at the urgent request of his friends, gave permission for the MS. poems to be exhumed, since much of his verse was forgotten beyond recall.

The second and grimmer shadow that fell across his life at this time is the more to be deplored, inas-

much as few men of letters had reached so high a position, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, as had Rossetti. Harassed by sleeplessness, he had taken chloral, quite ignorant of the seductive and baneful character of the drug indiscriminately used. Yet, though his vitality was impaired and his mental and physical suffering considerable, his imagination as a creative artist remained practically undisturbed to the last. The very tenacity of the man's constitution merely increased his sufferings, until in 1882 he died.

Milton's postulate that poetry should be simple, sensuous, and passionate has never been bettered. All the greatest poetry is simple, because the elemental things of life are simple; it is sensuous, because its appeal must needs be made through the senses—how else can rhythmic beauty be realised? It is passionate, because it deals with the primal instincts.

In two of these requisites Rossetti's verse is assuredly not lacking. He is both sensuous and passionate; indeed, superbly so, though the elaborate craftsmanship somewhat distracts us at times and obscures the real emotional quality that lies behind. In the exquisite intensity of his sense-expressions he reminds us of Keats; and like Keats he is carried away at times by this into an ultra-opulence of illustration that weakens his work as an artist.

Gloom girt 'mid Spring-flushed apple growths she stands
Deep in the sun-scorched growths, the dragon fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky.

Yet how much more compelling in simple strength are these lines, from which luxuriant fancies have been ruthlessly pruned:

> Her eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of water stilled at even.
>
> Thy soul I know not from the body, nor
> Thee from myself, neither our love from God.

That the pictorial element is more insistent in Rossetti than in Keats is obviously due to the fact that Rossetti's outlook on the world is essentially that of the painter. He thinks and feels in pigments. Who but a painter would have given us lines like these :

> The blessed damozel leaned out
> From the *gold bar* of heaven
>
> . . . .
>
> She had *three lilies* in her hand
> And the stars in her hair were seven.
>
> And the souls mounting up to God
> Went by her *like thin flames.*

In that splendid poem, *A Last Confession*—perhaps the only one that shows a direct influence of a contemporary—the painter-poet is unmistakable. Browning's method may have suggested the general scheme of the poem, but Rossetti had stamped his own genius upon the tale. It is the story of a murder, and the colour red gleams through the verse from the very opening.

But the sensuousness of Rossetti's verse travels beyond the mere expression of emotion in terms of

sense. After all, Shelley and Browning also were colourists. But in their sensuousness as poets they exhibit divergences which may be explained by saying that, while all three give sensuous expression to " feeling ", Rossetti also gives sensuous expression to " thought". It is here that we light upon that quality in Rossetti's verse that has given offence to some and is responsible for the criticism that there is a voluptuous " hot-house " atmosphere about it.

The reverential devotion to the beauty of the body, which strikes most Englishmen as mawkish and unwholesome, and not a few as immoral, is far removed in spirit from mere eroticism. The senses were for Rossetti sacramental emblems of the spirit. In every department of thought and emotion, not in love only, Rossetti sought for the outward manifestation. Where Tennyson sentimentalised and Browning intellectualised, Rossetti read off the physical expression of certain sides of life. But he valued the physical expression, the outward manifestation, not as does the mere sensualist, as something disconnected from the inner life, but as a visible sign of the invisible power that moulds life and character into beauty and nobility.

Robert Buchanan's attack on Rossetti in *The Fleshly School of Poetry* is wide of the mark, because Rossetti's sensuousness is something other than sensuality. Indeed, Buchanan came to realise he had condemned without justice and years afterwards made a frank and unreserved retractation.

Yet if the heavy, perfumed atmosphere of Rossetti's.

love-poetry will always strike English readers as enervating, and if his outspokenness offends our constitutional reserve in matters of sexual love, let us at any rate recognise that the question is not one of morality but merely one of taste. Its real weakness lies not in its sensuousness but in its frequent lack of simplicity. Its rich ornamentation, its meticulous elaboration, fatigues the eye; and to this extent it fails to appeal to us so potently as do Burns and Browning as poets of passion. In its own circumscribed sphere of sexual ecstasy transfigured by spiritual rapture it is rarely beautiful and, indeed, unique in English poetry.

The human elements of old romance were finely apprehended by Scott and William Morris; the sensuous elements attracted Keats; the mystic elements inspired Coleridge. But no one poet has gathered up all these diverse elements in the way that Rossetti had done. In such poems as *Stretton Water , The Kings Tragedy,* and *The White Ship* he touches the popular ballad with all its rough simplicity and *naivete;* and if he fails to realise the hearty humanity that touches Scott's best work, he is more faithful to the conventions of the old ballad form. Again, he has essayed in poems like *The Bride's Prelude* and *Rose Mary* to reproduce the sensuous atmosphere which gave such richness of effect to *The Eve of St. Agtes* and *Lamia*; and his success here is unquestioned. Keats himself never excelled the pictorial splendour of *The Bride's Prelude* or the opulent imagery of *Rose Mary;* and in sheer intellectual grasp of old super-

stitions and ancient customs he is distinctly inferior to Rossetti.

Rossetti's power of mystic suggestion had no peer save in Coleridge. He had the power of impressing the imagination with splendid lines that suggested some half-expressed thought, some dimly-shadowed emotion—such lines as :

Girt in dark growths, yet glimmering with one star.

The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of hope.

Words whose silence wastes and kills.

The spacious vigil of the stars.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke thro' the still weather,
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

Profound thinkers and more varied singers the last century has given us, but Rossetti has expressed, in a way no other poet has done, the hunger of the human heart for love and beauty, the hunger of the human soul for those impalpable mysteries that touch the horizon of human thought.

(ii) **William Morris**

Born March 24, 1834, at Elm House, Walthamstow, William Morris was the third child in a family of nine,

and came of good middle-class stock, of sound, strong physique, with no remarkable gift of intellect or imagination. In 1840 his parents moved to Woodford Hall in Essex.

Morris matriculated at Oxford in 1852 and first met Edward Burne-Jones. The spell of Newman and the Anglo-Catholic revival still lingered in Oxford, and considerably influenced this serious and artistic youth —a pronounced High Churchman desirous of taking Orders. Then came his majority in 1854 and with it an income of £900 a year.

Having taken his degree in 1856, he might have settled down to a life of pleasure and idle comfort, but it was not in Morris's nature to do this. While on holiday in France he and Burne-Jones had definitely given up the idea of the Church as a profession. Art was to be their mistress : for Burne-Jones, painting; for Morris, the career of an architect.

The influence of Rossetti was soon evident. Morris had already written several poems, collected in the little volume, *The Defence of Guenevere*—and now " Rossetti says I ought to paint. I *must* try," and he made such rapid progress that when Burne-Jones and Rossetti were commissioned to execute the frescoes at the Union Debating Hall, in 1857, Morris was invited to assist them.

The year 1861 saw the foundation of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.; this partnership was dissolved in 1875 and Morris became sole proprietor. In consequence of the rapid development of

his business, Morris decided to sell the Red House in 1865 and move with his family to London. He had been ill with rheumatic fever, and the constant journeys to and from the City were beginning to be a strain.

He was now planning *The Earthly Paradise* and also writing *Jason*; after its publication he began to study Icelandic. Within a short time he was able to put this new venture to practical use in a series of Icelandic Sagas, the translation of which, with a tour in Iceland, occupied most of his spare time for the next few years.

Morris was not happy away from the country, so in 1871 he and Rossetti became joint-tenants of Kelmscott Manor, a charming old house on the banks of the Thames. The arrangement was more or less happy until 1874, when, after an illness, Rossetti departed.

Overwork was largely responsible for a serious illness in 1885, but the next year Morris was working, if possible, harder than ever. *The Dream of John Ball* was appearing in *The Commonweal*, the organ of the Socialist League—Morris having started and financed both paper and League; and much of his best literary work made its first appearance in its columns.

The House of the Wolfings, published in 1888, was the first of his books to be printed from specially selected type. His next romance, *The Roots of the Mountains*, was bound in one of his own chintzes. This peculiar interest in the production of books led to his founding the Kelmscott Press, established in the Upper Mall,

Hammersmith—and *News from Nowhere* was the first of his volumes to be issued from it.

So attractive were the volumes issued by Morris that the University of Cambridge in 1891 lent him Caxton's copy of *The Golden Legend*, from which he printed the Kelmscott edition of 1892.

After a few more years of literary work and numerous activities on behalf of the Social Democratic Federation, Morris's health gave way under the strain. A sea trip was advised and he started for Norway, but he longed only for the looked-for time when he might return to Kelmscott. When he arrived in England he was too ill to be taken beyond London. Early in September he dictated the last chapter of *The Sundering Flood*, and on October 3, 1896, died at Hammersmith, and three days later, at Kelmscott, was laid to rest in a storm of wind and rain.

The savour of the man's personality lay in the juxtaposition of two divergent qualities, poetic imagination and practical sagacity. His dreams were no castles in the air; they had a definite ground plan. The dreamer devised beautiful things, beautiful poems, beautiful prose, beautiful handicrafts; the practical man expressed them in terms of utility. He loved beauty so well that he turned it into a limited company.

Morris was not a great poet in the sense that we call Milton and Shelley great poets, for rhythmic beauty was not the inevitable expression of his creative imagination. His well-known saying that a man who was unable to turn from an epic to a tapestry had

better leave both alone is finely significant of the man. Supreme art is subject to no such chance incarnation : it can express itself only in one way. But if we deny Morris a seat on Parnassus as a supreme poet, he would claim supremacy, assuredly, as a great artist who wrote verse as one of many means for expressing his innate sense of beauty.

His first volume of verse, *The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems,* was necessarily experimental. The chief interest of the volume lies in the vigour and insight with which he treats some old-world story, whether one of Arthurian inspiration, in *The Defence ofGuenevere,* or some other tale of mediaeval passion, as in *The Haystack in the Floods* with its poignant horrors, or *Rapunzel* with its pictorial beauty. Admirably did he serve his poetic apprenticeship in this volume before he passed on to the mode in which he was a master—the narrative method.

Both *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* are narrative poems and, while he excelled them in emotional fire when he wrote *Sigurd,* he never surpassed these poems in fluent sweetness and gracious charm. The familiarity of the Jason story accounts for its greater popularity; but there is necessarily more variety in that garment of diverse colours—*The Earthly Paradise*—a lovely fabric of verse into which he has woven some of the most enchanting stories in the world : graceful fancies from Greece, gay romances of French origin, passionate legends from the North.

Following *The Earthly Paradise* came *Love is Enough*

(1871), a clever, technical experiment—a modernised edition of the old morality play.

After an interesting interval of translation work, *Sigurd the Volsung* was published in 1876. The translation of the *Æneid* of Virgil in 1875 is an agreeable production—nothing that Morris attempted was negligible. But it does not exhibit the poet at his best.

His next work on a big scale was a translation of the *Odyssey*, a vigorous and admirable piece of work. Certainly Morris was spiritually more akin to Homer than to Virgil.

The prose romances are nine in number : of these two are communistic in conception—*The Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*, the one a hark back to the past, the other a speculation into the future. The remaining tales are frank fantasies with flavours of German and Scandinavian sagas, with that peculiar Morris atmosphere in which dreamy melancholy and joyous vitality are piquantly blended, and where the author's passionate love of beauty breaks into every line, even in the musical titles—i.e. *The Water of the Wondrous Isles, The Wood beyond the World, The Well at the World's End, The Land of the Glittering Plain.*

Morris's craftsmanship is in reality only another aspect of his work as a poet. Superficially there may seem a good deal of difference between a tapestry, a stained-glass window, and an epic; fundamentally there is no distinction. The divergence is one of technique, not of art. Throughout his life his poetic

imagination inspired his craftsmanship, and his craftsmanship materially affected his poetry. It has been said that Rossetti wrote his pictures and painted his poems. In a sense this is a perfectly just criticism, and it is equally just to say that Morris wove his epics, yet if we cannot add that he wrote his tapestries, this is because his craftsmanship affected his verse far more materially than his metrical skill as a poet affected his craftsmanship. He thought in arabesques and curves rather than in metre and rhythm.

Morris was first and foremost an artist, and it is pertinent, therefore, to inquire how it was he left the pursuit of art during later years in order to preach social reform. The more we study Morris's life work the more we are convinced that all his activities, whether artistic or social, form a homogeneous whole. He loved beauty as passionately as did Rossetti; but feeling, with Ruskin, that the majority of his fellowmen would never care for beauty until the ugliness of their lives and environment was changed, he set about to try to effect this.

Here is the interconnection between art and life clearly formulated. Like Ruskin, Morris entered social politics through the gateway of aestheticism. He became a Socialist because, in his lifelong tirade against the ugliness of modern life, he felt that, unless conditions of labour were changed, his extension of art into every side of life would be an impossibility. He opposed Capitalism in the same spirit as he opposed aniline dye: not primarily because it made for cruelty but because it made for ugliness.

He had no belief in catastrophic Communism; he did not imagine that we could go asleep " on a Saturday in a capitalist society and wake on Monday in a communistic society ". He repudiated the idea of open war as a means towards the end desired. The change would, he knew, be a gradual one; and the best means of bringing it about was constant education and the continual making of Socialists.

Morris's Socialism differed from that of Ruskin in being democratic in basis rather than aristocratic. The dominant note in Morris's message is liberty and equality. Ruskin's instincts were against trusting the people to manage their own affairs. Morris found the exponents of Liberalism too weak-kneed, and passed them by. But he started on the Liberal platform; it was not because he disliked Liberalism but because he was impatient of Liberals that he left them.

Morris's value as a social reformer must not be estimated merely by his lectures and propaganda work, nor even by his communistic romances, but by the whole effect of his work as an artist-craftsman.

Herbert Spencer has said: " You cannot get golden conduct out of leaden instincts." Morris agreed; but he did not leave the instincts alone, as Spencer did, to work out their own salvation through the slow process of evolution. He did his best to change them. Art for him was never a luxurious toy but an ethic, a creed for the betterment of the whole community.

(iii) Algernon Charles Swinburne

Born in London on April 5, 1837, Swinburne entered Eton in 1849. On leaving Eton in 1854, he read for two years with Dr. Woodford, and in 1856 went up to Balliol College, Oxford. His scholarly habits attracted the attention of the Master, Benjamin Jowett, who became his life-long friend.

A literary set, presided over by John Nichol, of which the leading spirits were T. H. Green, A. V. Dicey, Birkbeck Hill, and Swinburne, founded the " Old Mortality " reading society; the members met once a week during term for reading and discussion. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was at work on the frescoes of the new building of the Oxford Union; William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones were also there, and Swinburne was soon drawn into that little circle of Pre-Raphaelites which included other intimate friends whom death alone claimed from him one by one.

Though he left Oxford in 1860 without a degree, it was admitted that Swinburne had a fine knowledge of Greek. In 1858 he had taken the Taylorian Prize for French and Italian, and in other subjects far exceeded the knowledge of his fellow students, but, failing to satisfy the examiner in Scripture, he was " ploughed ".

Of Swinburne's literary labours we hear of " four crudities ", as he called them, contributed in 1858 to the short-lived *Undergraduate 'Papers* edited by John Nichol.

In 1862 he joined the Rossettis and George Mere-

dith at 16, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea; it was their intention to live a kind of collegiate life, each to have his own sitting-room, but with a dining-room in common. This arrangement was not successful; first Meredith departed, then Swinburne left to roam from one set of rooms to another until 1872, when the supreme friendship of his life began in the meeting with Theodore Watts-Dunton. From that time the tie between the two became inseparable. *Tristram of Lyonesse* was thus inscribed in 1882 : "To my best friend, Theodore Watts, I dedicate in this book, the best I have to give him."

Thus the late years of Swinburne's life moved tranquilly on. The fevers of youth were over; the stimulus, at once intellectually provocative and emotionally disturbing, of active participation in the social life of the day gave place to the healing balm and quieter joys of life at The Pines. There was no radical change in Swinburne's attitude towards men and things; his verse still retained its old trumpet note of exultation, but the note is deeper and mellower, and the raptures circle more and more around the large simplicities of Nature. But if he withdrew from active participation in the life of the day, he never lost interest in affairs.

In the spring of 1909 he caught a chill and he died in April. Unhappily he presently became a figure of some ridicule, chiefly through the legends which gathered round his secluded life and through the " imaginative decorations " of De Maupassant. Pelle-

grini's caricature came to be taken for a portrait, with its enormous head, stalk of a neck and steeply sloping shoulders. In fact Swinburne, although well below medium height, was of muscular build, and the best portrait of him by Rossetti shows his neck to have been unusually thick.

The fact would not be worth mentioning were it not an example of the popular misconceptions which have led the average reader, who has not yet become acquainted with his life or letters, to postpone the introduction through a misbelief that Swinburne was something of a freak in himself. It is better to know that he was an ordinary person of most unusual gifts. It is better to know of his rapt enthusiasm for beauty in poetry and of the lovely voice with which he recited it. Then we can enjoy the caricatures and the legends.

In an age of cultured poets, Swinburne was easily first. Much of his earlier work was relentlessly destroyed, and it was not till his twenty-fourth year that he published his first volume, the two plays, *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond* (1860).

The volume attracted little attention, but its successor, *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), triumphantly vindicated Swinburne's claim to a foremost place among the poets of his time. As a lyrical drama it is a superb piece of work, which marks out as clearly his kinship with Shelley as did Rossetti's poems his affinity with Keats. Then came *Poems and Ballads* in 1866, rich in music and colour, and vibrant with the pagan inspiration of Swinburne's earlier years.

Rossetti's influence is more marked here than in *Atalanta* and, indeed, many of the poems were written before *Atalanta*; but, if influenced by Rossetti, the individuality of the poet is clear and unequivocal enough, as the " Hymn to Proserpine ", with its metrical glory, would alone have attested. For the future, Swinburne's work was divided between the dramatic and lyrical forms. He also produced, like Browning, a considerable body of dramatic work. Each failed for opposite reasons : Browning because he was too much of a psychologist; Swinburne because he was too little. Browning analysed his creations, when he should have illustrated their characters in action—synthetically; Swinburne rhapsodised about his characters in place of letting them speak for themselves. If Browning's are the more interesting intellectually, Swinburne's are richer in fine poetry. His unequalled knowledge of the Elizabethan dramatists proved a plenary poetic inspiration to lyric and drama alike, and *Bothwell* (1874), *Mary Stuart* (1881), *Locrine* (1887), to mention a few of the happiest, are delightful companions in the study.

In *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) the revolutionary note in Swinburne's poetry is uppermost Already in *A Song of Italy* (1867), afterwards merged into *Songs of Two Nations* (1875), the love of liberty and hatred of tyranny had proclaimed itself, and another link with Shelley had been revealed. But in his *Songs before Sunrise* the note is fuller and more challenging than

before. Mazzini's influence has swept away those elements in his work that bound him to Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites. He is never more eloquent in his passion, more orchestral in his music, than when singing of Italy and of her struggle for freedom.

If in political matters he is less satisfying as a poet with the course of years, none could say that his muse lost either in cunning or in passion. Literature inspired him less and Nature more as time went on; and the beautiful Nature-poetry of his later years is among his most cherished work. None of our poets has more completely expressed in rhythmic beauty " the rapturous resurrection of the year". If his powers mellowed as he grew older, his spirits seemed to grow more youthful. The poet of *A Midsummer Holiday* is younger than the poet of *Faustine*; and the fresh, Blake-like sweetness of his lyrics on childhood makes the amorous verse of the sixties strangely sophisticated and middle-aged by force of contrast.

If the conservative accretions of age circumscribed his intellectual life with the passing of time,, his imaginative life expanded and clarified. The influence of his intimate friend Watts-Dunton was no doubt largely responsible for this. Watts-Dunton's influence was of incalculable value to Swinburne; none realised this more than the poet himself, as several of his famous dedications testify.

Technically Swinburne's verse shows little development after the *Poems and 'Ballads,* for his powers as a literary artist ripened with astonishing rapidity. But

the work of his later years gains in breadth and freshness, while losing no tittle of its brilliant finish and metrical beauty.

The fire of Swinburne's muse has power to fuse all his vast learning into an incandescent splendour; and only by delicate gradation of tints in the jets of glowing flame here and there do you recognise the rich purples of the South or the delicate amber of Provence, a flicker of Gallic gaiety or a flash of Italian passion. The learning is all there but it has caught light. " The bush burns with fire and is not consumed." Naturally there are poems that appeal more to the cultured than to the uncultured reader; but it is a mistake to imagine that Swinburne's appeal is limited to the few.

Swinburne's scholarship, then, is never pedantic. If this quality of Swinburne's verse—viz. his vitalised scholarship—be regarded as one important feature, a more important still is melodic splendour. To concede melodic beauty to a poet is really only to say in other words that he is a poet and the question, therefore, in Swinburne is one of degree, not of kind. And it is here that the emphatic quality of Swinburne's music is appreciated, for he is the most musical of our poets.

Just as Rossetti made " thought pictorially sensuous ", Swinburne has made " thought musically sensuous ". He is not merely melodic—Shelley was gloriously melodic—he is harmonic; Shelley's music is the music of the lute, Swinburne's the music of a full orchestra; his melodies are rich and complex, with a

sweeping grandeur that no other poet has equalled, much less excelled.

The difference between the two may be appreciated if we compare Shelley's *Cloud* with one of the choruses of *Atalanta,* here quoted:

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

. . . . .

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round our knees, and cling ?
O that man's heart was as fire and could spring to her
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring !
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player,
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the south-west wind the west wind sing.

Finally, in the *Hymn to Proserpine,* the combined strength and beauty of the full orchestra are brought into requisition, and the result is a rush and glory of words unsurpassed in our language :

In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart.
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the flame of the flowers of the night,

And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of gods
from afar,
Grow dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a
star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod
by the sun,
Let thy soul with their souls find place, and forget what is
done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our
temporal breath;
For these give labour and slumber; but thou, Proserpina,
death.

Nor is this orchestral analogy a mere fanciful theory, as some may imagine. Swinburne's verbal music is no more a mere matter of verbal sound than a great instrumental music. Its delight does not stop short at the ear : it is the medium through which he expresses his thoughts, just as a nocturne by Chopin, a sonata by Beethoven, a study by Schumann, is the means of conveying to us, in terms of musical notation, the moods and fundamental ideas of the musician. What the proseman does by logical suasion, and most poets by pictorial appeal and intellectual suggestion, Swinburne tries to achieve by metrical modulation and the countless varieties of rhythmic cadence. The attempt is a daring one and, it may be frankly conceded, is a method of approach that is apt to fatigue the reader when carried to excess. You cannot transfer the methods of one art to another without doing some violence to that other; and, after all, language is not music, however musical it may be made. Yet this is only to say that Swinburne, like many another

great literary poet, suffers at times from the defects of his artistic virtues.

(iv) The Pessimistic Note

" The poetry of later paganism lived by the senses; and incidentally, the poetry of mediaeval Christianity lived by the heart and the imagination. But the main element of the modern spirit's life is neither the senses and understanding, nor the heart and imagination; it is the poetry of reason." In this last phrase we have the germ of the poetry of Pessimism. It was the endeavour to " intellectualise" the visions of the imaginative life that led Arnold, Clough, FitzGerald, and James Thomson into that mood of wistful melancholy which crystallised soon into more or less pessimistic criticism of life.

In each case, though in different ways, the poetic impulse was governed by the questioning attitude of a sceptical intellect.

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-61) was as a youth one of Thomas Arnold's pupils at Rugby. He entered Balliol College, Oxford, in 1837, and was deeply influenced by the theological controversies of the time. He resigned a fine position as Fellow and Tutor of Oriel College, on account of his religious difficulties, and signalised this step not by any weighty manifestation of his feelings but by a mirthful pastoral, *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* (1848). For all its play of humorous fancy, there is a deep underlying seriousness in the poem and a sensitive appreciation of the

weightiness of modern social problems. Interesting in its subject-matter and fresh in its treatment, it suffers from a certain roughness of artistry. Clough is only moderately successful in the use of the hexameter.

In a later work, Clough essays an even bigger spiritual problem, and *Dipsychus* has not been unfairly compared in its general trend with Goethe's *Faust* and, in its treatment of evil, with Hawthorne's *Marble Faun.* It is a poem of considerable beauty in parts, but the subject was too vast for one with Clough's limited artistic powers to expound satisfactorily.

Clough is most satisfactory as a poet in his shorter pieces.

Matthew Arnold (1822-88), the eldest son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, was born near Staines, December 24, 1822, receiving his education at Rugby, Winchester, and Balliol College, Oxford. Having secured the Newdigate Prize he passed to Oriel and was elected a Fellow in 1845. For a while he served as private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, afterwards accepting an Inspectorship of Schools.

In 1849 he published his first volume, *The Strayed Rjeveller and other Poems,* by "A."; *Empedocles on Etna* came in 1852, a second series of poems in 1855, *Merope* in 1859, and the *New Poems* in 1867. Meanwhile it was in 1853 that he first gave a taste of his quality as a proseman. His critical prose was collected in 1865 and published under the title of *Essays in Criticism ;* this was followed by L*ectures on the Study*

of Celtic Literature (1867), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877), *Mixed Essays* (1879), and *Irish Essays* (1882).

In 1857 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, received a pension of £250 a year in 1883, and died suddenly at Liverpool in April 1888.

The writings of Matthew Arnold are characterised by three persisting qualities : Suavity, Wistfulness, and Serenity.

There is a suavity rather than a passion in his poetry. He will never be a favourite with ardent, impetuous temperaments. He is too severe, too chill, for the sensitive emotion of youth. He is not fierce and scornful like Byron, even in his moods of opposition; but he is courteously hostile, ironical often, satirical rarely.

The suavity of Arnold is at its happiest in *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis,* which rank among his best achievements. Here Oxford and the Thames are the inspirations. These two poems cover nearly twenty years of his work.

The dreamy sadness of the poet finds beautiful expression in lines which are at once forcible and nobly reticent:

> And bade betwixt their shores to be
> The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

How delicate the pathos in the more fanciful poem, *The Forsaken Merman.* It has the quaintness, the naive simplicity and charm of Hans Andersen's L*ittle Mermaid.* Compare with this poem, *The Buried Life,* and

Longing, and we realise forcibly the almost intolerable desire for human affection, especially womanly affection, that leaps up again and again in Arnold's work.

Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd,
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would we know.

The serenity of Arnold differs from the serenity of Wordsworth, in that it is a state of mind consequent on intellectual effort, whereas with Wordsworth it was largely, I believe, a matter of temperament.

Arnold's serenity is a quiet stoicism in a melancholy soul:

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth, and is still—
In mystery our soul abides—
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.

In conclusion we may take note of the poet's fastidious workmanship, and of the many rhythmic felicities with which his work abounds :

Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still.
But were you at the window now
To look forth on the fairy sight
Of your illumin'd haunts by night:

To see the park-glades where you play
Far lovelier than they are by day :
To see the sparkle on the eaves,
And upon every giant bough
Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves
Are jewel I'd with bright drops of rain—
How would your voices run again !
And far beyond the sparkling trees
Of the castle park one sees
The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,
Moor behind moor, far, tar away,
Into the heart of Brittany,
And here and there, lock'd by the land,
Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,
And many a stretch of watery sand
All shining in the white moon-beams.
But you see fairer in your dreams.

In short, Matthew Arnold was a fine artist; more limited than Tennyson in his music; less virile than Browning in his grasp of life; but unequalled in depicting certain wistful moods of the spirit.

Edward FitzGerald, of Irish stock, was born at Bredfield House, Suffolk, in 1809, and educated at King Edward VI's School. In 1826 he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge. On leaving the university in 1830 he resided with his parents for eight years, after which, in a small cottage on his father's estate at Boulge Hall near Woodbridge, he lived the life of a recluse with his books and garden. In 1853 he changed his mode of living and settled at Farlingay Hall near by, and three years later married the daughter of his friend Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet; they

separated shortly afterwards and lived the remainder of their lives apart.

Yachting and gardening were his favourite out-door amusements, and he delighted in the society of the old fisherfolk of Aldeburgh and Lowestoft. While paying his annual visit to his friend the Rev. George Crabbe at Merton Rectory, Norfolk, he died suddenly in 1883.

His first work, *Euphranor,* was published anonymously in 1851, and a year later *Polonius : a Collection of Wise Saws and Sayings.* From a study of Spanish he turned to Persian. When visiting the Bodleian Library in 1856 he became attracted by the works of Omar Khayyam, the eleventh-century astronomer-poet of Persia, and he at once set to work on a translation that he published anonymously in 1859. Fitz Gerald was also a charming letter-writer, the most interesting letters,perhaps,being those *To Fanny Kemble.*

His earliest experiments in translation were from Calderon's dramas. With his genius for discerning the spirit beneath the mere letter, he made no attempt at literal translation, omitting and adding with a freedom that would appal the dry-as-dust scholar. As a result he made Calderon live for English readers.

In dealing with Sophocles and Æschylus his omissions and additions are less justifiable, for he is not so successful here in preserving the spirit of the original, but in his last and greatest work, his translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1859), he is supremely successful.

FitzGerald's *Omar*, it may be admitted, has more of FitzGerald than of the Persian poet in its actual content. Indeed, we must say FitzGerald's version is less properly described as a translation than as a transcript of an Oriental subject in terms of Western feeling.

For this reason FitzGerald's translation has the force and beauty of an original work. Omar's indebtedness to FitzGerald is really scarcely inferior to the English poet's more obvious indebtedness to the Persian.

The *Rubaiyat* is like some rich mosaic, constructed out of divers patterns, each with a design and scheme of its own, yet related also in a large sense to some general scheme of decoration. In its cumulative effect it may be compared with *In Memoriam.* In each case we have a succession of moods cunningly wrought, each mood fashioned with delicate artistry, yet in its varying pictures presenting a certain oneness of design. Like Tennyson's great poem, the *Rubaiyat* is also a criticism of life, less explicit, less polemical in its form, but none the less definite. In its outlook Tennyson's poem stands midway between FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* and Browning's *Easter Day,* blending the two characteristics of the time—a wistful hesitancy and a religious optimism—in a way that proved by its very compromise extremely welcome and soothing to many minds. FitzGerald's frank fatalism appealed to only a few and repelled the majority, yet no more beautiftd 'expression of an Epicurean philosophy has been uttered by an English writer.

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose !
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close !
The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows ?

If we cannot afford FitzGerald a place among our greatest poets, because his work necessarily lacks creative originality in its primary inspiration, he is none the less a poet of great distinction and a literary artist of the first order.

Inferior in his art to FitzGerald yet, like him, endowed with a very real poetical imagination, and probably the most imaginative of all our sceptical poets, is James Thomson (the second). He was born in 1834 and died in 1882. His was a storm-tossed, unhappy life, as much the result of an unfortunate temperament as of untoward circumstances. The son of a sailor, he was born at Port Glasgow, educated at the Caledonian Asylum, and became first an army schoolmaster, then a journalist. He was a striking though unequal writer of prose, and the same inequality pertains to his verse, but the power and intensity of his *City of Dreadful Night* (published originally in a "free-thought" newspaper, the *National Reformer)* is unquestionable.

In addition to *The City of Dreadful Night,* Thomson wrote also *Vane's Story* (a thinly disguised fragment of autobiography), and *Weddah and Om-el-Bonain;* less powerful than *The City of Dreadful Night,* but exhibiting a great deal of poetic beauty, and though sombre in view the greys are flecked here with gold. These

are all of considerable length. His earliest and latest works contain poems of lighter and more agreeable quality, such as *The Two Idylls of Cockayne,* and *Sunday up the River* and *Sunday at Hampstead* (1859), and *He Heard her Sing* (1882).!

[1] Notes on the theory of pre-Raphaelite literature will be found in Volume VI.

Chapter Three

The Women Poets

(i) General

IN ballad-writing the contributions of women writers are comparatively slight. A few women have written songs, no whit inferior to the best that Burns has given us, though giving a distinctively feminine point of view—as for instance, *Auld Rabin Gray, The Land o' the Leal,* and *Caller Herrin'.* Indeed, Scotland may claim priority to England as the nursery of the woman poet, for in addition to the balladists there was Joanna Baillie, who, though less original than Fanny Burney, occupies somewhat the same place in the development of the woman poet that the author *of Evelina* did in the development of the woman novelist. A more versatile and accomplished writer of verse was Fanny Kemble, grand-niece of the tragedienne, Mrs. Siddons, but neither in her case nor in the case of the facile Mrs. Hemans is there much originality or a pronounced feminine note. Sara Coleridge wrote too little for us to judge fairly of her artistic power but she had certainly a touch of the Coleridge genius, and of her intellectual gifts there can be no question. The genius of the Sheridan family is illustrated by its two brilliant sisters—one, Helen Sheridan (Lady Dufferin),

whose *Lament of the Irish Emigrant* has a tender charm that no familiarity can spoil; while her younger sister, Caroline (Hon. Mrs. Norton), whose life-story inspired Meredith with his *Diana of the Crossways,* can at any rate hold her own with Mrs. Hemans as a flamboyant but spirited balladist. In Mrs. Clive there is less force than in many of her predecessors, but greater distinction and artistic finish.

The position of Emily Bronte in our literature is indeed unique. That one whose experience of life was so limited, whose literary training was so slight, whose artistic content is so little varied and by no means extensive in quantity, should have impressed us indisputably as a woman of high genius is one of the marvels of literary history. Of *Wuthering Heights,* which is fundamentally not a novel but a prose poem, rough hewn, elemental, and sublime, mention is made elsewhere. I cannot, as some critics do, place her verse on a higher level, though the famous *Last Lines* assuredly touch that level.

But she rarely wrote a stanza that has not the touch of fine poetry in it; such poems as *A little while, a little while, the weary task is put away; Remembrance; Shall Earth No More Inspire Thee; The Linnet in the Rocky Dell*—to mention a few only, are instinct with true poetic genius.

(ii) Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Moulton Barrett, was born at Coxhoe Hall, Durham, on March 6, 1806.

Educated at home with her brother Edward until he was sent to Charterhouse, she pursued her studies with the blind scholar, Hugh Stuart Boyd, and wrote *The Battle of Marathon,* published by her father in 1826. At fifteen, through a spinal injury, she became an invalid.

Shortly after the removal of the family to London, the young poetess published *The 'Romaunt of Margret, The Rhyme of the Duchess May,* and *The Lay of the Brown Rosary,* and formed many notable friendships—she owed much to the unfailing interest of Wordsworth, Landor, Miss Mitford, and John Kenyon.

In 1840 her beloved brother Edward, while on a visit to her at Torquay, was drowned in Babbacombe Bay. At first prostrate with grief, her wonderful courage and innate cheerfulness induced her to throw herself into her work, although virtually a prisoner moving only from bed to sofa.

Mutually attracted as they were, when Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett first met she deemed it her duty to hide her feelings; but her scruples were soon overcome and their marriage took place.

A deep sympathy with oppressed and down-trodden women and children had found earlier expression. In later years she threw her whole heart and soul into the struggle for Italian independence. After the Peace of Villafranca she was seriously ill, and the subsequent death of her hero, Cavour, probably hastened her end. Seized with a bronchial attack, she died in the arms of her husband on June 30, 1861, and was buried in the English cemetery at Florence.

An eager and enthusiastic student with a sensitive and strongly emotional nature, she began to write long before she had mastered the technique of her art. And her active imagination and vital interest in human affairs were always in excess of her power of execution. But despite an astonishing amount of slovenly writing there was work of the highest quality; even her poorest output never lacked vitality. She had many of the merits of the great romantic writers, but the defects and weaknesses that poets like Keats and Coleridge sternly combated and subdued remained with Elizabeth Barrett Browning all her life, and have distressed some readers as they long ago distressed and exasperated FitzGerald, so as to blind them to the splendid opulence and deep imaginative insight of a goodly portion of her work.

The love-story of Mrs. Browning proved a significant factor both in her emotional experience and in her work as a poet. The poems in which she has enshrined that love remain her highest achievement in poetry. The so-called *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* published in 1850, were written some years earlier.

No finer statement of a woman's passion—of love from the feminine standpoint—exists in our literature.

How do I love thee ? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;

I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise,
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith,
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life !—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Aurora Leigh (1857) is a fragment of spiritual autobiography, and its vitality lies in the intimate revelation of the writer's nature, temperament, and outlook. Despite weaknesses, it is rich in great poetry, while its passion, its sincerity, and its pulsing life are incontestable. Moreover, like nearly everything that Mrs. Browning wrote, it is essentially an eloquent exposition of the woman's point of view.

Such memorable lines as these take the reader by the throat, so true and beautiful are they in their poignant femininity :

No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee,
But finds some coupling with the spinning stars;
No pebble at your foot, but proves a sphere;
No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim;
"And (glancing on my own thin, veined wrist),
In such a little tremor of the blood
The whole strong clamour of a vehement soul
Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes *off* his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more from the first similitude.

(iii) **Lesser Poets**

In striking contrast with Elisabeth Barrett Browning is Christina Rossetti. In the first place, her body of work is slight. In the second place, it is practically in one key of wistful and delicate asceticism. In the third place, it is wrought with most scrupulous art.

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-94) was the younger daughter of Gabriele Rossetti and sister of the poet-painter.

Her principal works are *Goblin Market and other Poems,* published in 1862, *The Prince's Progress* (1866), *A Pageant and other Poems* (1881), *Verses* (1893), *New Poems,* published posthumously in 1896, and *Sing-Song,* a book of verse for children.

Her work is almost entirely in the minor key; looking merely at the subject-matter of her poems, one would expect to find the constant preoccupation with death and the futility of life intolerably sad and depressing. But so exquisite is her art, so subtle her sense of beauty, that the insistent minor fascinates us rather than depresses us, and we are distracted from her melancholy matter by her charm of manner.

Yet with all her intense religious feeling there is nothing of the preacher or teacher in her. She does not seek, with Mrs. Browning, to justify the ways of God to man; she is content to picture with subtle simplicity the mystical moods of the spirit. Perhaps Blake alone among our poets can convey with equal clearness the reality of things unseen and unheard by

the ordinary senses. Blake impresses us with his power of actualising the supernaturalism of the natural world; Christina Rossetti with her gift of actualising rather the naturalism of the supernatural world. She believes—and worships. Her entire attitude is that of a worshipper; and in the moods of awe and ecstasy she certainly has few rivals.

Critics like her brother have noted the ascetic passion of her verse, yet the asceticism is not that of the bloodless soul in which both love and living are withered, but of one who has all the capacity for enjoying the sensuous delights of life, yet has deliberately put them aside and turned her eyes skywards, from choice.

The woman who could write,

> Raise me a dais of silk and down;
> Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
> Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,
> And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
> Work it in gold and silver grapes,
> In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
> Because the birthday of my life
> Is come, my love is come to me,

was no anaemic votary of what George Eliot has aptly called " other-worldliness ".

The verse of George Eliot deserves attention if only for her position as a highly cultured woman and a great novelist, but it is far inferior to her prose. There are no cheap rhetorical effects, no facile sentimentalities ; but the merits of *The Spanish Gypsy* arid *The Legend of Jubal* are mostly negative. There is

more poetry in a passage from *Silas Marner* than in all her verses put together.

Adelaide Anne Procter (1825-64), daughter of the popular but unimportant " Barry Cornwall" (Bryan Waller Procter), wrote much agreeable verse which had an immediacy of appeal. Dickens published some of her work in *Household Words,* although he was for a long time unaware of the writer's identity. She must be mentioned because one poem has become known in every home; it might be ungracious to suggest that its survival is less due to its merit than to the music Sir Arthur Sullivan gave to *The Lost Chord.* The music also is immediately attractive and suits the sentiment of the verse. Whatever else might be said about verse or music, only a soured critic would begrudge their popularity.

Her contemporary, Jean Ingelow (1820-97), had both power and to some extent freshness. Prolix and unequal, she is decidedly one of the poets who count. There is grip and imagination in *The High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire,* and *Requiescat in Pace*; and her shorter pieces, especially, display much versatility and subtlety of fancy. If she is not always musical, that is because she was not content with the jog-trot rhythm usually in favour, and there is abundant technical cleverness in some of her metrical experiments.

In Augusta Webster (1837-94) we have a writer less attractive superficially than Jean Ingelow, but with an intrinsic strength and originality of outlook.

Some of her best work may be found in *A. Woman*

Sold, and other Poems (i 867), and *Portraits* (i 870). As is all high-class work achieved by women, it is distinctly feminine and the woman's point of view is insisted on again and again with force and passion.

Like Augusta Webster, Mathilde Blind (1847-96) was a woman of wide culture, and if she had not the original force and imaginative insight of her contemporary, she was at any rate one of the women poets we must note. She had a sense of drama and a distinct lyrical gift but she was at her best as a sonneteer. In her sonnet *The Dead,* and in some of the songs in *Love in Exile,* we have worthy illustrations of her power and grace as a verse-writer.

Why will you haunt me unawares,
And walk into my sleep,
Pacing its shadowy thoroughfares,
Where long-dried perfume scents the airs,
While ghosts of sorrows creep,
Where on Hope's ruined altar stairs
With ineffectual beams,
The Moon of Memory coldly glares
Upon the land of dreams ?

Alice Meynell published her first poetry in *Preludes* (1875), so that we may include her here although her collected poems were not published until 1923, the year after her death. A devout Catholic, much of her poetry has a spiritual quality which may be appreciated, perhaps, in the light of her remark that for her Wordsworth's poetry was " the normal poetry". Her lines are marked by precise diction, simplicity of imagery, and a grave, rather rarefied beauty re-

miniscent of the seventeenth century. Her sonnets deservedly enjoy a high reputation; *Renouncement* is perhaps the best of them.

We need only note the names of Katherine Tynan, Dora Sigerson, and " Michael Field " (Mrs. Katherine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper), all of whom have been widely appreciated without attaining anything more than competence. One poem by Amy Levy (1861-89) is truly remarkable—*London Plane Tree*. Mary Elizabeth Coleridge (1861-1907) survives through the publication of her work as *Poems Old and New* immediately after her death in 1907. Her poetry is deeply serious and shows much skill in elegiac measures. Reference should also be made to Margaret Veley (1843-87), whose poems also were posthumously collected under the title, *A Marriage of Shadow and Other Poems.*

Chapter Four

Miscellaneous Poetry

(i) General

AMONG the chief influences in the poetry of later Victorian times is that of Tennyson, Browning, Rossetti, and Swinburne. For instance, we can trace Swinburne in Lord de Tabley; Rossetti in William Bell Scott; Tennyson in Stephen Phillips; Browning's influence has been more diffused and indirect, and has been shown in the subject-matter rather than the style of a good many modern verse-writers; whereas the influence of Tennyson and Swinburne has been one of manner and treatment. The influence of Pre-Raphaelitism is apparent in the later verse of William Bell Scott (1812-90). His work is essentially philosophic and contemplative; and he is more of a thinker in verse than a good literary artist. Yet there is some originality in his work, especially *The Sphinx*.

Coventry Patmore (1823-96) has never lacked powerful admirers and his place among the greater poets would be upheld by not a few able critics. None the less, despite his many rhythmic felicities and his undoubted technical skill, his excessive fluency and frequent banalities seem to the present writer to ex elude Patmore from the front rank. His projected

poem in many volumes on the joys of married life was never carried out " for the simple reason that though married life is a very great subject, it is not a very poetical one ". Certainly, to have justified its thesis, *The Angel in the House* should have been dealt with in a more concrete fashion and with such a power of psychological insight as Browning and Meredith brought to their work. *The Angel in the House* is a happier piece of work than *Faithful for Ever* or *The Victories of Love*; but its merit lies in fine passages of description and flashes of sententious wisdom. His later work, *The Unknown Eros* and *Amelia*, have less pedestrian qualities, perhaps, and show a remarkable mastery of metre.

Patmore at his worst wrote some appallingly bad verse. At his general level it is unfortunately true that he maintains more consistently than almost any other Victorian poet a standard only just below the best. As John Drinkwater has pointed out, there is little of good in the poetry of his time which cannot be illustrated from his writing. If we look at his best poetry, which is to be found in his odes, we find a poet without equal anywhere in the century. Critical opinion is slowly giving him the place which this poetry has earned him. His range, his originality of invention, his keenness of spiritual perception, are becoming better understood and appreciated.

Many passages in *The Unknown Eros* (1877) are unsurpassed either in poetic content or in metrical skill, and there can be little doubt that if a wise selection of

his poems, truly representative of him, were issued, his real status as a poet would be readily recognised. Until something like this is done Patmore may languish in a reaction from the popular enjoyment of him in his own day, a popularity chiefly due to his hymning of the domestic unity and felicity of married life held in sacred respect by his Victorian public.

"He never weeded his garden," said Dr. John Brown, "and will I fear be strangled in his waste fertility." These words, uttered of Sydney Dobell (1824-74), epitomise truly enough his besetting weakness. Dobell was not a great poet; yet he is often a remarkable one and is remembered for the lyric usually called *Keith ofRave/ston.*

If the quality of Dobell's work at his best shows an energising power, that of his contemporary Alexander Smith (1830-67) offers us great pictorial beauty. Three volumes practically cover his work in verse, though it must not be forgotten that he wrote charming volumes of rural essays, such as *Dreamthorpe* and *A Summer in Skye.* These volumes are *Poems* (1853), *City Poems* (1857), *Edwin of Deira* (1861). Of these, undoubtedly the finest flowers of his imagination are to be found in the *City Poems.* Over-ornate at times, his descriptive passages abound in many beauties. His picture of Glasgow is one of the most remarkable things, and is rich in the poetry of crowds—a poetry so seldom realised by our verse-writers.

> Instead of shores where ocean beats
> I hear the ebb and flow of streets.

Roden Noel (1834-94) and Philip Bourke Marston (1850-87) were verse-makers of fine merit in the later Victorian era. Noel's best work may be found in his *Modern Faust* and *A Little Child's Monument,* where he shows strength and sincerity, if not much art. Marston, the blind poet, is chiefly remembered by a few musical lyrics and neatly turned sonnets. He is particularly happy with the wind as a poetic inspiration —as in his *Wind Waves* (1883).

Thomas Gordon Hake (1809-95), whose name is pleasantly associated with that of the greater Pre-Raphaelites, is one of the more remarkable names in the poetic literature of the late century. His best work may be found in *New Symbols* (containing such striking poems as *The Snake Charmer* and *Michael Angeld),* and in *The New Day,* a series of nearly a hundred sonnets, musical and expressive and seminal in thought.

The later years of the era had scholar poets no less than its earlier period, though they are not quite so prominently in evidence.

William Cory (1823-92) and Francis Turner Palgrave (1824-97) are cases in point. Cory was the finer scholar. His *lanica,* published in 1858, had to wait long for recognition; and admittedly its appeal is only to a highly cultured few. Palgrave is best remembered for his admirable *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics,* where he showed a fine faculty for critical discernment. His original work is tame and nerveless.

John Byrne Leicester Warren, Lord de Tabley

(1835-95), was another scholarly poet, sensitive to the influences of his age, yet with a distinctive and original power of his own, when all allowances are made for the influences that greater poets like Tennyson and Swinburne especially left on his work.

His earlier work was dramatic in form; *Philoctetes* (1866) and *Orestes* (1867) exhibited an essential mastery of blank verse. His later work is more lyrical. He achieved some notable artistic successes as a lyric-writer, showing simplicity and strength as well as sweetness in his song. Though scarcely appreciated by many of his contemporaries, he had some wise and discerning friends, none more so than Watts-Dunton.

Another cultured man who also achieved popular success was Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904).

The Light of Asia (1879) may not be a great poem, but it breaks fresh and fascinating ground; and although we may desire for so vast a subject a more dignified, a more profound treatment, yet it has that agreeable fluency and play of fancy that pleases a large number of readers. At any rate it opened what was practically a closed book to the public at large: the life and faith of an Eastern people—a subject that of late years had received increasing attention from men of letters.

Playful and extravagant in his moods is William Brighty Rands (1823-80). He excelled in the fantastic and had a rich gift for parabolic fancies, such as *Lilliput Legends*, *Silver Sand,* and *The Carrier Pigeon.*

In his quality of imagination he reminds us not infrequently of Nathaniel Hawthorne. He has been called " The Poet Laureate of the Nursery."

Topsyturvey World

If the butterfly courted the bee,
And the owl the porcupine;
If churches were built in the sea,
And three times one were nine;
If the pony rode his master,
If the buttercups ate the cows,
If the cat had the dire disaster
To be worried, sir, by the mouse;
If mamma, sir, sold the baby
To a gypsy for half a crown;
If a gentleman, sir, was a lady—
The world would be Upside-Down !
If any of all these wonders
Should ever come about,
I should not consider them blunders,
For I should be Inside-Out!

Another verse-writer with a blessed sense of humour, though with less art owing to the exigencies of a hard-driven life, is Mortimer Collins (1827-76). His best lyrics have grace and charm, and his humour, with admirable antiseptic properties, is active in destroying the bacteria of sentimentality that flourish too often in graceful minor verse.

The romance of Anglo-India had one of its earlier singers in Sir Alfred Lyall (1835-1911).

Mention of other lands recalls yet another romantic poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-70), whose vivid and picturesque writing of Bush life in Australia finds

many admirers not merely across the seas, where he is regarded with special affection, but also in England, where his local colour cannot affect us as strongly as it does people living down south.

Born in the Azores and educated at Cheltenham, he had a roving and varied career. A youthful exuberance at home led to his departure overseas, and for six years he was in the Mounted Police of South Australia, with occasional experiments as a horse-breaker. After various vicissitudes, and a fairly constant re-pitching of his tent, he settled in Melbourne, where his verse was first published under the title of *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift.* This was followed by *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes.*

Along with Gordon may be placed Henry Clarence Kendall (1841-82), who was an Australian by birth as well as by inspiration. He is a poet of richer and intenser imagination than his contemporary, and is a kind of spiritual counterpart to Gordon. Where Gordon is picturesque and vigorous, Kendall is mystical and passionate. His landscapes, as compared with those of Gordon, are like turning from a Rembrandt to look at a Constable. After a venturesome and varied life, a life also of struggle and unhappiness, he was cut off in his prime, succumbing to the exactions of trying climatic conditions.

Grey winter hath gone like a wearisome guest,
And behold, for repayment,
September comes in with the wind of the west,
And the spring in her raiment!

The ways of the frost have been filled of the flowers,
While the forest discovers
Wild wings with the halo of hyaline hours,
And the music of lovers.
September, the maid with the swift, silver feet,
She glides, and she graces
The valleys of coolness, the slopes of the heat,
With her blossomy traces.
Sweet month, with a mouth that is made of a rose,
She lightens and lingers
In spots where the harp of the evening glows,
Attuned by her fingers.

William Ernest Henley (1849-1903) was a distinguished and forceful man of letters; provocative as a critic, though undeniably fresh and suggestive; interesting if not satisfying as a dramatist, and certainly stimulating and unconventional as a poet. His verses entitled *The Hospital: Rhymes and Rhythms* assuredly pioneered the realistic verse of today, and are the product of a mind at once brutally concrete and highly imaginative.

The deft and happy phrase in which he suggests the background of these verses bespeaks a genuine poetic imagination:

The morning mists still haunt the stony street;
The northern summer air is shrill and cold;
And lo, the Hospital, grey, quiet, old,
Where life and death like friendly chafferers meet.

Better still, for he allows himself greater imaginative scope, are the *London Voluntaries.* Apart from the London note in his work, Henley showed himself to be a spirited and impassioned lyric-writer, and has

added materially to our store of vigorous patriotic verse.

Poets of the late nineteenth century, such as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and Francis Thompson, will be dealt with in our next volume, where reference will also be made to some of the poets, such as Coventry Patmore, already mentioned.

(ii) The Celtic Note

A little group of poets, more or less Celtic in their inspiration, now claim our notice.

Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844-81) was a melodious and agreeable writer of considerable sweetness, if little originality, much influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite School. He wrote *An Epic on Women* (1870), *Lays of France* (1872), *Music and Moonlight* (1874), while *Songs of a Worker* (1881) was published after his death.

The younger Aubrey de Vere (1814-1902) was a voluminous writer of verse, among his best work being *Innisfail and other Poems* (1861) and *Legends of St. Patrick* (1872). Like O'Shaughnessy, he is more imitative than original and modelled himself largely upon Wordsworth. Both he and Sir Samuel Ferguson (1 810-86) were hampered by a fatal felicity in verse-making which mars their work. Ferguson's best volume is his *Lays of the Western Gael* (1865), for his portentously long epic, *Congal*, is wearisome and commonplace.

In William Allingham (1824-89) we have a fresher and more original writer; not strong, nor varied, but

undeniably sweet. His most striking work lies in his *Poems* (1850) and *Day and Night Songs* (1854).

Sir Lewis Morris (1833-1907) is one of the very few representatives we have of the Cymric poet. His writings were once exceedingly popular, the *Epic of Hades* having passed blithely through nearly forty editions. He was facile to a degree and knew how to blend didacticism and sentiment into an acceptable bolus for his large public to swallow. But there are hundreds of obscure and little-read poets who had more real inspiration than this successful Welshman. A writer far superior to him in every way is the Manxman, Thomas Edward Brown (1830-97), whose dialect verses, *Fo'c'sle Yarns* (1882), are among the best of their kind. Nor was he merely a clever dialect writer; he could write in good classical English almost as well, and his best work shows genuine dramatic power, insight into character (especially that of simple folk), and a refreshing vein of humour.

In Charles Mackay (1814-89) we have a spirited though rather commonplace representative of the Scottish Celt, and in George Macdonald (1824-1905), one who achieved distinction in several classes of literature, with a deep and delicate imagination; who, although happier in prose than in verse, has written some admirable religious poems (e.g. *Love's Ordeal and The Diary of an Old Soul)* and a few delightful lyrics, Blake-like in their fresh simplicity.

By far the ablest, however, of the modern Scottish

poets was Robert Buchanan (1841-1901). Buchanan published in 1866 his *London Poems,* that contain some of his best and most representative work.

In dealing with problems of poverty and humble life, Buchanan is more in touch with the methods of Crabbe than with those of Wordsworth; but he had a greater sense of beauty than Crabbe possessed, for, ugly and sordid as are the stories and studies he put into verse, they are framed in a fine imaginative setting.

In *The Book of Orm, the Celt,* the realistic method is discarded, but behind the fervent imaginings of this remarkable book there looms that uncompromising sense of reality that never deserted Buchanan even in his most imaginative flights.

Buchanan, indeed, is a poet who has not received the meed of praise due to his considerable powers.

(iii) Parody and Light Verse

Humorous and satirical verse became a force in our literature with the advent of Samuel Butler, and from *Hudibras* to the polished gibes of Sir Owen Seaman humorous verse has rarely failed to find an experienced and effective craftsman. It was natural that the other great Romance nation, France, should foster this form of literature with special care, and when Butler wrote his *Hudibras* he was deeply read in Gallic satire. In the hands of Matthew Prior a lighter and more genial note was introduced. He showed that the spirit of comedy could be airy and graceful as well as

tart and savage; while in Gay we lost sight of the didacticism that underlay the humorous verse of his predecessors; he was essentially sprightly and unmoral.

More pungent in his wit, and neat and fluent as a verse-writer, is John Hookham Frere (1769-1846). Byron owed much to him, for it was not until he had seen Frere's treatment of the octave stanza that he stumbled on the medium that was to prove his salvation as a poet. And so *Beppo* was written frankly in imitation of Frere's work, which had taken Byron's fancy.

If Frere outshines Gay in his wit, James and Horace Smith transcend him as parodists. Indeed, their *Rejected Addresses* ranks among the comic classics in our language.

Horace Smith (1779-1849) was a most lovable character, to whose charm and personality both Leigh Hunt and Shelley testified :

> Wit and sense,
> Virtue and human knowledge, all that might
> Make this dull world a business of delight,
> Are all combined in Horace Smith.

His parodies are not of equal excellence—that would be expecting too much—but the *Scott* and the *Moore* are admirable.

Harsher in substance, though dexterous enough in their rhythmic ingenuities, are the *Ingoldsby legends* of Richard Barham (1788-1845). These first appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany*, then under the editorship of Charles Dickens. They proved a little godsend to.

the earlier Victorian reciters, though their popularity, once so great, has declined of late years. Barham had a vein of poetry in his nature, as his verses " As I lay a-thynkynge " show; but, unlike many of the best writers of light verse, he subdued this entirely in his *Legends.*

The brilliant society jester by no means necessarily shines as a literary wit. This is shown by comparing the verses of Theodore Hook (1788-1841) with the stories around him and the neat, audacious sallies with which he enlightened his escapades. In cold print his fun seems commonplace and mechanical. He excelled at comic improvisation, but the jest loses at once if torn from its context.

> Here comes Mr. Winter, collector of taxes;
> I'd advise you to pay him whatever he axes;
> Excuses won't do; he stands no sort of flummery,
> Though Winter his name is, his process is summary.

James Robinson Planch6 (1796-1880), a prolific play-writer, showed an agreeable knack in the direction of extravaganzas, and, ephemeral as most of them are, his humour now wears better than that of Hook; there is more play of fancy and a lighter touch.

Samuel Lover (1797-1868), novelist, painter, dramatist, song-maker, composer, and etcher, was a versatile Irishman, whose characteristic Celtic humour, whimsical, extravagant, and tender, finds pleasant expression in his *Songs and Ballads.*

In Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802-39), however,

we meet the lineal descendant of Prior, one who proved an exceedingly deft maker of poetic *souffle.* Without the range of Prior, he has a lighter and more sensitive touch. Indeed, as a writer of *vers de société* he is unsurpassed. In his play of fancy he shows some affinity to Hood, but he relies far less on mere verbal humours and his wit has a finer bouquet. True, he is a mere trifler but he is a very Prince of Triflers in his *"Letter of Advice* and *The Vicar.*

Our love was like most other loves;—
A little glow, a little shiver,
A rose-bud, and a pair of gloves,
And " Fly not yet "—upon the river;
Some jealousy of some one's heir,
Some hopes of dying broken-hearted,
A miniature, a lock of hair,
The usual vows,—and then we parted.

We parted;—months and years rolled by;
We met again four summers after;
Our parting was all sob and sigh;—
Our meeting was all mirth and laughter :
For in my heart's most secret cell
There had been many other lodgers;
And she was not the ball-room Belle,
But only—Mrs.—Something—Rogers !

Mention must be made of George Outram (1805-56), who is in many ways a Scottish Praed, with shrewd insight into character and a neat technique. Called to the Scottish Bar in 1827, and for many years editor of the *Glasgow Herald,* he wrote chiefly for the benefit of his friends, and is one of the very few verse-writers who really did—what a polite convention de-

dares of so many—" publish by request ". One of his most amusing pieces is *The Annuity*.

William Edmonstoune Aytoun (1813-65) was a sprightly Professor of English Literature in Edinburgh University, whose spirited Scottish lyrics have already been noted. He wrote in collaboration with Sir Theodore Martin (1816-1909) *The Bon Gaultier 'Ballads* (1845), delightful in their sub-acid yet perfectly good-natured humour; also *Firmilian* (1854), satirising a prevalent school of verse dubbed " The Spasmodic School".

Thackeray deserves a passing tribute for his light, agreeable verse, especially for his delightful *"Ballad of Bouillabaisse;* but Edward Lear (1812-88) is something much more than a distinguished maker of light verse. He is one of the great original comic forces of the century, and his incomparable *Nonsense* verses constitute a landmark in the development of humorous literature.

A Lancashire man, and the youngest of twenty-one children, he showed at an early age artistic leanings, and was always fond of natural history. He was a great traveller, and a fairly successful landscape painter, but it is as the inspired jester of the *Book of Nonsense*—first published in 1846—that he will be remembered by old and young alike.

There was an Old Man in a tree, who was horribly bored
by a bee;
When they said, "Does it buzz?" he replied, "Yes it
does!"
" Its a regular brute of a bee I "

There was an Old Person of Ancrley, whose conduct was
strange and unmannerly;
He rushed down the Strand, with a pig in each hand,
But returned in the evening to Anerley.

Frederick Locker-Lampson (1821-95) carries on the Praed tradition; and if he is somewhat less dexterous and polished in his triflings, he has a richer poetic strain in his nature than Praed could claim.

Then comes Charles Stuart Calverley (1831-84), a fine scholar, a clever (but over-rated) parodist, and a delightful companion. He was a fine translator, and had a remarkable sense of rhythm, and a keen, if somewhat tart, sense of humour. Though famous as a parodist, he is, despite the brilliant work he accomplished here, less first-rate than in his miscellaneous work, for strong literary prejudices have marred to some extent his art of mimicry. This point will be appreciated by all who compare his well-known parody of Browning, *The Cock and the Bull,* with that of his successor, J. K. Stephen.

James K. Stephen (1859-92) had a finer poetic imagination than Calverley, and more plastic sympathies, and his parodies strike deeper than do Calverley's. Calverley burlesques the syntax of Browning; but Stephen burlesques with a light inimitable touch the Browning " attitude " also.

More acidulated in his humour, lacking the breadth and human note of some of his contemporaries in light verse, such as Locker-Lampson and J. K. Stephen,

yet unexcelled by any in his metrical ingenuity, is William Schwenck Gilbert (1836-1911).

Gilbert is at his best in the *Bab Ballads,* written during the sixties. Here many of the comic ideas elaborated in the Savoy Operas are seen at their freshest and happiest as thumbnail sketches.

Of lesser note, but worthy of mention, are Henry S. Leigh (1837-83), who wrote *Carols of Cockayne,* facile, nimble pleasantries in verse; and Ashby Sterry (1838), whose dainty and sparkling paean of river scenes and life are well known to faithful students of *Punch.*

"Lewis Carroll" (Rev. C. L. Dodgson) (1833-98), has this in common with Edward Lear, that he owed nothing to any predecessor for his vein of humour; he has succeeded in delighting children of all ages with it.

What is the distinctive feature about his humour ? It is not madly extravagant, like Lear's, for there is a delicious wayward intellectuality about it, an inverted logic that appeals to the cultured mind; while it can be enjoyed equally well by children who see only the inventive fertility. The glorious incongruities of such things as the " Alice " books and *The Hunting of the Snark* is rendered the more delightful by the droll affectation of precision and the mock-serious manner.

There may be some who can read unmoved the wild ballad of the *Jabberwock* or that genuine " slice of life " in a fantastic key, *The Walrus and the Carpenter,* and indeed we have heard of those to whom *The Hunting of the Snark,* with its parabolic extravagances, was

merely a " piece of dull silliness ". For such we can only say, after the manner of Elia, that we suspect their taste in higher matters.

In his later writings " Lewis Carroll" largely forsook his earlier vein, with unhappy results. There are some of the old individual touches in *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893) but, for the most part, they are as inferior to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*(1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass*(1871) as is a turnip to a nectarine. At his best—and that is considerable—" Lewis Carroll " is the most delightful spinner of whimsical dreams that our literature can boast.

II. PROSE

Chapter Five

Dickens and the Satirists

(i) **Charles Dickens**

CHARLES DICKENS (1812-70) was born at Landport, in Hampshire, his father being a clerk in the Navy Pay Office at Portsmouth; of his mother little is recorded. In 1814 the family moved to London and, three years later, to Chatham. Debts became urgent, and John Dickens was eventually arrested and imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Charles, now eleven years old, was sent to earn his living in a blacking factory. When family affairs improved he was able to attend school, which he left to enter an attorney's office. Seeing little hope of advancement, he studied shorthand, attaining such proficiency that, in 1830, he became a Parliamentary reporter.

In 1833 his first literary sketch was published. Then came *The Pickwick Papers* and fame. Almost immediately he married Catherine Hogarth and for the next few years wrote incessantly. *Oliver Twist* appeared in 1838, *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1839, *The Old Curiosity Sbop, Master Humphrey's Clock,* and *Barnaby Rudge* in 1841. Then he visited America, at the warm invitation of Washington Irving, and was enthusiasti-

cally received. On his return he wrote *American Notes* (1842) and *Martin Chusglewit* (1844), in which his remarks on slavery and the American way of life gave great offence to his recent friends.

In 1843 the famous *Christmas* Carol began the series of Christmas books which appeared annually until 1848. Selling a fourth of his earnings during the next eight years to Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, Dickens took his family to Italy, publishing *Pictures from Italy* (1846) on his return. He now became the first literary editor of the *Daily News,* but was so tied by the work that he resigned after three weeks. During a three months' visit to Paris in 1846 he began to write *Dombey and Son* (1848). On March 30, 1850, the first issue of his *Household Words* was published, containing the first instalment of *David Copperfield.*

In the same year he began *Bleak House* (1835), which was followed by a tour of France and Italy with Wilkie Collins (to whom he was indebted for valuable advice on good plot construction—as *Bleak House* shows) and by his first public reading, at Birmingham, where a local charity benefited by the £500 paid by people anxious to listen to Dickens reading his own works.

He continued to drive himself hard, publishing *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1861), *Our Mutual friend* (1865). In addition there had been the three volumes of *A Child's History of 'England* (1852-54), the editing of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round,*

and the readings, which took him to every part of the British Isles. The nervous strain became excessive, and a railway accident was followed by shock from which he never wholly recovered. In 1866 he gave another reading tour and went to Paris. A second visit to America followed. In 1869 he began *Edwin Drood*. On March 15, 1870, he spent most of the day working on the novel, but collapsed at six o'clock in the evening. His sister-in-law was unable to get him to a sofa. He murmured " On the ground ", and shortly afterwards passed away without regaining consciousness. He was buried in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.

His Work

There are two main causes for the popularity of the novels of Dickens. One was that, having learnt the hardships of the poor in his early days, he filled a niche as the story-teller of London life which no contemporary could claim. The other was that he was the right kind of social reformer for the taste of his time. He could moralise while he made readers laugh, so that his readers heeded his passionate admonitions without realising that he was doctoring them for their own good.

Beyond these causes was the fact that he was a writer of genius who would have been elbowed aside had he lacked the elements of greatness.

His strength and weakness lie in his hypersensitive imagination, for which he has no peer in English

letters. Whether its subject be a door-knocker, a Cockney urchin, a short-tempered landlady, a humbug, or a London fog, his imagination invests its familiarity with strange grotesques. Thus a Dickens character or scene is amazingly like and amazingly unlike anything in our own experience.

Undoubtedly his humour is at its best when it is mingled with pathos, and especially in the poignancy and actuality of the child life he creates. In the universally recognised merits of his studies of nervous, sensitive child life—as in David, Paul, and Pip—sentiment and love of a " curtain " lead him to false notes. Such notes are rare, however, and we may seriously ask whether our sense of their extreme pathos is not as exaggerated in condemnation as was the praise of its admirers. There is matter for reflection in the fact that combative Daniel O'Connell burst into tears and threw his copy out of a railway carriage window on reading of the death of Little Nell, while the acid-penned Francis Jeffrey, coldest of critics and Judge of the Court of Sessions, wrote that the death of Paul had made him sob and cry at night and again next morning. Many other Victorians as able in literary judgment and by no means weaklings or fools were no less moved. The Victorians were extremely sentimental, especially in matters of home life; in fairness to them and to our own literary judgments, we must admit that we are extremely unsentimental in that very point.

None but a genius could so modulate his style,

with true dramatic art, to take on the mood of the moment. His treatment of the wind, for example, shows that he uses it like a stage property, with its blustering cheeriness in *Pickwick* and its wailing through *The Chimes*. In his description of a coach ride the language quickens or slackens, is rollicking or deliberate, according to the pace of the coach. His fogs creep over lonely flats or blow round rain-soaked houses, in words which are a mist of sounds and phrases. We note with interest that little is said of those mental states of feeling dear to Thomas Hardy. Egdon Heath would have been little more than a wind-blown ridge to Dickens.

Another quality in Dickens's writing is its humanity, which is best illustrated by his character-drawing. Despite the broad brush of caricature, the over-insistence on the externals of his characters, Dickens makes them live. Many of his most exaggerated characters live with us. So intensely does their creator believe in Pecksniff, Stiggins, Chadband, Scrooge, and in his Winkles and Tupmans also, that we too are compelled to believe in them. The reformed Scrooge screaming from the window for the largest turkey or digging the astonished Cratchit in the ribs is outrageously improbable. Yet he is alive, and refuses to be dismissed into the limbo of forgotten worthies.

At this point an attack is made on Dickens because, it is held, his characters are mere puppets unless they are the incarnation of certain qualities. And it is said that Dombey is pride personified, Pecksniff is hypo-

crisy personified, and so on. To this it must be replied that a few of his satirical portraits must be set aside from his characterisations as being faulty. The other characterisations, if fairly examined, show that Dickens has not over-emphasised; the fault is in our own want of observation.

Broadly speaking, his characters fall into two divisions : the Normal and the Abnormal. By the Abnormal I do not mean unnatural or necessarily cranky, but normal human beings removed from the average human being by some peculiarities or eccentricities of temperament. Joe Gargery is not a normal blacksmith; he is abnormal, and his oddities are irradiated by the author's penetrative humour. Yet he is perfectly natural. We may never have met Joe, but we feel we might meet him at any moment. For that reason he is a perfect fictional character.

Dickens must not be regarded as a psychologist but as an analyst. Quality of motive is of less significance than the number of waistcoat buttons. We may say that where he fails, as in Carker or Monks, it is because some psychological insight is absent, so that the characters lack vitality. But where physical uncouthness or mental disability is allied to certain moral qualities—as it almost always is in life—such as tenderness or sympathy or humour, each character is a fresh delight with whom we would not part. People like Newman Noggs are of warm flesh and blood. They are among the closest friends of our imagination. Indeed, the aspect through which Dickens saw people

like Steerforth, Traddles, Jaggers, or even "dry" characters like Tulkinghorn, is so persuasive of reality that we prize people who, stripped of their engaging qualities and looked at critically, have nothing especially attractive about them. Surprisingly, we find Dick Swiveller and Mr. Micawber among this class.

The more we admit Dickens's defects, the more we build up his ability and success. By emphasising their oddities and idealising them, the more Dickens convinced us that they lived and we find ourselves eager to overlook their personal faults, so that his creatures are more prized than people who might be actually more attractive.

With women past their first youth, who have little charm and often no mental brilliance, but who have soundness and sweetness of heart, Dickens is extraordinarily kind and happy. Betsy Trotwood, Miss La Creevy, and Miss Pross are noteworthy examples. He is no less successful when shrewd observation rather than psychological analysis is required, as we see in the cases of Mrs. Joe, Mrs. Snagsby, Mrs. Varden, Mrs. MacStinger, Mrs. Jelliby, and Mrs. Pocket. What a collection of minor vices they show ! Not a repulsive feature missed; they are etched with such humorous twists and twirls that you understand and feel with them, however contemptible they may really be.

With the normal type Dickens is less successful. This is not to say that he can show us only the gro-

tesques of life, for we have seen that it is through grotesqueries that he shows us the normal. It was the nature of his art to work in that way. It is when he deals with the normal in normal ways that he is less impressive. How shadowy are Martin Chuzzlewit, Nicholas Nickleby, and Walter Gay ! This falling off is due to two causes. One is found in the fact that they are less suitable to his methods of character delineation, as we have outlined them. The other cause lies in his want of interest in the spiritual history of men and women.

The result of this may be illustrated by a comparison between him and George Eliot. Dickens treats his characters primarily from without; he dwells only on the characteristics which express themselves externally. George Eliot takes you within. She is primarily interested to show you the growth and expansion of the soul. Only secondarily, and then not always, is she concerned with the externals of her characters. Dickens was not a scientific student of character. He was a shrewd observer of certain types of character, and was rarely capable of complete success when he diverged from these types. At the same time we realise how numerous and various those types were.

Of religion he showed scarcely anything, of politics nothing but an immature Radicalism, of science not a trace of knowledgeable interest, and of incident as evolved in plot little that was not " stagey " and mechanically invented. What he did show—and they were marks which suffice to make a writer a supreme

artist—were a host of people who were born of a genuine and fertile creative imagination, a world which was none the less real for being wholly his own, and an utter sincerity in all he wrote. And the general method by which he used these gifts, the " secret " of Charles Dickens, we may give in the words of Professor Saintsbury, who says that " it lies, of course, in the combination of the strictest realism of detail with a fairy-tale unrealism of general atmosphere ". Whatever his faults, he is unrivalled. He has touched with pity and tenderness the springs of our national life, and English life no less than English letters is the saner, the sweeter, and the sunnier for his presence.

(ii) William Makepeace Thackeray

William Makepeace Thackeray came of a good old Yorkshire family, and was born in Calcutta, July 18, 1811, where his father, who held an important post under the East India Company, died in 1816. In 1817 the boy was sent to England in company with a young cousin.

At no time inclined for study, he was sent first to school at Chiswick, then to Charterhouse in 1822 under Dr. Russell, who denounced him as " an idle, shuffling, profligate boy ".

In 1829 he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, became the moving spirit of a brilliant set that included Alfred Tennyson, Monckton Milnes, and Edward FitzGerald, and wrote caricatures and verses

which afterwards appeared in the University journals—the *Gownsman* and the *Snob.*

On coming of age he inherited about £20,000; of this he soon lost some in gambling, a little through the failure of a bank; then purchased a newspaper, the *National Standard,* that floated less than five months and still further lessened his income; then, with his step-father, he focused his energies on a Radical newspaper named the *Constitutional.* It gradually collapsed, and with it the remainder of Thackeray's fortune.

While acting as Paris correspondent for the *Constitutional* he added to his responsibilities in 1836 by his marriage with Miss Isabella Shawe. Now that he was thrown upon his resources for a living his ambition was to become an artist. Many ventures were made without success; at last, on Dickens refusing his offer to illustrate *Pickwick,* Thackeray made a bid for literature. In this he was more fortunate. In 1837 he became a member of the staff and a regular contributor to *Fraser's Magazine*; for which he wrote *The Letters of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush* (1837-38), *Catherine* (1839-40), *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841), and the celebrated *Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* (1844). In 1842 he made a tour in Ireland and met with Charles Lever; the following year one of the most humorous of his works, *The Irish Sketchbook,* was published.

In 1840 he was in sore trouble; the health of his young wife gave way—despite all his love and care, culminating in a complete mental breakdown; and in

1844 he was left alone to lavish all his affection on their two little girls. Mrs. Thackeray died in 1892.

On joining the staff of *Punch,* Thackeray made a wide appeal to the general public with *The Book of Snobs* (1846), but it was not till *Vanity Fair* appeared (1847-48) in monthly parts that he received full recognition; the sale of even this was so small at first that the publishers thought of suppressing it. However, with the sixth number and the account of Mrs. Perkins's Ball the sale increased enormously and *Vanity Fair* became the talk of London.

After *Vanity Fair* came *Pendennis* (1848-50). In 1851 he broke new ground and gave the first of a course of lectures on " The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century ".

After the London lectures he crossed to America, where he became popular.

In 1853 he published *The Newcomes, Esmond* (1855), with its sequel *The Virginians* (1857-59); and in 1860 he started the *Cornhill Magazine* with *Lovel the Widower,* continuing with *The Adventures of Philip* and the charming *Roundabout Papers.*

For some years Thackeray had been suffering from heart trouble, but he worked on steadily; he had just started on his new novel, *Denis Duval,* when he died suddenly in December 1863.

Thackeray first found himself as a writer in *The Book of Snobs.* The weakness and the strength of his long-sustained satire against the social foibles of his titne are revealed in that book. Other writers had dealt

with it before Thackeray, but more to mock quietly than to rail bitterly as did he. The strength of his attack is better seen in the ampler illustrative material of *Vanity Fair* than the thumbnail sketches here; for he is neither clear nor convincing in *The Book of Snobs.*

As a matter of fact, snobbery became a literary obsession with Thackeray and he read it into everything and into almost everyone.

The bluntness of perception mars the effect of a good deal of his satire. It is a pity, for Thackeray can be subtle enough in exposing our middle-class failings, as his powerful picture of the Crawleys, the Sedleys, and the Osbornes can testify.

Yet we do not see the best part of Thackeray in his mordant presentments of respectable mediocrities and pretentious fools. It was well done—but was it worth the doing on this scale? His finest art is shown in his pictures of rogues, male and female.

Great praise has been accorded to the picture of Colonel Newcome; but for freshness, force, and trueness to life commend me to the happy-go-lucky Pen and the peccant Costigan.

Thackeray's insight into the psychology of the plausible scoundrel and into thoughtless, hot-blooded youth is seen not only in his novels but also in his critical estimates. Read his *English Humourists* and you will realise how admirably he seizes on the essential greatness of Fielding and of Steele, not oblivious to their failings as men but valuing their defects in their proper relations. Face him with the pathological

vagaries of a Swift or Sterne, however, and his detestation of the men blinds him in the most amazing way to theiiSunquestkmable genius.

Thackeray was no cynic, though he has often been termed one; and herein lies the fundamental difference between him and Swift. His bitterness, indeed, is often merely a cloak to hide his sensitiveness. His own life was clouded by tragedy and he is intensely susceptible to the sinister elements in other human lives. But like many proud, sensitive natures he is terrified of taking the world into his confidence; of showing his inherent sentimentality (which will out in spite of him), and for fear he should be laughed at by the worldlings he savagely fastens upon the infirmities of human nature, whereas all the while he has a profound belief in the essential goodness of things.

Thackeray satirised social conventions, Dickens national weaknesses. Pretence and snobbery felt the lash of the one, hypocrisy and cruelty the rage of the other. Dickens uses a big brush and lays on the colpur thickly; subtle effects are more in Thackeray's line. Dickens paints in oils, Thackeray in water colour. Each has a big canvas, but Dickens excelled in vivid, massive effects, Thackeray in delicate touches and in clear draughtsmanship.

As a stylist Thackeray is at once both superior and inferior to Dickens. His riper culture, his greater fastidiousness, keep him from the glaring crudities that mar Dickens's writings; and his eloquence, when

he lets himself go, has a tragic beauty that did not lie in Dickens's homelier art to compass. At the same time the personal intimacy, the contagious zest of Dickens's style, carries with it a wider, a more universal appeal.

Thackeray's style appeals to our critical intelligence, Dickens's to our heart and imagination. Indeed, the critic in Thackeray is insistent everywhere. A few strong prejudices apart, he is a sound, broad-minded critic; there is admirable stuff in *The English Humourists* and in *The Four Georges,* while no one but a genuine critic could have written *Esmond.*

From the artistic point of view he never equalled, much less excelled, this picture of Queen Anne's time. There are passages in *Pendennis* and *Vanity Fair,* fewer passages in *The Newcomes* and *The Virginians* and *Denis Duvaly* that are as satisfying in conception and execution. But nowhere does he achieve the same easy level of excellence as in *Esmond.* It is a great historical novel, not in the sense that *The Cloister and the Hearth* is great but in the sense that *Old Mortality* is great.

The greatness of the book, however, lies in its private history, and in such perfect pieces of characterisation as the capricious but lovable Lady Castlewood, Beatrix, " whose eyes are fire, whose look is love", the shiftless yet attractive Lord Castlewood, and Esmond himself.

His other books are great in parts but lack homogeneity and perspective. They have been abused for their excessive discursiveness : but discursiveness is

no fatal bar to a great book, though it may be to a great novel. *Tristram Shandy* is hopeless as a novel, but it is one of the great books of literature. And it would be impossible to deny the attribute of greatness to *Vanity Fair,* to *Pendennis,* and to *The Newcomes.* Sterne's discursiveness is woven in one pattern; Thackeray's is not. The preaching harmonises ill with the comedy, and obtrudes detrimentally on the illusion of reality created by the characters. This is a blemish, for the characterisation is often admirable, occasionally excellent.

It is our great regret, therefore, that tedious moralising and wearisome rhapsody should distract our attention from such finely drawn figures as Ethel and Barnes Newcome, Lady Kew, and the Baroness de Bernstein, or such delightful caricatures as Charles Honeyman, " F. B.", and Sampson.

Looking at Thackeray's work from the point of view of its place in the development of English fiction, we are struck by the more emphatic realism of his stories as compared with that of his predecessors. His instinctive critical faculty revolted against the garish sentiment of Lytton and Ainsworth, the philanthropic romanticism of Dickens, the machine-made morality of G. P. R. James.

In all this he did good and memorable work in restoring to English fiction a sober actuality and a fairer appraisement of class virtues and class failings than it had received since the time of Fielding. For this reason Thackeray excels as a painter of manners, as an

artist of the conventions, as a draughtsman of civilised man with all his merits and limitations. He did the same service for English fiction as Ben Jonson did for English drama; and just as Jonson, loving Shakespeare, yet saw his deficiencies and his danger as a model to writers with less genius, so Thackeray realised the imperfections of Dickens and the danger attaching to young writers who should slavishly follow in his wake.

Whether Thackeray at his best is better than Dickens at his best is a problem of no great value. It is like asking whether a nectarine is better than an apple. The excellence is a different excellence: let it go at that. It is another matter, however, whether Thackeray was able to express his genius as easily and simply as his great contemporary. And herein, I think, lies the secret of Thackeray's decline. He was at his best a great artist, a great stylist, and an admirable painter of manners, but his genius did not lie in the way of social regeneration, his irony is not best exhibited in his didactic moods.

In other words, whereas Dickens on the whole knew his limitations and kept within them, Thackeray too often neglected those qualities of ironic portraiture in which he excelled for sermonisings that did really scant justice to his wide human sympathies. " A beautiful vein of genius lay struggling about in him," as Carlyle admirably said. Unhappily, we see too much of the struggle in what he has given us.

(iii) Benjamin Disraeli

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81), one of the brilliant and forceful personalities of mid-Victorian times, has in his novels—*Vivian Grey*, *Coningsby*, *Tancred*, and *Sybil*—pictured somewhat flamboyantly, yet with a good deal of humorous insight, the social and political life of the age. In so far as he is a satirist, he belongs to the group around Thackeray. There are some neat satirical pictures in his novels, and he was a powerful upholder of the new Tory Democracy. *Sybil* (1845) dealt with labour conditions subsequent to the first Chartist riots. Though his point of view is that of the satirist, the painter of manners rather than that of the humanitarian story-teller, he yet did no little to prepare the way for such reformers in fiction as Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Kingsley.

(iv) Anthony Trollope

As a novelist Anthony Trollope (1815-82) has every qualification save that of genius. His mother, Frances Trollope (1780-1863), was the wife of an impoverished scholar. She emigrated to the United States to make money, chiefly by opening a bazaar. The voyage and her subsequent misadventures are well related in her *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), which caused great anger in the States. She later became a prolific writer of novels, in which she dealt rather crudely with a variety of subjects, vicars and widows being her favourites for treatment. Something of her vigour and cheerful resoluteness of

character make her books more worth reading than it is at present usual to allow.

Anthony received an irregular kind of education, being considered stupid and uncouth by his fellows at Winchester and Harrow; to this he was most sensitive, as also to his unavoidable shabbiness. The experiences of boyhood stiffened the doggedness of his nature and, entering the service of the Post Office, he earned steady promotion. At the same time he took to novel-writing to increase his income. His duty took him to Ireland, where he organised much of the postal system, and it was from life there that he drew material for his fiction. In this he was like Thackeray, whom he also resembled in the failure of his books until he left the Irish scene as a source of inspiration.

In spite of poor eyesight, Trollope indulged three interests which gave him unfailing pleasure—his work, hunting, and writing. Recalled to England, he organised the postal service in many parts of the country, yet contrived to hunt two days a week, and to write so steadily that his output reached the total of sixty novels. Rising shortly after five o'clock in the morning, he wrote for three hours (at a steady rate of 1000 words an hour, timed by his watch), breakfasted, and set off to his work. His first real success came with *The Warden* (1855), and continued through the allied series of pictures of provincial life in *Barchester Tcfivers* (1857), *Dr. Thome* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), and *The Last*

Chronicle of Barset (1867). These books give us the best of Trollope and, in spite of a mid-twentieth century fashion for reading every word he wrote, we need not greatly concern ourselves with his political novels *(Phineas Finn,* for instance, in 1869) or social tales (such as *Orley Farm* in 1868).

Most of his novels are competent and at his best he is an excellent painter of character, at least within the limits of society in Barsetshire. Particularly did he excel in depicting the genial worldling type. This is best exemplified in his Cathedral stories, and his portraits of the provincial clergy and folk that congregate in Cathedral towns have never been excelled. With keen observation and ready humour he differentiates between these people and, in unfolding the comedy of their lives, he rarely descends into caricature. As a painter of middle-class life he stands midway between Dickens and Thackeray, on the one hand, and George Eliot, on the other. He saw the dominant traits of the men and women about him less clearly than they did, but he saw round them more surely. In his novels we meet the beginning of that scientific appraisement of character raised to so fine an art by George Eliot. All things considered, Trollope is happiest in delineating those scenes and characters which exhibit especially Saxon qualities. No one can sketch for us more faithfully and sympathetically the English middle-class matron, the jog-trot country doctor, the average Member of Parliament, the commonplace yet kindly country cleric.

As a story-teller he is mechanical rather than inventive. Seeing that he wrote for income as well as because he wished to write fiction, he aimed at regularity of output. Consequently his plots are often contrived rather than inspired. Indeed, it is to his credit that many readers refused to believe this and were inexpressibly shocked when, on the appearance of his honest *Autobiography* in 1883, he warmly approved Dr. Johnson's blunt saying that no one but a fool would write except for money. For a time his popularity waned but his public recovered from the shock and was content to accept him as he was. It has become accustomed to the idea that his plots are satisfactory but not brilliant, his texture mainly good homespun, and his literary aims unambitious. The very ordinariness of his level has been his strength, for he kept up to his level and, because it was not above his normal reach, he rarely disappoints. In other words, he is always found in a middle course, and has therefore a lasting appeal to English readers.

(v) Samuel Butler

Samuel Butler (1825-1902). Lacking the sense of artistic form possessed by men like Thackeray, and the diversity of gifts that accentuated the force of Meredith's satirical faculty, his books may be regarded rather as a storehouse of ironic comment and suggestion than works of art. But his influence on sortie of the ablest writers today—Bernard Shaw, for instance—has been very profound. No one has more

frankly admitted this than Shaw himself, and to some extent he has done for Butler what Huxley did for Spencer, by popularising his methods of thought. For Butler was a distinctive original force, as all admit who have read his *Erewhon* (1872), *Erewhon Revisited* (1901), and *The Way of all Flesh* (1903).

He will never be popular, for he could not throw his thought into clear dramatic form, and the multitude do not take kindly to elaborate irony. But as a satirical critic of modern life he must always be reckoned among the more potent influences of his generation.

Chapter Six

Women Novelists

(i) Earlier Writers

WE have dealt with the first chapter in the development of the woman novelist, in the preceding volume, by recording the novels published between the first novel of Fanny Burney and the last by Jane Austen. From then until the Brontes there is little which must be mentioned and much that might be. For we have noticed the books of Frances Trollope and must now turn to several other popular and able writers. Susan Ferrier (1782-1854) is still reprinted and enjoyed, especially as she has that extra amount of sentiment most of us secretly like to find, a good deal of wit and humour, and a pleasant way of being didactic. For some years her novels were attributed to her friend, Sir Walter Scott. There is much enjoyment in her picture of a well-bred English girl's marriage into a Scottish family and life in Scotknd. This appeared in *Marriage* (1818), and was followed by *Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831).

Miss Ferrier's first novel appeared in the same year as *'Frankenstein, or the Modem Prometheus* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, the result of a suggestion by

Byron that he and the Shelleys should beguile a tedious holiday by each writing a story of the supernatural. Shelley's wife achieved a " horror " story which she makes credible, a feat she repeated in *The Last Man* (1826). Outside of this *genre* her novels were undistinguished. With these novels we may join *The Night Side of Nature* by Catherine Crowe (1800-76), who otherwise reached a satisfactory level in the scarcely less sensational *Adventures of Susan Hopley, or Circumstantial Evidence* (1841) and *The Story of Lilly Dawson* (1847).

The very names of the novels proclaim that the main growth of novel-writing among women was at a standstill. For some years readers enjoyed the books of Catherine Gore (1799-1861), of which we may notice *Mothers and Daughters* (1831) and *Mrs. Armytage, or Female Domination* (1836). Her novels move briskly, deal exclusively with high society, and have been found not unlike some of Jane Austen's work.

Of other writers even less has survived, although it would be wrong to omit mention of all the other women novelists, since this would exclude Caroline Archer Clive (1801-73) and her *Paul Ferroll* and *Why Paul Ferroll Killed his Wife.* We must also include *Deerbrook* (1839) and *The Hour and the Man* (1841) by Harriet Martineau, who also published in 1841 *The Playfellow,* which included, for the delight of its young readers, the well-established *Feats on the Fiord.* It would also be wrong to forget a name well-known to Victorian readers, the name of Miss Mulock, other-

wise Mrs. Dinah Craik, whose *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1857) is far from forgotten.

This name takes us well over the far boundary of the gap between Jane Austen and the Brontes, so we come back to the three sisters who assumed the names of Acton, Currer, and Ellis Bell.

(ii) The Brontes

The Rev. Patrick Bronte came to Haworth in 1820, with six children, Maria and Elizabeth, as well as Charlotte (1816), Patrick Branwell (1817), Emily (1818), and the baby of a few months, Anne. In that same year Mrs. Bronte died and an aunt came from Penzance to look after the family in the parsonage. The story of the Brontes is too well known to require detailed telling. All the children showed themselves passionately interested in reading; the four youngest also came to show an even greater passion for writing, using up all available pieces of paper for their highly imaginative and often complicated romances and adventures.

After only a year at school Maria and Elizabeth died of tuberculosis, in 1825. Charlotte went to a school for clergymen's daughters, at Cowan Bridge, in her eighth year. Emily accompanied her, but both were recalled home on the death of their sisters.

Later Charlotte went to Roehead school, where she found friends and enjoyed much kindness. At this time also she met her future biographer, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell. She left Roehead in 1832 but returned in

1835 as a teacher, so that her earnings might help to support Patrick, who had been sent to London to study painting. Emily again accompanied Charlotte^ but the tall, shy girl seemed to fade and pine during this absence from the moorland she loved. She returned to Haworth after three months and her place at Roehead was taken by Anne.

Even with the help of his sisters' small salaries, Patrick could not be maintained and was recalled from London. The only evidence of his artistic talent is the picture of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne now in the National Portrait Gallery. For a few months he earned his living as a tutor but, losing his post, he became a clerk on the Leeds and Manchester Railway. The wild irregularity of his life, already beginning to show itself, soon occasioned his dismissal. About this time Charlotte went to a school near Dewsbury. Teaching was never wholly pleasing to her and in 1837 she returned to Haworth, while Anne and Patrick went to a clergyman's family as tutor and governess. Patrick was soon without a post again, and from this time forward he lived at home, unbalanced in temperament if not in mind, spending a good deal of his time in drinking at the Black Bull.

Refusing an offer of marriage, since she could not feel that passionate devotion which she was convinced should be present in those who marry, Charlotte again left home with Emily, the sisters going to the Héger Pensionnat, Brussels, in order to become so proficient as teachers as to be able to open a small school of their

own. After a term's work, Madame Héger suggested that they should remain to teach English and music in exchange for lessons in German. This arrangement was disturbed by their aunt's death but, after their necessary visit to Haworth, Charlotte went back alone to Brussels, while Emily, never happy or well when away from the Haworth countryside, remained to look after her father (whose eyesight was rapidly failing) and her unhappy brother.

The full facts about Charlotte's stay in Brussels, simple as they probably are and complex as they seem to have been in psychological effect, may never be known. Certainly she came to be greatly under the influence of M. Paul Heger; his wife's unhappiness because of this may be taken to have been ill-founded. Having survived a great emotional crisis, possibly her arrival at a full and frustrated emotional maturity, Charlotte came back to Haworth. The three sisters tried to open their school. The attempt failed: " Everyone wishes us well, but there are no pupils to be had." During this trying time Charlotte found a few of Emily's poems and was amazed at their depth and feeling. Of the three sisters, Emily is the most difficult to understand, partly because of her we know the least. Anne now showed verses she also had written and the sisters planned to seek publication of a joint work. The result was the publication, in 1845, of a slim volume of *Poems, by Currer, Ellis, and Acton 'Bell.*

In 1846 Mr. Newby agreed to publish Emily's

novel, *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne's quiet *Agnes Grey*. Charlotte's novel, *The Professor*, vainly went from publisher to publisher, but at least led to an offer from Smith, Elder & Co. to consider the novel she was then engaged on. Thus encouraged, she quickly finished *Jane Eyre*, received £500 for it, and saw it appear in 1847.

The year was eventful for the Brontes. Patrick, worn out by his excesses, and a constant source of anxiety to his sisters, died, and Emily's health began to break down seriously. It has been maintained that Patrick was the real author of *Wuthering Heights* or that, at the least, he was more responsible for it than Emily was. The theory is not seriously entertained, if only because there is no evidence for it outside the " internal evidence " which has led to startling errors in other literary problems. Moreover, the argument that Emily could never have experienced the passion which fills the novel ignores both the inexplicable element of mystical love and " visitation " in her poetry (an element so presented as to have convinced some that she must have experienced some kind of spiritual materialisation) and the similarity between the kind of novel it was and the current trend of the German novel with which she could easily have been acquainted.

In 1848 Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, was published by Newby, who issued it as the work of " the author of *Jane Eyre* ". To correct the error, Charlotte and Anne went to London, where

Smith, Elder & Co. was astonished to find that its "Currer" was a woman who was almost overwhelmed by shyness.

The year 1849 was another important year in the Bronte record. In May the sisters went to Scarborough because of the ill-health of Anne, who died there in the same month and was buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's. For many a long year the grave was forgotten by all but a few; a small plaque in the churchyard wall now at least commemorates its presence. In December, back home at Haworth,[f] Emily collapsed and, struggling to stand for her last moments, as Patrick had done, died. She had lived to see the publication of Charlotte's *Shirley,* a novel so wanting in the emotional urge and tension of *Jane Eyre* that many of her readers were disappointed.

Two years later Charlotte began *Villette,* fell seriously ill, but resumed work upon it when she recovered. The book was published in 185 3. In the same year her father's curate, the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, asked for her hand in marriage. Her father refused, and Nicholls left Haworth. A year later Mr. Bronte relented; Charlotte was married at Haworth on June 29, 1854.

On March 31, 1855, when prospective motherhood had brought joy to her, and her long and patient quest for happiness seemed to be at an end, she died in her husband's arms. Her last words were, "We have been so happy ".

As might be expected, many books have been

written about the Brontes, some being general biographies and others being monographs on particular points, such as the Brussels interval, the authorship of *Wuthering Heights,* or the printing and annotating of correspondence. And, as might also be expected, much of this literature is almost useless. Yet for anyone unacquainted with the Bronte traditions it offers varied reading of absorbing interest. We have had space here for only the briefest outline of the lives and their background. Mrs. Gaskells *'Life* of Charlotte will necessarily be included in the reading of anyone who wishes to know more about the sisters. From that point onwards any reliable reading list will open out a more detailed study.

There are three characteristics that detach themselves from the writings of Charlotte Bronte: the note of intimacy, the note of passion, the note of revolt.

By an interesting paradox of temperament, Charlotte Bronte, reserved and almost inarticulate in ordinary intercourse, lets herself go with frank and eager abandonment directly she takes pen in hand.

It was this that so shocked and disturbed the critic in the *Quarterly :* it seemed a startling and outrageous thing—this passionate whispering in the reader's ear. Outrageous it was not; startling it may well have appeared; and Charlotte Bronte was really only applying to fiction what had already been applied with such delightful results, by men like Elk and Hazlitt, to the essay. To the modern reader many

scenes in *Jane Eyre*, to a less extent in *Villette*, seem strained, hysterical, theatrical; but the reader has little discernment if unable to realise while reading that this excitability is only a surface quality, largely determined by the writer's relief in at least being able to express herself and to unburden her soul.

Some story-tellers write for material advantage; others for fame; she writes simply because it is a necessary condition to her existence. There is no trace of self-consciousness in her self-abandonment. She is far too serious to pose. The turbulent forces that ordinary intercourse and the conventions of life had driven inward burst out with the greater unreserve as soon as the barrier was removed. She does not really live until she takes up pen and ink. Then she is a woman of genius. Till that moment she is merely the queer-tempered, painfully shy, old-fashioned daughter of an obscure country parson.

Charlotte Bronte has written of lonely, repressed womanhood with a passion and intensity unsurpassed in English fiction, even among the outspoken fiction of our own day. Until she began to write, no woman had ever dared to write of life from the woman's point of view, as Fielding had done from the man's. The masculine convention—that, whatever a woman may feel, it is bad for her to express it; that while the man may do and dare, the woman must wait meekly and patiently, had held good in our fiction. This convention Charlotte Bronte utterly broke down. She revealed woman as a human being. How very real the

tragedy of the unloved woman was, none felt more keenly than the large-hearted creator of *Aurora Leigh* when she wrote of,

> The unkissed lips
> And eyes undried, because there's none to ask
> The reason they grew moist.

Yet there is no breath of lawlessness in her passion; to us today, indeed, she seems quaintly puritanical in her outlook on life. We recall Mrs. Carlyle's satirical exclamation when she met George Eliot: "What! *she* an improper female!" and if she is volcanic, a primmer volcano never existed than Charlotte Bronte.

And thus we have this curious result: while the agonies of a woman yearning for affection are exhibited—especially in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*—with a poignant feeling beside which the love-troubles of Maggie Tulliver seem half-hearted and conventional, yet the solution of the emotional problem, which seems to her inevitable, strikes many of us as curiously timid and strait-laced, for all its honesty and sincerity.

We know now sufficient of her life-story to realise how frustrated love threw its grey shadows across her path. And even if we had known nothing of the Brussels episode, and only surmised that her interest in M. Heger was something more than intellectual admiration, we might have gathered from the character and temperament of the woman, as exhibited in her writings and the records of friends, that she was moulded for tragic disappointment. Charlotte had

the soul of the primitive woman, leashed in by a few early Victorian conventions, and she is always straining against the leash while upbraiding herself for doing so. She goes down to posterity as a type of the plain, sensitive woman hungering for a love that will never be hers; not that she was really unattractive: her eyes, her delicate hands, her pleasant voice were not devoid of magic. But it was not the kind of magic to win over the man destined to transfigure her life.

It is hard, perhaps, to associate with the gospel of insurgency a woman who cautioned her friends against reading the comedies of Shakespeare, tabooed *Don Juan,* and whose hero in those days of flaming personalities was the Duke of Wellington. And an insurgent in the modern sense of the term, an insurgent of the militant feminist type today, she is far from being. She is insurgent just because she is a primal woman : she is insurgent just as a caged thrush is insurgent that beats itself against the bars of the cage. Modern civilisation always provides a cage for primal natures.

She revolted against the accepted convention of the heroines in fiction; she revolted against the convention of the woman's place in the routine of life; she revolted against the formalism and hypocrisy, the harshness and cruelty, that she saw around her.

This bias shows itself again and again in that wonderful description of unhappy school life in the early chapters of *Jane Eyre,* where she heaps up her scorn on mealy-mouthed religionists; in her char-

acteristic and obvious admiration for the rough, brutal, yet not unattractive Rochester; in the spirited description of the strike in *Shirley*; in that Rembrandt-like portrait of Rachel in *Villette*, where the primitive woman in her admires and the Puritan in her loathes. Even in her scenic pictures it is the elemental fury of Nature that inspires her best as an artist.

Charlotte Bronte's reputation rests on three books : *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette*. Of these it may be said briefly that while *Shirley* is the least faulty as a work of art, *Jane Eyre*, inequalities notwithstanding, is the most vital. There is probably no piece of fiction in our language which has, together with such an abundance of crude accentuation, preposterous episodes, and glaring immaturity of outlook, so unequivocal a genius. There are scenes in the book that read like the ineptitudes of a sentimental schoolgirl; there are scenes—especially in the earlier portion—so amazingly actual, so finely imaginative, that only a woman of genius could have written them. And the genius triumphs. We are quite willing to condone the absurdities for the great moments of inspiration.

Beyond a few poems, and *Wuthering Heights*, we have nothing by which to judge Emily's powers. But they suffice. If Charlotte's personality attracts us, Emily's fascinates us. She seems the very embodiment of the wind-swept moors, and moves through Mrs. Gaskell's biography more like an elemental spirit than a woman; shunning society, inscrutable

and silent even among her own kin, revelling in all the bleakness, the loneliness, the storm-tossed vicissitudes of that countryside; dogged by relentless disease, yet grimly defiant, desperately self-controlled to the very last.

Something of this power and intensity of gloom meets us in her verse; but its fullest expression is found in that strange, amazing, and terrible book, *Wuthering Heights*. Shadowy, incoherent, remote from concrete human existence, oppressing and appalling in its violent imagery, it is lit up and transfigured by a tragic splendour rarely surpassed in English fiction. The chief characters in the story are scarcely human beings at all, and defy all psychological standards : they are the primal forces of Nature, incarnate passions; yet such fierce intensity of feeling has gone into their creation that we accept them at their creator's imperious command. A barbaric fragment if you will, this extraordinary book; but one of the imperishable fragments of imaginative genius—Titanic in its fierce, undisciplined power; with a haunting and poignant beauty underlying all its horrors; making us realise as no other story in our language does the significance of

> Infinite passion
> And the pain of finite hearts that yearn.

(iii) **Mrs. Gaskell**

"The name of Charlotte Bronte is intimately bound up with that of her friend and biographer, Elizabeth

Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-65). She and her husband lived for many years at Manchester, and from her experiences of Lancashire life she found the material at hand for her novels *Mary barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855).

Mrs. Gaskell did, in some ways, for the north what Charles Kingsley was already doing for the south. She was not an industrial reformer as Kingsley was, but she knew out of the fulness of her own experiences the bitterness and misery arising from these early conflicts between capital and labour; and she was as familiar with strikes as Kingsley was with " sweating ". But Mrs. Gaskell's importance as a novelist lies not merely in her spirited and faithful achievement of industrial dramas but in the method of her story-telling.

Mrs. Gaskell had neither the intellectual equipment nor the artistic power of George Eliot, but she was a shrewd observer, with a tolerant sympathy and a strong sense of humour. Curiously enough, she never did full justice to her humorous faculty, save in *Cranford*, which beyond a doubt is her highest achievement in fiction—an entirely fresh and delightful sojourn in a sleepy little country town. There is a pleasant aroma of dried lavender in its pages. The characterisation is rich in happy little touches, reminiscent of Jane Austen's art, yet with a more whimsical play of humorous fancy than she would have tolerated.

If *Cranford* is a real gem, the other novels are far from being paste imitations. *Mary Barton* is a sincere

and moving story, which might easily have been spoilt by sentimentality. *North and South* gives us a thoughtful study of the problems that arose out of the factory system; while there is excellent workmanship in *Wives and Daughters;* and a tragic power in *Ruth.* Indeed, had Mrs. Gaskell never written *Cranford* we might have been less critical of her other stories. Having achieved a little masterpiece in *Cranford,* we are naturally more critical about the rest of her work, which is good, thoughtful, workmanlike fiction of the secondary order. After *Cranford* (1853) perhaps her finest work is in the warmly sympathetic and convincing *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863).

From the criticism we ought to exempt the Life *of Charlotte Bronte* (1857), which is a fine and worthy study of a difficult, yet fascinating subject. This, with *Cranford* and *Sylvia's Lovers,* should survive.

(iv) George Eliot

Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) was born at South Farm, Arbury, in Warwickshire, on November 22, 1819. Her father, Robert Evans, was agent to Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Hall, her grandfather a builder and carpenter in Derbyshire. Robert Evans was a well-seasoned Tory with the firm belief that anyone with the revolutionary strain in his blood was a scoundrel of the deepest dye.

At first, of course, she accepted with docility her father's views and, though thoughtful and imaginative as a young child, there was a certain reflective diffi-

dence about her that made her mental development proceed slowly. But in the early forties she came under the influence of Charles Bray, and the acquaintanceship proved a crisis in her intellectual life.

Bray was a ribbon manufacturer by trade and a philanthropist by inclination. He was interested in Socialism and turned his energies in the direction of social reform.

In 1836 Bray married Caroline Hennell, who came of a Unitarian family. Bray himself was a sceptic, and his brother-in-law, Charles Hennell, in endeavouring to convince him of the error of his ways became a sceptic himself. Hennell's book *An Enquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838) made a deep impression on George Eliot.

But she was not prepared to give up revealed religion as yet, although this book affected her attitude towards her father's rigid Puritanism. She gave up church-going and this naturally led to strained family relationships.

After her father's death she settled in London and became assistant editor of the *Westminster Review,* to whose columns she had already contributed. Fresh and potent influences now came into her life : the two Martineaus, James and Harriet—James one of the most powerful Theistic writers that the century had produced, his sister a keen intellectual writer on social and political subjects; above all, there was the influence of Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes.

Lewes was already married, though living apart from his wife, unable to get a divorce, through some technicality in the existing law. George Eliot, though disapproving of " light and easily broken ties ", felt strongly that the law binding Lewes to his wife was not a moral law; and she determined deliberately to throw in her lot with his, declaring that no one " acquainted with the realities of life " could believe such a union " immoral". The union proved in many ways not only a happy one but a fortunate one in determining George Eliot's literary career. She was already well known as a singularly able critic and translator; but it was due to Lewes's discernment and encouragement that she now turned to write fiction. She was thirty-eight when she wrote her *Scenes from Clerical "Life* (1838) for *Blackwood's Magazine.* It is characteristic of her peculiar diffidence as to her own powers that the impulse to write a story came, not from some sudden kindling of the creative imagination, but from the suggestion of her friend Lewes. The result was dramatic in the phenomenal success that attended this departure; and so long as she drew upon her own memories and impressions her power was unquestionable. When she left this fount of inspiration she proved far more uncertain in her touch and less satisfying as a literary artist.

In 1878 Lewes died and some two years later she married a young London banker, John Walter Cross, about twenty years her junior. To some this may have reflected on the passionate devotion she had always

expressed for Lewes; but all who knew her intimately felt that it was merely a natural expression of that curious dependency in her otherwise strong and decisive nature—a dependency which she refers to in her letters, the need of someone always upon whom she could lean for support.

Shortly after her marriage her health failed, and in December 1880 she died suddenly after a short illness.

It is the essential womanliness in George Eliot that gives vitality to her best work. Her delicate intuition, her tact, her woman's power of sympathy—these are the qualities that give greatness to *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861). Her intellectual gifts, splendid as they were and invaluable in her critical work, are positive drawbacks to her as an artist. The best part of *Romola* (1863) lies in the subtle delineation of the young Greek hedonist, Tito; the scholarship shown in the book is sheer dead weight from the artistic point of view. Similarly in *Daniel Deronda* (1876), when she writes as a woman she makes the pages live; when as a follower of Comte and as a student of racial problems, then the wheels of her chariot drive very heavily.

She was the first novelist to lay the stress wholly upon character rather than upon incident; to make her stories spiritual rather than physical dramas. It is true that Charlotte Bronte had drawn attention to the emotional life, but she had lacked the knowledge of men and women, the mental detachment necessary for giving actuality to many of her characters. Within

her own limited range she depicted characters with force and insight; but the range was narrow and the high lights were over-strong. She flung the emotional life of her heroine at you in a seething ferment and did not, as did George Eliot, trace its sources and confluence with patient care.

Essentially a critic of life, George Eliot, though keenly observant and richly humorous, was never content with merely chronicling the result of her observations. For good or ill, you never forget the philosopher in the story-teller. It has been urged that herein lies her great defect as a novelist. But such an assertion is too sweeping.

Unlike Jane Austen, she acts as chorus to her characters, throwing in by way of occasional parenthesis her appreciation of their values. Jane Austen would never have added " entering thoroughly into the possibility of an inopportune decease ", or " it was a great concession "; but it is quite possible to admire and enjoy all these methods, and it seems a. great pity that some of Jane Austen's admirers can never praise that delightful artist without seeking to vilify George Eliot.

She is at her happiest in characterisation; here we find both subtlety and variety. The most casual inspection will reveal the variety. Florentine scholar, half-witted rustic, cultured freethinker, wayward, passionate natures, shallow, insincere characters, mystics, men of the world, are intelligible to her. Her wide range of observation, her generous sympathies,

and the power of detachment, trained by scientific study, all helped to give breadth and variety to her canvas.

But there was another side to George Eliot's nature. She discarded early the narrow exclusiveness in which she had been brought up. Intellectually she was in touch with the most extreme of the Rationalist critics, but she never outgrew her Puritanism. It was too deeply ingrained in her character. Like Carlyle, she retained the austere ethical idealism of the Puritan long after she had discarded the dogmatic expression of her faith.

In her life the Puritan side was always warring against the pagan side. She threw in her lot with Lewes while his wife was yet alive; but she was never easy about the step she had taken, though never regretting it. Radical and revolutionary in her outlook on life, she yet shrank from revolt. Agnostic in her views, she was none the less mystical in her sympathies.

Yet her work expresses a clear, definite outlook on life. Her other important novels are *Felix Holt* (1866) and *Middlemarch* (1872).

Full as George Eliot's stories are of the tragedy of life, it is not surely the tragedy of circumstances so much as the tragedy of lost opportunities.

In *Adam Bede, Romola,* and *Daniel Deronda,* to mention none other of her books, there are epochs in the lives of the characters which, taken at the flood, had led on to moral fortune. There were occasions—not merely one but several—when a stronger resolve

would have changed the entire complexion of the future.

At her worst George Eliot is laboured, self-conscious, and didactic, never trivial or shallow. At her best she is rich in mellow wisdom and in sympathetic insight; and whatever her shortcomings as a story-teller, she has no rival and few peers in the power and poignancy of her psychology.

Chapter Seven

Realism and Romance

(i) The Realist Novel

(a) *George Meredith*

ALMOST the last link connecting the present generation with mid-Victorian literature is George Meredith, and of few distinguished men is less known personally.

Born at Portsmouth on February 12, 1828, George Meredith was of Welsh and Irish descent, and was naturally very proud of his double Celtic origin—a fact that is noticeable throughout his work.

When quite a small boy he had the misfortune to lose his mother, and for some years he attended a day-school in Portsmouth; but on being made a ward in Chancery he was sent, at the age of fourteen, to the Moravian School at Neuwied-on-the-Rhine, which he left when sixteen. On returning to England he directed his unwilling attention to the law, which he soon abandoned for literature.

In 1849 Meredith's first poem, to commemorate the battle of Chillianwallah, was published in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* on July 7, and in the same year he married Mrs. Nicholls, the young widow of a naval

officer and daughter of Thomas Love Peacock, " a singularly brilliant and witty woman " who died in 1860. After their marriage, which proved an unhappy one, the young couple lived much on the Continent. After 1860 Meredith furnished a room in the house where Rossetti and Swinburne were living in Chelsea, but he used it little and left off going there altogether after a short time. Then in 1862 a second marriage, with Miss Vulliamy, brought with it twenty-one years of unclouded happiness. When Meredith refused to adopt the law as a profession he turned to journalistic work, and for a period contributed regularly to, and for a short while edited, the *Ipswich Gazette.* During the fifties and early sixties he was also contributing articles to the *Morning Post. "* I detest the writing for money," he said. " Journalism for money is Egyptian bondage." In 1866, on the outbreak of war between Austria and Italy, he became war correspondent for the *Morning Post.*

Towards the end of 1867, on the departure for America of John Morley, then editor of the *Fortnightly Review,* Meredith was asked to undertake, and accepted, the editorship *pro tem.* He had succeeded John Forster as reader and literary adviser to the publishers, Messrs. Chapman & Hall.

The first volume he published was a book of *Poems* (1851), then came the fantastic *Shaving of Shagpat* (1855). Two years later came *Farina. The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) met with a cold reception generally, and took twenty years to pass into a second

edition, notwithstanding that *The Times* devoted three columns to an appreciative review. His next volume, *Evan Harrington* (1861), was all but ignored by the critics. Then came *Modern Love* (1862), *Emilia in England* (now known as *Sandra Belloni)* followed in 1864, with *EJjoda Fleming* (1865), *Vittoria* (1867), all of which had a poor sale, and *Harry Richmond,* one of the longest of his novels, in 1871. With *Beauchamp's Career* (1875) we find Meredith received almost with enthusiasm.

With the publication of *The Egoist* in 1879, came fame. That forceful literary organ, the *Athenœum,* which had reviewed *Farina* as " a full-blooded specimen of the nonsense of genius ", now generously praised *The Egoist* as " a piece of imaginative work as solid and rich as anything that the century has seen—one of the strongest and most original productions of modern literature ".

Following *The Tragic Comedians* (1880) came *Diana ofthe Crossways* (1885), an instant success.

Meredith now collected some of his poems and two volumes were issued—*Poems of Tragic Life* (1887) and *A Reading ofEarth* (1888)—then returned to the novel with *One ofOur Conquerors* (1891), and *Lord Ormont and bis Aminta* that ran serially in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in 1894. His last work, and one of the most popular, was *The Amazing Marriage* (1895). *Celt and Saxon,* issued posthumously, but written at a much earlier date, was left unfinished.

In 1892, on the death of Tennyson, Meredith was

chosen to succeed the Laureate as President of the Incorporated Society of Authors; and to his eminent satisfaction he received the Order of Merit in 1905.

On May 18, 1909, came the end, painlessly and quietly, just as the dawn was breaking, five weeks subsequent to the death of Swinburne. After cremation, all that was mortal of George Meredith was laid in Dorking churchyard.

In considering the works of Meredith it will be useful to regard him from three points of view : as the satiric observer, as the poetic impressionist, and as a critic of life.

There never has been a nimbler, shrewder observer of human nature than Meredith. His humour lacks the jolly geniality of Dickens and the easy breadth of Fielding; but there is a keener intellectual vision behind. Less universal in his appeal as a humorist, he has no rival as a satirist; for his satire is keen, subtle, incisive.

As a painter of contemporary English manners he has no peer. Inferior to his great contemporary, Hardy, in his treatment of the more elemental aspects of human nature, he transcends him, and indeed any other writer of his time, in the mixture of convention and primal instinct that goes to make up the average civilised man. No one has given a more faithful picture of the Englishman, with his merits and defects.

One of the most important tasks of Meredith as a

satirist has been the de-sentimentalising of men and women. And just as he strips the prig and the sensualist of his tinsel, so with his women does he remove the conventional rose-pink that early Victorian writers particularly loved to cloak womenkind in. What Fielding did for men, George Meredith did for women, drawing them frankly and sincerely from the life—and not from the conventions. Yet it is questionable whether many readers did not prefer the sentimental artificiality of Richardson and the literary Lowther Arcade of pink-and-white dolls, that most of the early Victorians, and mid-Victorians too for that matter, provided for their reader's delectation.

Meredith's strength as a poet lies in his luxuriant imagination. Sometimes it proves too luxuriant for us; its crowded opulence fatigues while it delights; and the multiplicity of its beauties detracts in place of impressing. With this small grumble, let us offer an ample meed of praise to the extraordinary beauty and fresh suggestiveness of much of Meredith's poetry; to that spring melody, *Love in a Valley* \ to the fine tragic complexities of *Modern Love;* to the glorious *Hymn to Colour-*, to the fresh vigour of *Juggling Jerry ;* to the simple yet deep wisdom of *The Woods of Westermain ;* to the inspiring *Treading of Life,* and to the technical brilliance of *The Spirit of Earth in Autumn.* Intellectual preoccupations do not mar his music in the same way as Browning's were sometimes wont to do; but the obscurities that baffle and worry the reader in certain poems are due no less to the recon-

dite character of his images than to the rapidity with which he utters them. It is not his insistent intellectuality (that is a part of the man's temperament, and if you object to that you will get little good from Meredith), but his unhappy syntax, crushed and breathless under the beauties he crowds so unpityingly into it, that makes him no easy poet to construe. But we must not be unmindful of the quality of the profusion; and the tangled growth contains sweet and precious things.

Sometimes the poet and the critic in Meredith might have exchanged media with advantage. *The Shaving of Shagpat* would have made an even better verse than prose romance; and *The Empty Purse* would have gained considerably in effectiveness by being written in prose.

There is nothing of the transcendentalism in Meredith that we find in most poets of Nature, since he was more interested in Earth-worship than Nature-worship. Nature for him was not a brooding spirit of peace, as for Wordsworth, nor the swift-winged spirit of love, as with Shelley; nor, on the other hand, was it merely an exquisite mechanism, unmoral if not immoral, as with Tennyson—nor a cheery, amusing, joyful comrade, as to Browning.

To Meredith the Earth is a kind, though Spartan, mother—who attracts us to her by those elemental bonds that tell us that we came from her, but repels us because she has nothing but the silence of grim rebuffs for our desperate hopes and high aspirations.

Man
May entreat, aspire,
He may despair, and she has never heed.
She drinking his warm sweat will soothe his need—
Not his desire.

In such poems as *The Thrush in February*, *The Southwester*, *The Lark Ascending*, the splendour and rapture of the physical world find eloquent speech.

Of the lark:

He rises and begins to round :
He drops the silver chain of sound
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur, and shake :

All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide,
Where ripple, tipple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls.

Of the longer poems, perhaps the fine and opulent *Hymn to Colour* is the most remarkable for its artistic workmanship.

In the first place we note his sense of individuality. Meredith is full of life, ebullient life. A born fighter, a lover of conflict, he holds :

" Nothing the body suffers, the soul may not profit by."

" Resolution is a form of light; our native light in this darkened world."

Yet self-confidence he distrusted; there you have the mere drum and the trumpet. Reliance should be moderate and quiet. A respect for Nature is the beginning of wisdom.

With this individuality comes power to contend.

There is no sentimental blindness about Meredith. Life to him is a hard business but, as with Browning, its very hardness yields a joy to the brave heart.

The third quality on which he insists is the Greek quality of temperance. Asceticism and sensuality are extremes to be avoided. Thus he parts company with the modern hedonist, on the one hand, and with Tolstoy, on the other.

Body and soul: each is desirable; each has its place in the scheme of life.

> " We do not get to any heaven by renouncing the Mother we spring from, and when there is an eternal secret for us, it is best to believe that Earth knows, to keep near her even in our utmost aspiration."

Life depends not on self-satisfaction but on service to others. Without altruism we decay and rot. To live selfishly is not merely wrong : it is foolish. There are insoluble problems to be faced; do not let us maunder over them. After all, the most tragic thing is not death nor pain, but " an ' unteachable spirit' ".

What man needs is blood, brain, and spirit, each acting in co-operation.

Finally Meredith admonishes us to combine cheerfulness with our courage. Let us fight gaily : look the world laughingly in the face. Fate is cruel, you say—well, face the wind and take its keen edge without repining.

A gallant personality he, a stimulating novelist, an arresting poet certainly; but, above all, a spiritual and tonic influence in English life and letters.

(b) *Thomas Hardy*

The writings of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) take us well beyond the limit of this book, but his prose works began within its period and he is connected with the literary background it sketches. His poetry belongs to a later time and will be mentioned in the succeeding volume.

Hardy was born at Upper Bockhampton, near Dorchester, on June 2, 1840. His parents wished him to become a clergyman, but Hardy inclined towards architecture, and accordingly studied modern Gothic under Sir Arthur Blomfield. In 1863 he gained the prize and medal of the Institute of British Architects and the Tite prize for architectural design. Two years later his first " literary" success came with the appearance, in *Chambers's Magazine*, of an unsigned article, " How I Built Myself a House ".

Not long afterwards George Meredith, as a publisher's reader, received the manuscript of *The Poor Man and the Lady*. Recognising its merit, but believing that its general tone would prejudice the author's future prospects, he advised the rejection of the script and took the unusual step of arranging a meeting with its author. The result was that Hardy began a new novel which was published in 1871 under the title *Desperate Remedies*.

From now onwards Hardy wrote steadily. The list of his novels is, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *A fair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Far from the Madding Crowd*

(1874), *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), *A Laodicean* (1881), *Two on a Tower* (1882), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1896), and *The Well-Beloved* (1897). After this time Hardy appears to have purged himself of sentiment, which had always been something of a concession to public liking, and turned to poetry.

In fact it may be that his capacity for novel-writing was coming to an end. The unnecessary crudity of *Jude the Obscure* may have been a symptom of such a decline, and tiredness is marked in *The Well-Beloved.* Hardy required a new form and his development will be dealt with when his poetry is considered later. For the moment we notice only the increasing tendency to believe that " whatever gods there be " had little good will towards man, and that the mere fact of his existence 'brings on man the punishment of having to endure his own nature and the savagery of mischance.

The key to Hardy's attitude as a literary artist may be found in an essay published by him in 1888 :

> " The conduct of the upper classes is screened by conventions, and thus the real character is not easily seen; if it is seen it must be portrayed subjectively; whereas in the lower walks, conduct is a direct expression of the inner life; and thus character can be directly portrayed through the act. In one case the author's word has to be taken as to the nerves and muscles of his figures; in the other they can be seen."

It is precisely here that he is at the opposite pole

from Meredith. To Meredith and, for the matter of that, to Henry James, character begins to be really interesting only when it is " not easily seen ". Hardy's strength, as well as his inclination, lay in tracing the elemental things of life, and this is why he has annexed Wessex as his province and left London and town society, for the most part, severely alone.

Hitherto the West Country had been the special province of the Romantics, and as a rule the writer of fiction, when he elected for incident, chose the country districts as his *milieu;* when he desired to emphasise character, he placed his story in a town setting. Was not the return to Nature itself a step towards the upsetting of many conventions and a restoration of the simpler, more primal, less artificial life of the open spaces ? Hardy's great distinction lies in his putting on one side the romantic point of view and adopting a thoughtful and scientific, observant method of treating the life of the country-side.

Interesting as Hardy's stories always are, arresting, even exciting as they sometimes are, the appeal to the reader does not lie in any skilful manipulation of incident. It lies in a treatment of character—" as the inevitable outcome of a special environment ". It is here that Hardy differs from George Eliot, with whose psychological methods his work shows certain affinities.

He has a sensitive, brooding imagination that loves to play over the past, and sees in the mouldering relics

of a bygone age symbols of a pomp and power that still can unconsciously affect the imagination and lives of men; he is for ever noticing those transmitted impulses of pagan feeling and religious sentiment that run through generations; watching with intense preoccupation the mingling of the finer elemental qualities, sexual devotion, pity, courage, endurance, with the coarser " ape and tiger " instincts. Showing a marked affinity as an observer of peasant life with the naturalism of writers like Zola, he suffuses his naturalism with a rarer delicacy and beauty.

Hardy's work may be considered under three aspects : as an interpreter of Nature—the descriptive artist; as an interpreter of character—the analytical artist; as an interpreter of life—the philosophic artist.

Hardy's love of the earth is an intensely personal and local one. It has little in common with the transcending love of Nature felt by poets like Wordsworth and Shelley; though in its concrete expression it reminds us often of Wordsworth's brooding spirit, it is the reverse of Wordsworthian in its note of sadness and fatality.

But in sensitive tactility he is supreme. Without overwhelming you with intimate knowledge of natural phenomena, he can make you feel, by his delicate and multifold allusiveness, the significance of the country's life: the individuality of the damp and fragrant woods; the meaning of the wind's voice, whether for storm or peace; the premonition of the tempest; the spirit of the heath of every hour of the day and night;

above all, the mystic relation between the toiling peasants and the hills and valleys where they live and move and have their being.

In fact, his interpretation of Nature gives us the clue to his outlook on men and women. To understand the self-sacrificing love of Marty South we must realise the spell of the brooding woods, the magic of the quiet, enduring trees, whose life she knew so well. To understand the attraction of the Reddleman, with his vagrant aloofness, we must first be made to feel the fascination of Egdon Heath in all its moods.

In his loving knowledge of the earth we have the key to the kingdom of Hardy. Possessing it, we may see more clearly into the character of the *dramatis persona.* His figures are elemental forces on the background of vaster elemental forces; they are the natural expression of sleepy woodland places, gaunt, austere hills, purling streams, lonely open places.

And if this be the case, we are prepared to find that their creator insists especially upon the emotional life of his characters. His very choice of types leads us away from those intellectual complexities that delight some novelists.

The outstanding characters in Hardy's fiction are incalculable, if you like, but that does not make them subtle. He is at his very best when dealing with what Charlotte Bronte so well called " the Stormy Sisterhood ". But a thunderstorm is not subtle.

Subtle characters, it is true, he did essay at times, and he was too fine a psychologist to fail entirely *in*

portraying them; but they are vastly inferior to his simpler and more elemental types. FitzSpiers is a shadow beside Winterbourne; Paula and Mrs. Charmond are certainly less real and vital than Bathsheba or Tess.

But if his best characters are not subtle and complex, the art that depicts his characters assuredly is; for he can record the minutest fluctuations of emotional experience and make them real and actual; it is this power which brings home to us with sureness the vital, full-blooded, and essentially fine-hearted Tess. I am not sure, however, that Eustacia Vye is not drawn with even greater power than Tess—for the philosopher obtrudes less often here than he does into the later creation.

Hardy's style is deliberate and characteristic. He impresses his scenes and characters upon us by accentuation of a hundred little touches and details, not 'by impressionistic gift. But although his narrative as a rule sweeps along in an orderly, progressive way, he has a real dramatic instinct that enables him at times to seize upon some crisis and present in terms of subtle dynamic conflict the characters he has been gradually unfolding for us.

Save when dealing with his rustic characters, Hardy's humour usually takes the form of irony; he is too much of a realist to take pleasure in caricature; too little of the moralist to make effective use of satire; and his natural reserve tends to make him, when dealing with tragic issues, grimly ironical. His books

abound in the irony of circumstance : e.g. the double pledging under the tree in *A Pair of Blue Eyes;* the proposal scene in *The Hand of Ethelberta,* with the lovers in different rooms—the Power behind things wears always a mocking smile to Hardy; and finely devised as many of these ironies are, especially in his shorter stories, the note is somewhat too insistent. The author, reversing the procedure of Mark Tapley, is too determined to be miserable in all possible circumstances, especially in his later books. But at its best the irony is very fine, and sometimes, as in *Two on a Tower,* it has a light, exquisite flavour that Anatole France himself could not have bettered.

As a story-teller he allies rich inventive power with a sense of symmetrical development which, as a rule, characterises our lesser, not our greater men. Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, so productively fertile in invention, show often little perspective on their constructive side. For all his minuteness of method, Hardy never loses sight of the harmonious whole; his detailed touches have ever their special significance in unfolding the burden of the story; here he shows the economy of the great artist. We shall find no loose ends in his work.

In reading Hardy's prose and verse one is inevitably reminded of Andersen's whimsical tale of *The Princess and the Pea.* No matter how many soft mattresses were piled upon that couch, the sensitive princess developed bruises.

Thus with Hardy. He is made sleepless by the pea.

and the soft mattresses of comedy add no whit to his comfort.

In other words, Hardy's temperament has conditioned his pessimistic outlook on life. A man's philosophy of life is, when you probe it deep enough, an instinctive, temperamental thing. Optimism, meliorism, pessimism are but endeavours to express in intellectual form the temperamental bias.

Now in Hardy's outlook on life there are two points especially insistent—his sense of law and his sense of pity. The first gives him his conviction that a spiritual logic governs men's lives, and the Greeks called it Nemesis; but we, affected by scientific formulae, attribute it to law.

There is only one other novelist who has touched the logic of life with the same persistence as Hardy—that is, George Eliot; but whereas she considers it rather from the standpoint of retribution, and treats it as a -moralist, Hardy is affected rather by the injustice of its workings. He admits, as she does, the dreadful vitality of our deeds but he dwells far longer on the disproportionate punishment.

His sense of pity is perhaps more acute than that of any modern writer. Realising as he does the terrible handicaps of life, he treats with gentle tolerance the passionate misdoing of men and women, and is better disposed to the sinner than to the saint.

Few who have thought at all about life can help moods like these when the littleness and sordidness of life and the great empire of pain and suffering over-

shadow all else. But it is not merely a mood with Hardy; it is "the mood"—his prevalent way of looking at things—and he practically excludes from his writings any sense of the splendour and beauty of human life that visits us at other times, just as the sunrise chases away the gloom of night. The sublimities of life are as much a matter of human experience as its abysses.

This tenacious and bitter preoccupation with the futilities of life is even more evident in Hardy's verse than in his prose. He is too genuine an artist, too sincere and high-minded a man, not to touch his readers again and again with the imaginative subtleties and delicate insight that often distinguish his verse. But while mindful of passages of power and beauty in his *Dynasts,* and of the haunting charm and freshness of many vagrant lyrics, I cannot but feel that Hardy's genius is far better expressed in his prose; for the spacious background of prose allows for those qualities of rich comedy (quite other than the satiric humour of his verse), of characterisation and of description, that necessarily find little outlet in poetry.

Yet it would be churlish to leave so great a writer on a note of dissatisfaction. Errors of taste there are no doubt; he has the blunt outspokenness of a countryman, and there is about his works something of the coarseness of Nature herself; but though sometimes coarse, he is never trivial or debasing. The furtive prurience that spoils some fiction, the juggling with moral values that mars other fiction today, is abso-

lately alien to his stern and austerely noble attitude towards human life. Differences of opinion must naturally be held of Hardy as a critic of life; but as an artist—as a painter of certain concrete aspects of that life—he is among the greatest in English Literature.

(c) *Charles Reade*

It has long been customary to regard Reade (1814-84) and Charles Kingsley as being of more or less equal importance. To subscribe to this view is difficult, and of the two Reade must be considered the greater, because he had a certain quality of permanence not found in Kingsley.

Without public-school education, he graduated at Oxford, and was elected to a Fellowship of Magdalen. This security enabled him to indulge the many whims of a brain which seems at times to have been half crazed. The most understandable of these ideas was the .menagerie which he maintained at his residence in Knightsbridge. He began to write fairly late in life, persisting in unsuccessful dramas, but published a novel, *Peg Woffington,* in 18 5 2. His pleasantest novel, *Christie Johnston* (1853), was followed by the documentary books in which he advocated causes or attacked what he considered abuses. In all these novels he shows a thorough knowledge of detail and first-hand acquaintance with the social conditions he describes. The gaol system was assaulted in It's *Never too Late to Mend* (1856), the cruelty and fraudulence of mental asylums in *Hard Cash* (1863), mer-

cantile villainies in *Foul Play* (1869). To this class of novel also belong *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870), about trade disputes and destruction of machinery, and *A Woman Hater* (1877), about the insanitary conditions of country life. Three earlier novels, *Autobiography of a Thief* (1858), *Jack of All Trades* (1858), and *A Hero and a Martyr* (1874) may be mentioned only for their remarkable realism. So far his best novel had been *It's Never Too Late to Mend,* but a rewriting of the anaemic *A Good Fight* resulted in the masterly *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861). Even here Reade found it necessary to attack something—clerical celibacy, as he did again in *Griffith Gaunt* (1866)—but the book has true creative power and depth of emotion.

In himself Reade was a contradictory, irascible, litigious, kind-hearted, and extremely generous man, always ready to aid those who had come down in the world. His writing is weakened by his tendency to write melodrama instead of tragedy, to be resentful instead of rightly angry, and to indulge violent prejudices. , His judgment was often as faulty as his taste. These are not small faults to overcome but Reade had merits which make him survive. He could handle thrilling situations with a skill rivalling that of Wilkie Collins; his eighteen years of effort to write drama gave him a dramatic ability rarely reached by Kingsley; his realism makes even his most romantic pages convincing; although his novels are sometimes badly proportioned, he can handle sweeping stories without

loss of control. It is true that his characters usually lack vitality—they remain people in a book. But the force of his conviction, the earnestness of his preaching, carry him over this defect on most occasions. And as a preacher he had the saving grace of being able to fuse his social purpose with his poetic imagination.

(d) *George Borrow*

Born at East Dereham, George Henry Borrow (1803-81) was the youngest son of an Army officer who had risen from the ranks; on his mother's side he came of Norman-Huguenot stock. The wandering life in search of recruits necessarily restricted educational advantages and it was not till the captain retired and settled down in Norwich that any regular teaching was possible; the boy was thirteen and was sent to Norwich Grammar School.

Captain Borrow died in 1824 and London now became the goal of his son's ambition. With a letter of introduction, he called on Sir Richard Phillips, a publisher who employed him readily but at starvation rates. For a record of four hundred " Celebrated Trials ", in six volumes, containing 4000 pages, he received £50; and even this sum had to be drawn upon for many out-of-pocket expenses.

At length Borrow left London to ramble with the gipsies throughout the country, and of " the veiled period ", as it has been called, *Lavengro* (1851) furnishes an interesting account.

In 1832 Borrow returned to Norwich. Here he made the acquaintance of the Rev. Francis Cunningham, who introduced him to the British and Foreign Bible Society, as " a person without university education who had read the Bible in thirteen languages ". Upon this recommendation Borrow was invited to London, walking the whole distance of 112 miles.

Borrow's independent and self-confident manner produced some consternation among certain members of the Society and their quiet admonition he seems to have taken in good part. In 1833 he was sent to Russia to " enlarge his acquaintance with the Manchu language " with a view to a translation of the New Testament, which he eventually accomplished. In 1835 his services were required in Spain and Portugal, " to direct his attention to schools, and to be liberal in *gving* New Testaments ". After a year of struggle with the authorities, he was recalled to England. A later and longer visit saw his imprisonment in Madrid in 1838, and his renewal of his friendship with a widow lady, Mrs. Clarke, whom he had known at Oulton Broad, where she possessed some property.

In 1840 he left Lisbon for London with Mrs. Clarke, who was accompanied by her daughter, and on April 23 they were married at St. Peter's, Cornhill. He then settled down to literary work at Oulton Broad.

In 1869 Mrs. Borrow died in London, and for years afterwards Borrow was also believed to be dead; however, in 1874, he returned to Oulton Broad, where he died in 1881.

Reading *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* (1857), the reader is struck by the remarkable interest that Borrow takes in the people—especially the rough, uncultured people. There is very little objective feeling in his friendships; as flesh-and-blood personages with individualities of their own—loves, hopes, faiths of their own—he seems to regard them scarcely at all. They exist chiefly as material for his curiosity and inquisitiveness. Hence there is a curious selfishness about him; not the selfishness of a passionate, capricious nature, but the selfishness of a self-absorbed and self-contained nature.

It may seem strange at first sight to find this wanderer of the road in the pay of the Bible Society, and a zealous servant in the cause of militant Protestantism; but the violent " anti-Popery " side of Borrow is only another instance of his love of independence.

It says much for the amazing charm of Sorrow's writing that *The Bible in Spain* (1843) is very much better than a glorified tract. It must have come as a surprise to many a grave, pious reader of the Bible Society's publications.

And the Bible Society made the Vagabond from the literary point of view. Borrow's book, *The Zincali,* an account of the gipsies in Spain, published in 1841, had brought his name before the public; but *The Bible in Spain* made him famous; doubtless to the relief of " glorious John Murray ", the publisher, who was doubtful about the book's reception. Other books were *Wild Wales* (1862) and *Romano Lavo-Lil* (1874).

Can we analyse the charm that Sorrow's books and Sorrow's personality exercise over us, despite the presence of those unpleasing traits that repel ?

In the first place, he had the faculty for seizing upon the picaresque elements in the world about him. He had the ready instinct of the discursive writer for what was dramatically telling. Present his characters in dramatic form he could not; one and all pass through the crucible of his temperament before we see them. We feel that they are genuinely observed, but they are Borrovised. They speak the language of Borrow.

Perhaps his power in this direction is more fully appreciated when he deals with material that promises no such wealth of colour as do gipsy scenes and wanderings in the romantic South. Cheapside and London Bridge suit him fully as well as do Spanish forests or Welsh mountains.

True romancer as he is, he is not dependent on conventionally picturesque externals for arresting attention, since he will discover the stuff of adventure wherever his steps may lead him.

Borrow is emphatically an original force in letters. We may not always like him; never can we ignore him. Provocative, unsatisfying, fascinating—such is George Borrow. And most fascinating of all is his love of night, day, sun, moon, and stars, " all sweet things ". Herein lies the spell of Borrow, for in his company there is always " a wind on the heath ".

(ii) **The Romance Novel**

(a) *Miscellaneous*

Scott's immediate successor was William Ainsworth (1805-82), as beloved by Victorian youth as he is little read today. He has a real though crude sense of historical colour and a vigorous and spirited style, tending to the twopenny coloured, yet effective enough in a rough-and-ready way. His best tales are *The Tower of London* (1840, dealing with Tudor times), *Old St. Paul's* (1841, dealing with the period of the Plague and the Fire), and *Jack Sheppard* (1839, dealing with the eighteenth century). The idealism of the criminal in the third book is quite in the eighteenth-century spirit and most boys vastly preferred it, because of its cleverly devised excitements, to the more wholesome but less enthralling *Oliver Twist.*

A'writer of great literary merit is William Carlton (1794-1869), whose *Autobiography* gives us an admirable picture of Irish life in the early century. As a writer of Irish sketches for the *Examiner,* Carlton made his entrance into literature. These sketches were afterwards published in volume form: *Father 'Butler* and *The Lough Derg Pilgrims* (1829), *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830). In longer and more elaborate tales of Irish life, such as *Valentine M'CIutcty* and the *History of Paddy-go-lang and his Wife Nancy* (1845), Carlton is certainly less successful, though here his work contains lively and pathetic writing.

Most outstanding as a picture of Irish life was *Knocknagow, or the Homes of Tipperary* by Charles Kickham.

Together with Carlton may be mentioned two other Irishmen—Gerald Griffin (1803-40), whose novel, *The Collegians,* obtained posthumous fame in the dramatic version of the story made by Dion Boucicault, and re-named by him *The Colleen Bawn,* and that versatile, vagrant man of letters William Maginn (1793-1842), befriended by Thackeray and embalmed by him in literary form as Captain Shandon.

In Samuel Lover (1797-1868) and Charles Lever (1806-72) we have two more Irish writers who enjoyed a good vogue in their day. Lover was the more versatile man, being a painter and something of a poet and musician as well as a story-teller. But Lever is certainly the better novelist. Both of them did well in light comic verse and both of them are inclined to caricature in their stories. But whereas Lover relies mainly on caricature, as in *Rory O'More* (1837)' and *Handy Andy* (1842), Lever relieves his burlesque flourishes by his nimble faculty of inventive imagination. Lever's best works are *Harry Lorrequer* (1840), *Charles O'Malley* (1841), and *Jack Hinton* (1842). Neither Lever nor Lover shows any sense of form, and even Lever's better-written stories are more like good-humoured, happy improvisations than deliberately devised stories.

Where Lever celebrated the Irish soldier, James Grant (1822-87) eulogised the Scottish, in his historical novel *The Romance of War* (1845), dealing with the

Peninsular Campaign. He was a careful and thorough craftsman but is rather over-burdened by his historical material.

Captain Frederick Marryat (1792-1848) in his turn glorified the British sailor. Marryat has an easy, effective style, and in such excellent yarns as *Peter Simple* and *Jacob Faithful* (1834), *Midshipman Easy* (1836) and *Masterman Ready* (1841) he is hard to beat on his own lines. He is less successful when he tries to deal with the mysterious side of things, as in *The Phantom Ship*. His imagination is neither subtle nor profound; but it is quite adequate for the task he usually sets before himself.

Inferior in breadth and narrative power was Michael Scott (1789-1835), one of " Blackwood's" men. Yet his *Tom Cringle's Log* (1829-33) and *The Cruise of the Midge* are excellently written stories of sea life.

The glamour of the East had attracted, as we have seen,' many of the Romantic school, both in verse and prose; but one of the very few who had an inside knowledge of the subject was James Morier *(c.* 1780-1849), who in his *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824-28) gave us a novel of the old picaresque type and showed that the Orient has its " comedy " as well as its more conventionally romantic side.

Edward George Bulwer, first Lord Lytton (1803-73), a voluminous and rapid writer, is said to have written regularly from 4000 to 5000 words a day and published some sixty works.

Lytton had one of those plastic imaginations ready

to receive every impress of the age; each succeeding literary fashion finds its echo in his work. While romances were the vogue, Lytton did excellent work of the secondary order; and a measure of vitality lingers even today in his *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi* (1835), and *Zanoni* (1842). But from the time of *The Caxtons* (1849) he was conscious of a change in the drift of current tastes and, leaving the historical novel and the mystical fantasy alone, he turned his attention to English country life, describing its rural phases in *The Caxtons* and *My Novel* (1853), its urban fashion in *Pelham* (1828) and *Paul Clifford (1830).*

His work is distinctively imitative; but it is dexterous and showy, and exhibits a versatile, if not a profound, mind. He is most original when he gives his imagination rein; but, lacking humour, he is always overstepping the border-line between the sublime and the ridiculous.

Another writer belonging to the turn of the mid-century is Wilkie Collins (1824-89), a writer of remarkable power at his best, though his later writings, partly owing to a mistaken choice of subject-matter, but largely owing to physical reasons, show an almost tragic decline of merit.

In 1848 he published a Life of his father, and two years afterwards appeared his first novel, *Antonina.* A considerable friendship then sprang up between its author and Charles Dickens and the two henceforth were more or less associated.

Collins produced two dramas, *The Lighthouse* (1855)

and *The Frozen Deep* (1874), in both of which Dickens appeared as an actor. In 1860, *The Woman in White* was running as a serial in *All the Year Round,* of which Dickens was editor, and in collaboration they published *No Thoroughfare* in the same paper.

Wilkie Collins is so persistently underrated today that it may prove interesting to inquire with some closeness into the quality of his work.

At its best, his work is distinguished by :

(a) Exceptional skill in the art of plot construction.

(b) A remarkable gift of dramatic suggestion.

(c) Pictorial power of high order.

His technical skill is most happily shown in *The Moonstone* (1860), where all the parts fit into one another with the neatness of the puzzle-pictures that were at once the agony and delight of our childhood; from the impressive opening scene, where the gem is shown in its splendid Eastern setting, through all the phases of the story down to its final recapture by the Indians, there is not a scene which does not carry forward the tale, not a character that has not a part to play in the solution of the mystery.

The faculty of dramatic suggestion is a much rarer quality than is usually allowed. The expectant interest which Collins arouses so keenly in the reader is created not by incidental thrills—these, indeed, are singularly few—but because of the " atmosphere of suspense " that he creates by cunning hints and sug-

gestions. Murder looms seldom in his stories; of fighting there is next to nothing; hairbreadth escapes interest him but slightly; and out-of-the-way occurrences are few and far between. Eschewing these things on the one hand, and the psychological interest of the character novel on the other, it is surely a signal testimony to his power as a literary artist that he should hold us with such unmistakable enthralment. He is a master of dramatic "innuendo"; the Sterne of sensationalism. He can thrill you more by the posting of a letter than most of his school can by a lurid murder.

His pictorial power again is badly under-estimated by many critics. Wilkie Collins was the son of a painter; he exhibited in 1849 a landscape of his own at the Royal Academy and always retained a fine critical appreciation of the painter's art. Thus the supernaturalism in *Armadale* (1866) revolved round a series of dream-pictures; and even a sunset on the Norfolk Broads and the slanting rain of a passing storm are organic elements in the plot.

In Wilkie Collins the novel of domesticity and the novel of romantic adventure are pleasantly blended. In George Macdonald (1824-1905) the two are kept apart. His novels deal with Scottish life and show considerable humour, actuality, and deep religious feeling. Among the best are *Alec Forbes* (1865) and *Robert Falconer* (1868). In the art of story-telling, however, he is not an adept; constructively his tales are weak, and live by virtue of their imaginative

strength and insight into character. This may be studied in the delightful books he wrote for children : *At the Back of the North Wind, The Princess and the Goblin, The Princess and the Curdie, Cross Purposes,* and in those books where his Gaelic mysticism found its richest expression: *The Portent, Phantastes, The Cruel Painter,* and other stories.

It is here rather than in the novels that the genius of the man is best exhibited. In all these tales there are touches of eerie suggestion that Poe himself has never bettered, and they are blended with a delicate sense of beauty, a strength of passion, and a fine humanitarian feeling that place them in the very front rank as works of the romantic " genre ".

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) was born in Edinburgh, of a line of lighthouse engineers—a fact which did not prevent his showing an inclination for writing which produced a dictated *History of Moses* wheh he was six years of age. Indeed, his father gave him much encouragement, although he also prudently advised him to read for the Bar in case literature should fail to support him. The routine of the Scottish Bar did not suit Stevenson and bad health compelled him to journey about while he worked hard at essays and short stories, chiefly for the *Cornhill Magazine.* The literary results of his travels were *An Inland Voyage* (1878), after a canoe journey in Belgium, and *Travels with a Donkey through the Cevennes* (1 879). They attracted little attention, so he emigrated to California to find both health and an income. Here

he met, for the second time, a Mrs. Osborne. Their marriage followed, to Stevenson's great happiness and comfort.

Returning to England, he published *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881) and *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882). He then wrote *Treasure Island,* which was sold to a magazine while it was being written. Stevenson found himself unable to continue writing when the tale was only half complete and six months passed, while the finished instalments were appearing in print, before he could again make headway. As he was to remark later about novel-writing, " It's the length that kills ". The book made Stevenson's reputation and he followed it by *Kidnapped* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886, *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Black Arrow* in 1888, *The Wrecker* (1892), *Catriona* (1893), and the unfinished *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston.* In addition he wrote *New Arabian Nights* (1882) and the *Vailima Letters* (1895). Of his verse the *A Child's Garden of Verses* is not likely to be surpassed. Less important were the novels *The Silverado Squatters* and *Prince Otto* and the essays and sketches of *Memories and Portraits* and *Across the Plains.* He died at Samoa, on December 3, 1894.

Stevenson is at the present time not quite in the fashion. We are undergoing the tedium of " debunking " the man and the writer. Presently the portrait will change so that he is no longer an almost inhumanly heroic invalid or a spineless, affect'ed, cadging *poseur.* We shall also decide how far he was

a really good writer. His style often was strained to the limit of mannerism; against this we must balance the fact that some of his books contain lovely prose surely written and infused by most able and subtle characterisation. Undoubtedly he will take a prominent place among our prose-writers and, just as certainly, he will be allowed to retain the name the Samoans gave him—Tusitala, the Teller of Tales.

(b) *Minor Fiction*

Among the minor novelists of the period who have a right to remembrance was William Black (1841-98), a spirited and picturesque writer who excelled in descriptions of Scottish life and scenery. His *Daughter of Heth* (1871), *A Princess of Thule* (1874), and *MacLeod of Dare* (1878) still find appreciative readers. His contemporary, Richard Blackmore (1825-1900), won many generations of readers with *Lorna Doone* (1869)' and there is merit in *Cripps the Carrier* (1876), *Christowell* (1882), *Springhaven* (1887), and *Perlycross* (1894).

More important was John Galt (1779-1839), whose *métier* is exactly described in the title of his novel, *Annals of the Parish* (1821). Precise and intimate as are his pictures of Scottish life, they serve as the raw material of fiction than as works of literary art. Yet they abound in admirable vignettes of character, and Laird Guppy is worthy of Scott himself. Other books were *The Ayrshire Legatees* (1821) and *The Entail* (1823). Students may like to compare his work with that, noticed earlier, of Susan Ferrier, and

to connect it with the " Kailyard School", to be mentioned in the next volume. There also will be included other writers whose early work appeared before 1880, but whose main writing was published after that date.

Charles Kingsley (1819-75), largely influenced by F. D. Maurice, had done much to make known the unhappy lot of the unprotected workers, and his novels were rather tracts, in purpose, than formal fiction. *Alton Locke , Tailor and Poet* was published in 1850, and was followed by *Yeast, a Problem* in 1851. In the latter year *Hypatia* began serial publication, and in it Kingsley achieved his greatest artistic success. Its purpose was to attack scepticism, but this is usually lost sight of as the novel, full of action and colour, outlines the fall of the Western Empire and gives a vivid picture of life in ancient Alexandria. *Westward Ho !,* in 1855, is brisk and swashbuckling enough, but Kingsley's prejudices become oppressive and tiresome. In *Two Years Ago* there is again brisk action and excellent reportage on scenes of the Crimean War, but the story fails to grip. More successful, but never wholly so, partly because its course is obvious, is *Hereward the Wake* (1866). Three years earlier Kingsley had published his delightful book for children, *The Water-Babies.*

His far less fortunate brother, Henry Kingsley (1830-76), drew excellent pictures of life in Australia in *Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859) and, also turning to the Crimea, maintained a sustained interest in Ra*wenshoe* (1862).

Space must be found for *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), perhaps the most lasting of the many novels of Charlotte Yonge (1823-1901), in whom the twentieth century is taking renewed interest. An ardent follower of the Oxford Movement, Miss Yonge led an active life of many interests, in the course of which she managed to write a surprisingly large number of novels, all sweet and pleasing, once " adored " and now almost forgotten. Another one-volume survival is from the pen of Anna Sewell (1820-78), whose *Black Beauty* (1877) is still a favourite "autobiography " of a horse. Every school library providing for the " eleven-plus " age-group finds that *Black Beauty* is in steady demand and is invariably handed back with enthusiastic requests for something like it.

Margaret Oliphant (1828-97), in an endeavour to provide for a family, wrote steadily and copiously for forty years. Her first novel was *Margaret Maitland* (1849), and perhaps her finest work is to be found in *Salem Chapel, The Ejector and the Doctor's Family, The Perpetual Curate,* and *Miss Marjoribanks,* four novels which make up " The Chronicles of Carlingford ". She is unsurpassed in portrayal of life in dissenting circles. Her novels about the invisible world are less successful, but she is again found at her best in stories of her native Scotland, from her first novel to her last (the well-known and loved *Kirs teen,* 1890). Undoubtedly Mrs. Oliphant had far more ability than her-long race against misfortune allowed her time to develop. The reader has the greatest regret in finding

that he cannot place her among the best women novelists of the century. It is important to note that her stories did much to help the efforts made by religious denominations to extend literacy in the country. In their strong religious element the books gave the new learners of reading much that was to their taste.

By way of postscript, and perhaps of a reverence which has become traditionally due, we mention *Tom Brown's School Days* (1875), by Thomas Hughes, and the equally immortal *Eric, or Little by Little*, by Dean Frederick Farrar, together with his less known but better novel, *St. Winifred's*. Readers whose taste is pleased should not fail to read *Misunderstood*(1869) by Florence Montgomery.

(c) *Richard Jefferies*

Richard Jefferies (1848-87) was. the son of a Wiltshire farmer. His education was fitful and at fifteen, when he left school, he showed neither genius nor promise. He was a quiet, shy, dreamy boy, no talker, and " not particularly amiable "—to whom the sunrise or the flight of a bird appealed far more than cricket or any other game. Indeed, little sympathy was shown, even by his parents, with the sensitive youth who found his companions in books and the teeming life of Nature.

Jefferies began his literary career at seventeen, as reporter for the *North Wilts Herald*, a mew Conservative paper, but it was not until 1872 that his work

attracted attention, when his letters to *The Times* on the condition of the Wiltshire labourer brought him into notice; after this he had little difficulty in finding a publisher to take his work, though financially he never reaped a big harvest.

Jefferies' writings are studies in tactile sensation. This is what brings him into affinity with Keats, and this is what differentiates him from Thoreau, with whom he had much in common. Of both Jefferies and Thoreau it might be said, as Emerson said of his friend, that they " saw as with a microscope, heard as with an ear-trumpet ". As lovers of the open air, their every sense was preternaturally quickened. But though both observed acutely, Jefferies alone felt acutely.

" To me," he says, " colour is a sort of food; every spot of colour is a drop of wine to the spirit."

It took many years for him to realise where exactly his strength as a writer lay. In early and later life he again and again essayed the novel form but, superior as were his later fictions—*Amaryllis at the Fair*, for instance, to such crude stuff as *The Scarlet Shawl*—it is as a prose Nature-poet that he will be remembered.

No scholar like Thoreau, he brings no system of thought, as did the American, for Nature to put into shape. Outside of Nature all is arid and profitless to him. He comes to her with empty hands and seeks for what she may give him. To Thoreau the earth was a kind and gracious sister; to Jefferies an all-sufficing mistress.

The reader who passes from Thoreau to Jefferies need have no fear that he will be wearied with the same point of view. On the contrary, he will realise with pleasure how differently two genuine lovers of the earth can express their affection.

In Jefferies' song of praise, his song of desire—praise and desire alternate continually in his writings—there are two aspects of the earth upon which he dwells continually : the exceeding beauty of the earth and its exceeding plenitude.

Again and again Jefferies returns to the richness and plenty of the earth. And his style, suiting itself to the man's temperament, is rich and overflowing, splendidly diffuse, riotously exulting, until at times there is the very incoherence of passion about it.

Ardent, shy, impressionable, proud, pagan, and idealistic, he is one of the interesting figures in the later Victorian literature. His best known works are *The Game-Keeper at Home* (1 878), *Wild Life in a Southern County* (1879), and the story of the boy *Bevis* (1882), which as a story is wanting in significance and is the leąst successful of his books. His excellent autobiography, *The Story of My Heart* , was published in 1883.

Chapter Eight

Criticism and the Essay

(i) Art and Life

LAMB'S essay on *Hogarth* and Hazlitt's on *Conversation ofNorthcote* are among the earliest essays in the broader criticism which attempts to trace the connection between art and life, as others had done between letters and life, similar to the way in which that unhappy man of genius, Benjamin Haydon (1786-1846), did for the Elgin marbles what Ruskin did later for the painting of the Italian mediaevals, in trying to reveal their beauty and vital significance.

The Romantic movement had one of its sources of sustenance in the art of the Middle Ages, another in Greek art, while music, sculpture, and painting affected the poetic outlook of men like Byron, Shelley, Keats, Landor, and Hunt. But the first great critic is John Ruskin (1819-1900).

He was the son of John James Ruskin, head of a firm of wine merchants. His mother was a strict Evangelical and disciplinarian who hoped one day to see her son an Evangelical clergyman. Toys were regarded askance and all entertainments, save a mild conviviality in connection with the local chapel, were tabooed. There was an even more Evangelical and

Spartan aunt, who reminds us of the awesome Miss Emerson, the terror of the youthful Ralph Waldo.

On his thirteenth birthday, Henry Talfourd—his father's partner—gave him Rogers's *Italy*, with illustrations by Turner. This determined, he tells us, " the main tenour of his life ". A year later Prout's *Sketches in Flanders and Germany* served as a prelude to the first of many delightful journeys abroad. Then his innate love of art and Nature were encouraged and stimulated by familiarity through these Continental tours.

In January 1836 Ruskin was entered as a Gentleman Commoner at Christ Church, Oxford, in the hope that in due course he would develop into a bishop of the approved Evangelical type. He proved an excellent student, developed a fine taste in sherry, and attracted many friends by his wit and hospitality. He won, moreover, the Newdigate Prize.

Shortly after he left Oxford the first-fruits of his tours abroad and artistic tastes at home came in the shape of the first of the five volumes given to *Modern Painters.* Nobody cared for Turner, he had said, but " a retired coachmaker of Tottenham and I ".

Although for the first twenty years of his literary life it is the art critic that occupies the stage, while the first of his explicit social strictures was not published until the early 'sixties, yet the social reformer was latent almost from the start, and so far back as 1849 his attitude towards social matters was clearly stated in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).

In *The Stones of Venice* (1853) the art criticism is really subsidiary to the larger matters of life and conduct suggested by those eloquent stones.

Despite these clear indications, there was great dismay and indignation when the vigorous indictment of later political economy appeared—and the papers which Thackeray was publishing then in the *Cornhill Magazine* aroused such opposition that the editor had to put an end to them.

In 1869 Ruskin was elected Slade Professor of Art at Oxford, and Oxford never had a more provocative or stimulating lecturer. After a break in 1877, he resumed his lectures and continued his association with Oxford until 1884. Bad health clouded his later years and obscured his fine genius, but he lingered on, a wreck of his old self, till 1900. No useful purpose can be served, in this short notice, by going into the question of why his marriage to Effie Gray was a failure. It was later annulled, and she married his friend Millais. The facts made known by her letter to her father, in 1854, when she left Ruskin, together with allied correspondence, leave little doubt that he was afflicted for many years by the insanity which eventually, although intermittently, overcame him at Brantwood.

His more important works were, *Modern Painters* (1843-60), *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *Stones of Venice* (1851-53), *Architecture and Painting* (1854), *Political Economy of Art* (1858), *Unto This Last* (1861), *Munera Pulveris* (1862), *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), *The*

Ethics of the Dust (1866), *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), *Praeterita* (1885), and the *Fors Clavigera*, whose periodical publication (many of Ruskin's longer books appeared in parts over a number of years) extended from 1871 to 1884.

Ruskin is often referred to as if he had been a great art critic who spoiled himself by meddling with social problems. Nothing could be wider of the mark than this. Indeed, it would be less extravagant to call him a great social thinker who wasted his time over art criticism. Certainly it is quite an arguable matter how far Ruskin may be called a great art critic. He was, without doubt, a brilliant one, though his idiosyncratic nature made him blind to some forms of art, unduly enthusiastic over others. What is not arguable, however, is the amazing versatility and suggestiveness of the man. He was neither pre-eminently a deep thinker nor a man of supreme excellence in any one department of literature, but a man of high moral principles, of splendid though ill co-ordinated intellectual power, of luxuriant imagination—all of which qualities he turned onto a rich variety of subject-matter.

He never deserted art for sociology, as has been said of him. He took up sociology because through studying art he discovered evil social conditions. His social teaching is a corollary of his art criticism —that " ideas of Truth are the foundation, ideas of imitation the destruction of all Art ". For art meant to him the outward expression of the inward beauty

that haunts the imagination of every great artist. And how could this beauty be realised while modern conditions of living were so ugly and deadening ?

Ruskin's value as an art critic lay chiefly in the impulse he gave to his generation to appreciate the beauty of natural phenomena; he showed them the absurdity of confounding the grandeur of Nature merely with her big scenic effects, where a blade of grass or an ordinary cloud can reveal as richly the possibilities of beauty. To this extent he supplemented the implicit teaching of Wordsworth and Shelley.

Approaching art with this underlying thought, he postulated that painting should be something more than an ingenious arrangement of pigments. Without under-valuing technique, he emphasised passionately the importance of sincerity and truthfulness.

"From 1843 to 1860 he concerned himself with the fine arts generally, especially painting, sculpture, and architecture; from 1860 onwards he carried the principles underlying this criticism into social life, and just as Turner inspired his earlier work so does Carlyle inspire his later.

The jerry-builder symbolised for Ruskin the defective idealism that he found in the life of his day. In a corrupt age, he argued, you have corrupt art; in an age of noble aims and endeavours, great art. As stated by him, the generalisation seems too sweeping. The history of our art can show periods of splendour when there was abundant moral depravity.

Ruskin over-emphasises the correspondence between

art and morality. Beauty may be the concrete final expression of tightness. But rightness of what? Not necessarily of conduct, surely, but of feeling. High and enduring beauty cannot be the expression of a debased and low nature. But it may well be that the artist expresses here merely his feeling for what is good and great, although the evil influences in his nature conspire to prevent him expressing this feeling in action as a man.

The vision of beauty is by no means confined to the virtuous soul, any more than is spiritual intuition. The crafty and scheming Jacob sees a ladder ascending from earth to heaven, where his more robust moral brother sees only a heap of stones in a desert place. Even " the devils believe and tremble ".

Ruskin therefore circumscribes bis argument too narrowly, in identifying great art with the outward expression of a healthy conscience.

In regarding Ruskin's work as a social critic it is well to bear in mind his thorough qualification for the r61e of reformer. Whatever may be the defects of his teaching, they are not due to any ignorance about the subject-matter he is discussing. Ruskin had, indeed, approached social economics with none of the vague sentimentalities so often and so unjustly placed to his account, but with a logical power and dialectical skill denied to many of his hostile critics.

What he has done, roughly speaking, is to humanise political economy, to express the jargon of the Economist about " cost" and " utility " in terms of

human life and he did this not as an emotional moralist but as a keen scientific inquirer.

In this way wealth was estimated by the economist as a question of material welfare only, whereas, as Ruskin truly maintains, material welfare must be balanced by the character of the labour that goes to produce it; its duration, monotony, wholesomeness, or unwholesomeness.

Work that debilitates a people, drawing away its best energies, can produce only a sorry kind of wealth. The only true wealth, in fact, is life.

Ruskin's social teaching was manifested in *Unto This Last* (1860) and *Munera Puheris* (1862), while his early discontent was generally expressed in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). This was tolerated but his full teaching was found so shocking that serial publication of the two later books was stopped. It is significant that Ruskin none the less considered himself a Tory preaching most conservative views against the cold doctrines of Utilitarian economists.

Apart from his directly social work, he played a most important part in showing the people's need for a free and compulsory general education. In this work his name ranks with those of Matthew Arnold and Herbert Spencer in preparing the way for the Education Act of 1870. Holding that, " You do not educate a man by telling him what he knew not, but in making him what he was not", he was at one with Spencer, who wrote that, " To prepare us for complete living is the function which Education has to discharge ".

In order to appraise the content of Ruskin's work as a critic of art and social problems we must always bear in mind that he was essentially a medievalist. His medievalism it was that gave him his passion for the Gothic; that led him to under-rate Greek art; that attracted him to Pre-Raphaelitism, that coloured the eclectic Catholicism into which he finally drifted as a religious thinker; this medievalism it was, moreover, which brought him into line with Carlyle's love of the Middle Ages and that made him, with Carlyle (though more explicitly and elaborately), adopt a kind of aristocratic Socialism as his economic creed, and laud authority and obedience. With his successor, Morris, he disclaims the art-for-art's-sake theory; but whereas with Morris it was art for life's sake, with Ruskin it is ultimately art for God's sake. For him all great art is praise.

An understanding of this strong medievalist spirit in Ruskin will probably help to explain many of the strange inconsistencies and arbitrary pronouncements that often mar not only his immensely valuable art and social criticism but also his literary criticism.

The writings of Pater, Symonds, and Wilde fall inside the period covered by our next volume.

(ii) Life and Letters

At the opening of the century Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), whom we have noticed in the preceding volume, was one of the most remarkable figures of the time. Here we may briefly say that he was educated

at Christ's Hospital, and joined his brother in editing the *Examiner*. He was fined and imprisoned for libelling the Prince Regent. On his release he went to Italy, to live with Byron and edit *The Liberal*—an ill-starred venture. An indefatigable journalist, whose commitments prevented him from writing to the fullness of his ability, he wrote almost the whole of the periodicals *The Indicator* (1819-21) and *The Companion* (1828), as well as *Leigh Hunt's London journal* (1834-35). He was a pleasant, rather vague man whom Dickens unfairly caricatured in the Mr. Skimpole of *'Bleak House ;* his constant shortage of money was almost the only proper detail in the representation. His prose writings invite comparison with those of Lamb and Hazlitt, necessarily to be placed below them at a general estimate. His verse has given us such excellent things as the sonnet *Nile* and the by no means inconsiderable *Abou ben Adhem* and *Jenny Kissed Me* (said to be derived from a welcome once given him by the charming Jane Welsh Carlyle). One would like to say that Hunt was no less than Hazlitt or Lamb; perhaps the fact that one's liking for him is so strong as to cause the wish may indicate how little he is at times behind them. Unfortunately, it is only " at times ".

The great Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was born at Ecclefechan, in Dumfriesshire, whence he went to the Annan Grammar School and, at fourteen, entered Edinburgh University. After teaching mathematics at Annan and Kirkcaldy, he decided it " were better

to perish than continue schoolmastering ", and returned to Edinburgh to study law. He took badly to the work, maintained himself by contributions to Brewster's *Encyclopedia,* studied German, became devoted to Goethe and, in 1824, published a translation of *Wilhelm Meister,* and a *Life of Schiller* a year later. In 1826 Jane Welsh agreed to marry him, and they set up house in the small farm she had inherited at Craigenputtock. Carlyle said it was " the dreariest spot in all the British Dominions ", and here for six years he wrestled with his work, enduring the agonies of his chronic dyspepsia and his wife's inexperienced cookery. In 1834 he turned to London, having accomplished some of his best essays and *Sartor Resartus* in the farm the Carlyles were glad to leave.

He now began the famous *French Revolution.* The manuscript of the first volume he lent to John Stuart Mill, who found himself unable to return it. One account says that Mill's servant used all save a few pages of it to light fires; another says the servant was employed by Mill's friend Mrs. Taylor, to whom he had lent the precious papers. Carlyle accepted the disaster without reproach, quietly began his labour again, and the work was published in 1837. Then he took to lecturing as a source of income; *Heroes and Hero-worship* (published 1841) was a reprint of one of the three courses he undertook. Anxiety about income had by then ceased, since his wife's mother had bequeathed Mrs. Carlyle an income of £250 a year. This relief was only one of the many helps which she

brought to him. An intelligent, witty woman who was well able to manage him and to fulfil what she decided was her vocation—to be the wife of a man of genius—she gave him a love and care which he deeply appreciated.

In 1845 he published *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell ; Latter-Day Pamphlets,* one of his most brilliant books, appeared in 1850, and a year later his gentlest and probably most easily likeable book, the *Life of Sterling.* No less than fourteen years were now spent in preparing and writing his monumental *History of Frederick the Great,* which was published in 1865.

Carlyle was now in the forefront of the literary giants. A few months later Mrs. Carlyle died while driving in her carriage in Hyde Park; she was alone, and the tragedy was discovered only when the coachman turned to ask for instructions. Carlyle later wrote, " All of sunshine that remained in my life went out in that moment; all of strength, too, seems to have gone." The house in Cheyne Walk was now empty for him, and he remained for fifteen years, haunting the Chelsea Embankment and Battersea Park, and writing the *Reminiscences* of his wife and himself which Froude edited after his death. In 1874 Disraeli offered him a baronetcy and the Grand Cross of the Bath. He refused them. He died in February 1881 and, although a burial in Westminster Abbey was desired by all, his remains were taken, as he had wished, back to Ecclefechan.

The publication of the *'Reminiscences* on which he

had been working, and the injudicious printing of many details and papers which he would assuredly have omitted, caused a storm of abuse to fall upon Froude. Certainly what was published was by no means representative of Carlyle and his wife. The matter may now be forgotten, since one of the compensations which time has made has been the restoration of a true picture of the happy relations between them and of her own gracious, witty, and self-denying love for him.

Before passing to a critical review of his work, we may immediately admit that Carlyle is not easy to read. Even his printed page is often ugly to look at, its craggy sentences made jagged by forcible punctuation, its capital letters starting out to strike the eye. His simplest and most musical prose can be disconcerting to look at, as in

> " Dark is the way of the Eternal as mirrored in this world of Time : God's way is in the sea, and His path in the great deep."

The habit of accenting the first syllable of sentences, which is a violence to prose rhythm, increases the unfamiliarity :

> " Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tired, and beaten with stripes, even as I am ? Ever, whether thou bear the royal mantle or the beggar's gaberdine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave."

Well, there are idiosyncracies enough, but they are purposeful, and not merely wayward. Carlyle wrote

with infinite labour and had no desire that readers should use his books to woo sleep after dinner.

Although Carlyle lived to feel the influence of the Scientific Movement of the mid-century, he remained in spirit and attitude a revolutionary of the older period. Not an abstract revolutionary like.Shelley; not a merely literary radical like Lamb; but one thoroughly imbued with the revolutionary spirit, dissatisfied with modern commercialism, a champion of the simplicities of life, with keen admiration for the qualities of courage and endurance, a fighter rather than a critic, while in spirit he was far more attuned to the transcendentalism of Wordsworth than to the utilitarianism of Mill. Yet, like his friend Ruskin, he was a man of moods and wild inconsistencies. Consequently he has been claimed as the friend of widely divergent schools of thought and abused by all the political parties in turn.

Ldoking at his work as a whole, we are struck by the burning ethical enthusiasm that lights up every utterance. Literature is to him as a chaff unless it is the medium for conveying some direct moral truth. History has no meaning save as the life experience of great personalities and as a serial illustration of the prevalence of Might.

Whatever the subject, he always interpolated a few of his favourite precepts, and here we can get some definite outline of his teaching. Don't cant—Don't whine—Don't gush ! On these he is always ringing the changes. Like many preachers, he was doubtful

at the time what we ought to do but never doubtful about what we ought not to do.

Indeed, as a writer he is not merely great, but very great; less imposing than Ruskin, less perspicuous, but with an incisive force, an illuminating brilliance of phrase that Meredith himself might have envied. The difference, indeed, between Carlyle and (the earlier) Ruskin as stylists is as considerable as that between Whistler and Burne-Jones.

When Carlyle came up to London with *Sartor Resartus* in his pocket and the determination to harass the " terrified owls " of publishers, Coleridge was the dominant spiritual force among those of the younger generation, and although Carlyle seized, with his customary satiric humour, on the weakness in Coleridge's transcendental philosophy, his own spiritual standpoint was much the same. Both he and Coleridge were impatient with the " cause-and-effect" philosophy of the eighteenth century, and both of them valued German idealists as providing the basis of a vital and practical religion.

In his German studies, therefore, he fixed upon Goethe as his hero. At first sight the choice is surprising and unaccountable, for Goethe was essentially an artist and Carlyle's contempt for art was deeply ingrained.

But it was Goethe as a philosopher that attracted Carlyle—Goethe's natural mysticism, his untheological transcendentalism, if I may use such a contradictory term, that appealed especially to one who was always a Calvinist without dogma. And *Sartor Resartus* is

Carlyle's first and most elaborate attempt to state disposition.

His gospel of work, of action, is here : here also is his belief in personality, which he elucidates in more concrete form in his *Hero Worship* and later writings. What are the *French Revolution, Cromwell, Frederick,* but elaborate studies of the dynamic influence of men like Robespierre, Mirabeau, Cromwell, and Frederick? What are his *Critical Essays* but attempts to get at the "man" beneath his literary trappings, whether it be Richter or Burns, or Scott or Johnson ? Why did he extol the Middle Ages at the expense of his own age, as he does in *Past and Present* ? Because in the Middle Ages, in his opinion, a finer and more forceful expression of the personal equation was possible. Why does he laud the strong man ? Because of his belief in his personality. And if we ask why this insistence on the dynamic, we come back to his religion, his belief that in gfenuine men the Divine Idea is expressed; or, in theological terminology, that in Man, God (the spirit of the universe) is made flesh.

Sartor Resartus, with its explosive transcendentalism, met with no friendly reception save from a few like Emerson, who welcomed its anti-materialistic standpoint. Very different was the reception of the *French Revolution,* where he gives a concrete illustration of the thesis in *Sartor.* And a wonderful prose-poem the book remains—a dramatic poem that no student of history can afford to pass by. He will not learn the story of the Revolution from this book but, having

mastered the story and the great sequence of events in any reliable text-book, he will understand the Revolution the better for reading Carlyle's poem.

The *French Revolution* appeared in 1837; then came his little book on *Chartism,* and *Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841). *Chartism* is best considered along with *Past and Present* and *Latter-Day Pamphlets,* for in these three volumes his social creed is fully expressed in its curious yet characteristic blend of radicalism and conservatism; its idealism of the past; its paean on the strong man whom the people should obey; its contempt for legislative forms; its denunciation of *laissez-faire.* Amidst much extravagance, as for instance, in the unrestrained denunciation of political machinery; amidst much wilful wrong-headedness, as, for instance, his defence of slavery, there are many luminous suggestions on social politics that subsequent reformers have seized upon.

The nineteenth century accepted a political econbmy which caused great suffering among agricultural and industrial workers; it was satisfied to relieve this by philanthropy, which it organised socially as well as in the form of Poor Laws. To Carlyle both the inhuman doctrines of Ricardo and the charity were equally repugnant. Sternly individualist, he shaped Liberal thought by his great moral influence, and stood out for a man's right to be manly, hard working, and sure of proper reward. His phrases became slogans, such "Justice before charity"—"Permanence of employment "—" A fair day's wage for a fair day's work."

These ideas he defended even though he became estranged from Utilitarian friends such as J. S. Mill.

Meanwhile, in 1845, came the big book *Cromwell,* and the re-discovery of the greatness of Puritanism; for that it was great is practically assented to. In its way the book is fully as fine from the intellectual point of view as the *French devolution.*

The *Life of Sterling* (1851), that followed *Cromwell* and the *Social Essays,* has a distinctive place among Carlyle's writings; there is no thunder here, nothing of the fierce worship and hot intensity that inform most of Carlyle's works. There is an atmosphere of spiritual calm curiously unlike the prevalent mood of the writer; while those who find Carlyle's usual style an irritant rather than a stimulant may find here a clear, tranquil, and subdued prose that cannot upset their susceptibilities.

Then came a longish interval in which Carlyle was passing through, as his wife humorously called it, " the Valley of the Shadow of Frederick ". Less attractive than the *French Revolution,* less direct in its appeal to most English readers than the *Cromwell, Frederick the Great* is the greatest intellectual feat performed by Carlyle. Indeed, in its treatment of Frederick's military carpings, it is regarded as a classic in Germany. The book severely taxed Carlyle's powers, as we may believe when we consider its scope and content; and it is one of the hardest to construe of the author's writings, largely because Carlyle's mannerisms of style are nowhere more abundant.

There are two ways of regarding Carlyle's significance. We may regard him merely as a force in letters or we may look at him as a prophet to his age. In both capacities he deserves the attention of the literary student.

Even those who condemn his thought as confused and esteem his ethical influence as over-rated concede him greatness as an artist. His books abound in brilliant, vivid pictures. Whatever he touches—whether a bit of landscape, an historical character, a biographical detail, even a date—is made alive and significant. His style has serious defects, but want of actuality and intensity is not among them.

Carlyle's imagination is, as Emerson truly observed, of the stereoscopic order. He can give substance and perspective to his pictures. His figures are not embroidered decorations on flat surfaces. No literary critic can more happily sum up the character of a man in a phrase. Take, for instance, the following felicities : " Bacon sees—Shakespeare sees through "; Swift carried " sarcasm to an epic pitch". With what humorous insight he has referred to Dean Stanley as " knocking holes in the Church of England ".

This brilliant intensity of style is occasionally blinding and leads the writer into violent contrasts that lack proportion; but this is only the defect of his virtue as a writer. For the writing is always individual and forceful, never dull, insincere, nor trivial.

Passing from the manner to the matter of his criticism, it may be noted that he reduces every subject

to a common moral denomination. His best criticisms are something much more than literary estimates; they are spiritual appreciations.

As a literary critic Carlyle has none of the lighter graces, for he is too stern a wayfarer to care to saunter along the highways of literature; his imagination, intense and concrete, finds no sustenance in the exquisite abstractions of Shelley on the one hand, or the clear, logical presentment of a John Stuart Mill on the other. There must be passion or pronounced ethical bias in a writer for Carlyle to value him. He valued the teacher in Goethe rather than the artist; the genial man in Scott rather than the story-teller, and where he could detect no distinct moral purpose nor gripping emotional power he was frankly uninterested and did less than justice to his subject.

Yet it is as an ethical force that Carlyle will be best remembered. Here scarcely ever is he at fault. Sincere and honourable in all his dealings, he preached a practical workaday creed that was a living force for many decades after it was first delivered. If his hatred of compromise led him at times into intemperance of speech, the feeling at the bottom was incontrovertible enough. By a little trimming and toning down he might at more than one juncture in his career have secured a material position that would have saved him many a year of hard struggle. But he never compromised, never abated a jot of what he held to be right. And if he proved impervious to the blandishments of money, he was equally impervious

to the seduction of praise. Success has spoiled many a good man : it never affected Carlyle.

The glowing sincerity of his *Sartor Resartus,* the moral suggestiveness of his *Hero Worship* and his *Cromwell,* and the large poetic imagination of certain of his *Essays,* will exercise a more permanent influence than even the brilliance of the *French devolution* and *Frederick,* and that because, as Leigh Hunt said of him:

> " What Mr. Carlyle loves better than his fault-finding, with all its eloquence, is the face of any human creature that looks suffering, and loving, and sincere."

The didactic essayists were most popular among Victorian readers. Among them were the two Hares (Julius, 1795-1855; Augustus, 1792-1834), whose aphoristic *Guesses at Truth* was once so eagerly read. Neither they nor Sir Arthur Helps (1813-75), author of *Friends in Council* (1847-59) and *Companions of My Solitude* (1851), show any depth of originality; and their popularity was probably due to the fact that they expressed sensibly, and with mild literary ability, sentiments held to be improving.

William Rathbone Greg (1809-81) was a decidedly more interesting figure. He was a clear, vigorous writer on social and religious problems from a Radical standpoint. His *Creed of Christendom* is practically a Unitarian manifesto and its chief merit lies in the forcible lucidity with which he states his case. Of greater interest is the volume E*nigmas of Life,* which is more varied in its scope and gives a good picture of

the various social and ethical problems troubling his generation.

More interesting still, from the literary point of view, is William Brighty Rands (1823-82). His delightful verse is treated elsewhere. Of his prose, the two volumes, *Henry Holbeach : Student in Life and Philosophy* (1865), and *Views and Opinions* (1866), give us of his best in wise, witty, and trenchant sayings on the life of his day.

But he was not merely a maker of aphoristic apothegms ; he had the power of visualising certain types of character with a dry humour that reminds the reader of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

More concerned with letters, less with contemporary life, are Sir John Skelton (1831-97), with his agreeable and sprightly *Nugae Criticae* (1882) and *Table-Talk* (1894), and A. K. H. Boyd (1825-99), whose Re*creations of a Country Parson* (1859-61), and other volumes of miscellaneous essay work, contain a good deal of pleasant chatter.

The next critic of importance is Matthew Arnold (1822-88).

At first sight, Arnold's critical essays may disappoint the student. He has no aptitude for logical arrangement; cares little about presenting a live and definite portrait of the subject of the criticism, and makes no attempt to look round his subject; indeed, when his sympathies are " imperfect" (to use Ella's phrase) he does not try even to present the writer's own point of view. He doesn't like him; that is

sufficient. He dismisses Shelley just as in another direction he dismisses miracles, with a shrug of his shoulders.

These are drawbacks which cannot be lightly passed over. None the less they are outweighed by the positive merits of Arnold's critical accomplishment.

Arnold's plea for Classicism as opposed to Romanticism may first be considered. Although he ignored or belittled much that was valuable in Romanticism, he pointed out very clearly its defects and weaknesses as a movement. He exposed the exaggerated importance attached to the Middle Ages and the " grotesqueness " and " irrationality " of much literary medievalism. He saw just as clearly, yet with more sympathy, the tendency towards eccentricity, formlessness, and lack of balance encouraged by Romanticism. The defect of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, he held, was to imagine " that the peculiar effect of nature resides in the whole and not in the parts ". What is the cure for this ? Arnold gives it not only once (it first appears in the Preface to the *Poems* of 1853) but again and again in his writings. A return to the classical spirit gives " calm cheerfulness, disinterested objectivity ". If we wished to regain these we must not only study the classics themselves but pay less attention to German and more attention to French literature.

For the critic one of the most important legacies of this classical spirit was the spirit of disinterestedness, of self-detachment. This is the spirit, indeed, that

animates all Arnold's work whether critical or creative. Suavity, as we saw, was a dominant note of his verse; the absence of violence—whether in laudation or disapprobation. Arnold is always in kid gloves. In his *Essays in Criticism,* his *Culture and Anarchy,* his *friendship's Garland,* his breeding is perfect, his voice is never raised; but the light banter, the courteous irony, the searching analysis, are of the highest quality.

Hence the famous remark that " poetry is a criticism of life " is an epigrammatic summing up of all that he contends for as a writer both of life and letters. It means that poetry is more than a matter of externals, more than the utterances of certain moods; it is an expression of the moral and intellectual attitude of the literary artist.

Culture, therefore, is nothing more nor less than the study of perfection. It moves by the force not only of pure knowledge but by the moral and social passion for doing good.

Hellenism he defines as " the intelligence driving out those ideas which are, after all, the basis of right practices, the indomitable impulse to know and adjust them perfectly ". Hellenism aims at right seeing; Hebraism at right doing. Our aim should be to combine these and not, as pantheism has done, to .emphasise conduct only.

Elsewhere Arnold applies this line of criticism to the various divisions of English society. He condemns the " aristocratic " classes for their indifference to

ideas, the middle classes for their preoccupation with money-making.

Yet while condemning the attention of the average man to what he calls " practical considerations", Arnold is, in the higher sense of the term, a lover of practicality. Whether he is just to the " mystic " is a debatable point that need not be discussed here. But his dislike of any spiritual attitude that could not be expressed in definite, concrete usefulness is certainly to the point. No one has more admirably disengaged from its pantheistic setting the shrewd practicality of Emerson than he; or appraised more clearly the peculiar genius of Heine, or the healing power of Wordsworth. The great idealist in his view was always practical. His dream-castles have solid foundations though their turrets may be in the clouds.

Of Robert Louis Stevenson's work as a romancer and as a poet mention has been made previously. There is not the same original force and intellectual body in his critical work that we find in the great critics of the Romantic movement; but in freshness, grace, and individuality he has few rivals. Especially attractive is the personal, idiosyncratic note. What holds us most is his engaging manner. Examine his agreeable essays, *Virginibus Puerisque* and *Familiar Studies of Men and Books,* and this quality will manifest itself. Frequently we are reminded of Hazlitt, Lamb, and Montaigne. Yet, despite his obvious indebtedness to these greater writers, there is an individual flavour

about Stevenson's work—the flavour of an attractive personality. This is sufficient compensation.

Among the critics in the closing years of the Victorian era are several names of considerable interest.

George Henry Lewes (1817-78) was a gifted and versatile man of letters, who wrote an excellent *Life of Goethe*, and touched with grace and distinction—if with fitful power—philosophy, fiction, and criticism.

Harriet Martineau (1802-76) proved a keen and incisive critic of social politics. Of greater importance was Walter Bagehot (1826-77), a fine economist who never lost sight of the human equation; and a fresh and stimulating literary critic, Richard Holt Hutton (1826-97) of the *Spectator*.

As literary editor of the *Spectator*', Hutton wrote criticism on most of the important tendencies of his day and his criticisms are wide and diverse. Many of these have been reprinted, and although there is a certain journalistic scrappiness about the papers in *Contemporary Thought and Thinkers* (1894), there are no few luminous suggestions and a high seriousness of treatment. He excelled especially in ethical estimates. One of his best volumes of criticism is his *Modern Guide of English Thought in Matters of Faith* (1887), where he reviews in turn the work and influence of Carlyle, J. H. Newman, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, and Frederick Denison Maurice.

In his more purely literary essays, those on Wordsworth, Tennyson, Hawthorne, and Browning are

perhaps the best. Much has been written on these great Victorians by other critics, more finely sensitive to their artistic qualities, but no critique with which I am familiar seizes with greater power on what may be called the moral dynamics than Hutton's.

Chapter Nine

Philosophers and Theologians

(i) Introduction

THE general drift of speculative thought in the nineteenth century can be gathered from the poetry, the fiction, and the critical-essay work of the age. Calvinistic evangelicalism, for instance, that flourished in its earlier years, is reflected in the poetry of Burns and the hymns of Cowper, while its influence is clearly apparent in the earlier novels of Dickens and George Eliot, more faintly so in the outlook of Macaulay, and insistently so in Carlyle's view of life. Ruskin's strict evangelical training left ineffaceable impressions upon his mode of thought—although, like Carlyle, he shook off its dogmatic trappings—while Browning's religious poetry owes more to evangelicalism than to any other theological school. The effect of the so-called " Oxford Movement " and the neo-Catholicism found also remarkable though less wide expression in letters; it coloured the writings of Froude, and is closely interwoven with the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelite school—indifferent as many of the singers were to its theological implications—while in fiction it bore fruit in the novels of Charlotte Yonge and the mystical fiction of J. H. Shorthouse. A third development of philo-

sophic speculation—rationalism—may be traced in the historical work of men like Seeley and Lecky; in the later novels of George Eliot, and in the work of modern men of letters such as Meredith and Hardy.

The Church in the late eighteenth century had been roused from its apathy by those fiery souls, the two Wesleys and their co-worker, Whitefield. And in the opening years of the nineteenth century the most vigorous personalities in the religious world were men of the same type. An analysis of the speculative thought of the Evangelicals is like the contents of that famous chapter " Snakes in Iceland. There are no snakes in Iceland."

Speculative thought in current theology began to stir in two directions. On the one hand we have the so-called "Noetic School" headed by Whately, a hard-headed thinker of the matter-of-fact type, who did vigorous work in destructive criticism, exposing the narrowness of the Evangelicals and turning attention to historical methods. His weakness and those of his followers lay in the lack of spiritual fervour which the great Evangelicals undoubtedly possessed.

A more potent and far-reaching influence was that of Coleridge and his Scots allies, Thomas Erskine and Edward Irving, who brought back mysticism into English theology, and assisted in pouring the wine of German philosophy into the worn-out wine-skins of orthodox Anglicanism—often, it must be admitted, with the result of bursting the wine-skins.

Coleridge's influence, then, was two-fold: on his

mystical and poetical side he favoured the growth of the High Church or Tractarian movement; on his dialectical side he brought about the birth of the Broad Church movement.

Scott tried to recapture the external splendour of the Middle Ages; Coleridge its mystical beauty; Newman its ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The great names connected with the new Catholic movement are John Henry Newman, John Keble, W. G. Ward, Edward Bouverie Pusey.

John Keble (1792-1866). His famous discourse on " National Apostacy ", in Newman's view, started the movement of the 'thirties.

Keble was a simple, sweet-natured soul, with no great power of thought and little originality; and his influence was almost entirely personal. His sensitive and pious mind eagerly absorbed floating ideas as to the authority of the Church in pre-Reformation times, and in his *Christian Year* (1827) we have a poetical expression of his saintly ideals, which appeal so strongly to men like Newman.

(ii) Cardinal Newman

John Henry, Cardinal Newman (1801-90) was the eldest son of a London banker, whose fortunes seriously declined in the financial crisis of 1815; his mother, of French Protestant descent, brought up her family to revere the work of such men as William Bell Scott, as well as to love the Bible.

From at school at Haling, Newman went to Trinity

College, Oxford, took his degree in 1820, and in 1822 was elected to an Oriel fellowship. In 1824 Newman was ordained to the curacy of St. Clement's, Oxford, and four years later was appointed vicar of St. Mary's.

But Newman was fast breaking away from the old evangelical traditions and a tour with Hurrell Froude to the south of Europe, in 1832, helped to fix more firmly the growing idea that his mission was to revive a more Catholic spirit in the Church of England. The well-known hymn " Lead, kindly Light", was written in 1833, during the journey back to England from his tour. On his return he threw himself into the Tractarian movement, inaugurated by Keble, and set to work upon the *Tracts for the Times*—his own *Tract XC* appearing in 1841.

With mental and spiritual forces now in conflict, Newman decided that he could not conscientiously remain at St. Mary's, so in 1843 he resigned his cure and retired to Littlemore. In 1845, "I was hard at work ", he tells us," on the *Essay of Doctrinal Development.* As I advanced, my view cleared. . . ." Thus in October 1845 Newman found a haven in the Catholic Church, " after many storms ". After his reception he spent some time in Rome and returned to Birmingham during the cholera epidemic of 1848, and at once devoted himself to the sick poor of that city. As founder and the first superior of the Community of St. Philip Neri, he settled in Edgbaston, where he passed the remainder of his life, and died in 1890.

Newman is, like Mill, a lover of clear, definite,

tangible statements. There is no danger with him of losing ourselves in that mystical haze which irritates and bewilders the ordinary common sense of mankind. Indeed, his own admissions support his critics' contention. No one, of course, could be more sensitive to the mysterious element in theology but in his view dogma is not the less definite for being mysterious.

His literary style expressed most admirably the temper and tone of the writer. It was a beautiful style—beautiful with a limpid lucidity, a chastened eloquence, a gentle persuasiveness.

Reading Newman's temperament through his delightfully pellucid style, we are struck by two personal characteristics which help to explain the deep and far-reaching influence of the man; " a peculiar power of sensitive sympathy, and passionate sincerity ".

There are men critical by nature, who are keenly sensitive to the " pros " and " cons ", and whose subtle intellects expose them to difficulties of which the average man knows nothing. Newman was a man of this nature. None knew better than he that some kind of active faith was essential to a man who wishes to do some genuine work in life. He appreciated the paralysing effect of doubt: he was alive to the criticism of the scoffer, that religion makes little difference to many men's lives. He knew the seductive power of the senses, for he was an artist in his own way, and the possibilities of human nature for good and evil appalled him.

And a good deal that he wrote which seemed hesi-

taring and casuistical, which provoked men of simpler, rougher natures, was due to his sensitiveness to every form of intellectual difficulty and to subtle moral temptations, and to his desire to meet them as far as possible.

After his conversion Newman published some remarkable books. The first was his autobiography—his spiritual autobiography—*Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864), perhaps the most significant of his writings. The keynote of the truth may be found in this statement:

> " From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion. I know no other religion : I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion. Religion as a mere sentiment is to me a dream and a mockery."

The dogmatic principle which he asserts so passionately in his *Apologia* is worked out with brilliant elaboration in two books—*The Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), and *A Grammar of Assent* (1870). •

In *A Grammar of Assent* Newman elaborated a principle derived probably from Keble, that religious conviction rests on emotional, not on intellectual grounds. That, further, these grounds cannot be theoretically proved, or logically justified, probability being converted into certainty by a voluntary assent.

The doctrine of probability is borrowed and developed from Butler and Newman certainly has much to say that is stimulating and suggestive. There is a profound psychological truth in his contention that our opinions are so largely affected by instinctive pre-

possessions, temperamental likes and dislikes, and that, estimating our view, these peculiarities of our mental constitution which no argument can alter must be taken into consideration.

The distrust with which much of Newman's writing has been received is not difficult to understand. It rests on the astonishment with which people notice that, in saying that we often reach the truth by imagination in advance of our reason, he then seeks to prove by logic what he had accepted by intuition. There is nothing fundamentally dishonest in this and it is beyond complaint, provided that logic actually supplies the proof. In many cases it does not appear to his readers to do so. They therefore complain, not unnaturally, that he has tried to gain their acceptance of particular dogmas by the claim that they have already committed themselves to the statement that the dogmatic principle is essential to religious belief.

This is a misconception of his position, since he had accepted the dogma of Papal Infallibility. Indeed, he had seen that logic will not always prove the validity of certain doctrines which the mind intuitively perceives to be essential to the whole body of faith. Consequently he underwent the long spiritual agony, suggested in the hymn " Lead, kindly Light ", which ended only when he had satisfied himself that there existed an infallible source of doctrinal authority which could, where logic failed, by its own logically established validity affirm certainty to what reason was too limited to prove. In other words, he relied on a

second principle, as St. Augustine of Hippo had done when he declared that he would not believe what he could not first understand. This, he explained, meant that he would accept any doctrine which reason showed to be rational. Should he fail to find such proof for any particular doctrine, which he intuitively perceived to be necessary to the complete structure of dogma, he would rely on the teaching of an authority which his reason had assured him to be of divine origin and teaching power. In this sense he would understand the dogma which his reason could not make clear to him.

This was Newman's position. He searched for such an authority and changed his religion because he believed that he had found it.

The fact was not clear to his readers, who had not had full opportunity to follow the working of his mind during the years when the problem of finding doctrinal certainty had been his greatest anxiety. From his point of view his subsequent demands that the validity of particular doctrines should be accepted was not only reasonable but imperative; from the viewpoint of many readers, both today and in his lifetime, it was either a dishonesty or an impertinence. A knowledge of his own spiritual quest and its result should have made it easier to understand.

(iii) **Other Writers**

Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-82). Lacking Newman's probing intellect, he did not even go so far as to try to reconcile faith with reason. His imagination

was far less sensitive; and although he, like Newman, was honest and sincere enough, he is even more of the special pleader. In almost every way he is inferior to Newman; he is far less attractive as a personality, more questionable in his methods, and immeasurably inferior as a literary craftsman.

Hurrell Froude (1803-36) was a man of brilliant parts who survives rather as a memory, for he died early, leaving nothing by which he could be fairly judged. He was a great friend of Newman, wrote two of the *Tracts for the Times*, and some fair verse. His personal influence transcended his literary power.

William George Ward (1812-82) was another personality with great intellectual gifts, personal charm, and indifferent literary ability. He was one of the most influential English Catholics after Newman. His *Ideal of a Christian Church* was not a well-written nor even well-thought-out book, but it was important, since it indicated, from another angle, that need for a teaching authority which Newman had seen and which led them both to embrace Catholicism.

Richard William Church (1815-90), the friend of Newman, is second only to him in literary skill and charm. Certainly he was the most distinguished literary figure of the High Church party. He has written a clear and succinct account of the Oxford Movement and some monographs of the first order on Dante, Spenser, and Bacon. Here he shows the fullest appreciation of those diverse personalities. While never indiscriminate in praise, he can be both delicately

sympathetic and coolly judickl—a combination of qualities as rare as it is welcome.

(iv) Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill (1806-73) is often referred to as if he had been a mere logic-chopping machine like his father, James Mill. It was quite otherwise; with his father's clear intellectual power he combined a power of imagination and an emotional intensity alien to his parent. Yet it was not till nearly middle life that he realised the potentiality of his powers. Schooled by his father to check the imagination and repress emotion, he had done so until he realised he was starving his nature and frustrating his ability.

Although his clerkship at the India House had freed him from financial worry, Mill found that life had no meaning or pleasure. Deeply depressed by the realisation that this was the chief result of his education, he looked about for something which would give him the peace of mind he needed. Religion he held to be an illusion; the quest for happiness he thought to be the main obstacle to securing what he sought; there remained for him only the discovery of a source of life and thought which would give purpose to his existence. In this dismal state, which continued for a long time, he came to realise that his depression was due to the neglect of his own susceptibilities. Shortly afterwards he found the inspiration he needed in Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality.* • He could not share the philosophical beliefs expressed in

the poem but he rejoiced in the " culture of the feelings " and the "sympathetic and imaginative pleasure " which he found there. They were to him a " source of inward joy ".

This discovery was of the first importance, for until now Mill had drawn his philosophy exclusively from Radical and Utilitarian writers, such as Berkeley, Hume, and Bentham, more fully noticed in Vol. IV. Nor did he ever wholly depart from their main lines of thought, but he began to exhibit signs of " mysticism " which alarmed his friends who clung to the individualism of Benthamite teaching. He passed on to a study of Coleridge, aided by frequent discussions with F. D. Maurice and John Sterling.

His approach to religious thought now became more rational and sympathetic. In the course of time he settled to a more or less contented and well-ordered system of beliefs. In social theory he was faithful to David Smith and *laissez-faire*; in philosophy he moved from agnosticism towards a theism largely derived from Comte and the Positivists. He remained rationalist and utilitarian but the " mystical" discovery of his own inner life gave him a moderation of thought, a moderation of judgement, and a desire to analyse fully before forming an opinion, which were in no small degree responsible for the high reputation accorded him by all thinking people of his day.

His principal publications were *A System of Logic* (1843); *Principles of Political Economy* (1848); the essay on *Liberty* (1859) and the *Thoughts on Parlia-*

mentary Reform of the same year; *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861); *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865); and the posthumously published *Three Essays on Religion* (1874).

Mill claims a place in our literature as a popular philosophical writer who did not write down to his public but expressed his views in clear and practical prose. He revealed an impartial mind, honestly stating such facts as it could discover, and rejoicing in precision of statement and fairness of discussion. Few philosophers have succeeded in writing so plainly and effectively. Indeed, few have seen the need for so writing, and we must credit Mill with both the perception of the style suited to his material and the ability to adapt his writing to its requirements.

(v) Positivism

There is no need to go into details about the theory of Positivist philosophy or to spend much time in reading the lives of its English exponents, the more important of whom are already included in this book for reasons of purely literary interest.

In brief, Positivism substituted humanity for Divinity as the object of man's respect and affection. By endeavouring to provide a philosophical system suitable to the whole of mankind, irrespective of race or creed, it sought also to stimulate man to further social and moral progress. Utilitarianism was not concerned with religion; Positivism tried to replace religious faith by a pragmatic belief.

The first Positivist group was formed in London by Richard Congreve, and its more famous members included George Henry Lewes, George Eliot, Frederic Harrison, and Harriet Martineau (1802-76). Miss Martineau wrote first under the influence of Unitarian convictions but shortly became, as her contemporaries averred, atheistic and materialistic, so that she finally caused a painful sensation to readers who admired her *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832), her novels *Deerbrook* (1839) and *The Hour and the Man* (1841), and the writings (mainly for juveniles) by which she is remembered today. The shock to Victorian society came from *Letters on the Laws of Man's Social Nature and Development* which she wrote in collaboration with Henry Atkinson and published in 1852. Almost all the writers of the day condemned it as dangerous and of evil influence. Even her devoted friends, Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Bronte, were sadly bewildered by her scientific and irreverent approach to the most sacred subjects. It is curious to note that this outrageous woman was herself shocked by *Vanity Fair,* since it occasioned in her nothing less than " a moral disgust". Happily she was made to alter her opinion of Thackeray by her enthusiasm for *Henry Esmond.* Miss Martineau's sensation died away. It was the most remarkable flutter caused by a Positivist writer and, it must be admitted, had as little to do with real Positivism as that theory had to do with changing philosophical opinion in the middle of the century.

Chapter Ten

History to 1900

(i) **The Romantic School**

IN this chapter it is necessary to take our subject beyond 1880 so that the movement of historical writing may be seen as a whole. Any other attempt to divide the subject destroys the connections between the three schools of Romantic, Scientific, and Philosophic history.

Beginning with the Romantic school, the first name of importance is that of Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59). The son of a wealthy merchant, whose support of anti-slavery finally involved him in serious financial difficulties, Macaulay went up to Cambridge, where he was found to be a fine classical scholar. He wrote two prize poems, and was elected to a fellowship in 1824.

In 1825 appeared the essay on Milton, his first contribution to *The Edinburgh Magazine,* a periodical with which he was connected for over thirty years. Literature had an almost irresistible fascination for him but the failure of his father's business necessitated a more lucrative profession. He was called to the Bar in 1826 and two years later was appointed a Commissioner in Bankruptcy.

A sturdy upholder of the Whig party, he turned his attention to politics, and entered Parliament in 1830; his speech on the Reform Bill in 1831 revealed his remarkable power as an orator.

While Macaulay was particularly interested in active political life, financial stress obliged him to accept a position in the Supreme Council of India in 1834. Within four years he organised Indian education and drafted the Indian Penal Code. From 1839 until 1847 he was again in Parliament, and for nearly two years was Secretary of State for War (1839-41). Thereafter he turned to literary work, quickly publishing his *Lays of Ancient Rome,* in 1842, and resuming political life in 1846 by his appointment as Paymaster-General of the Forces. After supporting a Bill for a grant to the Catholic College of Maynooth, he failed to secure re-election and again turned to his literary interests. The result was the publication, in 1848, of the first two volumes of his celebrated *History.* Active politics claimed little of his time after this, although he re-entered Parliament in 1852 and was raised to the peerage in 1857.

Two further volumes of the *History* appeared in 1855, and Macaulay pressed on with it amidst many other literary tasks. Death came suddenly on December 28, 1859, and the fifth volume of the work, edited by a sister, appeared in 1861.

As an historian Macaulay is valueless and invaluable. The paradox arises from the fact that while his enormous memory and range of knowledge enabled him

to make history a vividly detailed panorama, his prejudices often warped his judgment, and his views were almost always superficial. To him history was a fascinating drama and he presented it as such. There is no philosophy behind his outlook. The man who made history a living thing for many thousands of people, who kept students as well as ordinary readers out of their beds all night to finish his volume, was unable to make his subject show its lessons. He could make the past an unforgettable story; he offered no serious reason for the telling of the story.

As a writer Macaulay was the cause of a contradiction, for his style was unique. Unfortunately it was unique in the sense in which we may say that too much of G. K. Chesterton's writing is unique—it is wholly individual, too mannered, too easily imitated. The sentences build up clause by clause with brilliant effectiveness; the paragraphs follow the plan which will bring them to climax; the language is so colourful that we almost fail to notice that the plan on which this prose is constructed rarely changes. There it is all the time, majestic, antithetical, musical, unvarying. The fact is that what Brougham called " Poor Tom's, snip-snap " is rhetorical rather than literary. Indeed, as an historian and as a writer Macaulay is a gloriously enjoyable distraction. The same criticism may be made of his *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (1841-44). Here are the same sweeping judgments presented with all the persuasiveness of fine elocution and warm resonance of voice. We are almost persuaded to

forget that literature is something more than the repetition of *tour-de-force.* We incline to overlook the feet that the ceremonial march and the trooping of the Colours are not the whole of a soldier's life. And when we have admitted the faults and shaken our heads over them, we most rightly reach for the familiar volumes and give ourselves the unfailing thrill of the sight and sound of historical pageant or willingly surrender to the assured declamation which Macaulay took to be literary criticism.

Moved chiefly by Utilitarian principles, several writers of Macaulay's time were approaching history by methods more scientific and less exciting than his. Where Macaulay sought to re-create by the imagination, they tried to restore by the interpretation of facts. One of the first of them was Connop Thirlwall (1797-1875), whose *History of Greece* (1847) was a scholarly production of great learning. It was soon superseded by the similar *History* of George Grote (1794-1871), which appeared between 1845 and 1856. Less able as a writer than Thirlwall, Grote had devoted a longer period to the study of his subject, so that his volumes replaced those of his predecessor on historical rather than on literary grounds. His work was continued in *Plato and the other Companions of Sokrates* (1865).

One of the most surprising of these writers was George Finlay (1799-1875). After writing a history of .Greece " from its conquest by the Crusaders to its conquest by the Turks ", he then went back to the

eighth century and carried his narrative forward from there until the fifteenth century. Finally he completed a history of the Greeks from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth. His last work was comparatively a mere postscript, being a record of contemporary Greek history, so that his enormous work ultimately covered the centuries from 716 to 1843. It was eventually edited in seven volumes by H. F. Tozer, who enclosed it within the years 146 B.C. and A.D. 1864. Finlay had an intimate knowledge of the people who were the subject of his great enterprise, and this fact gives to his *History* much of its value.

Thomas Arnold (1798-1842) took the Roman Empire as his subject. Apart from his writings, he exercised great influence during his fifteen years' headmastership of Rugby School, where he changed and elevated the educational system so notably that the effects of his work reached every public school in England. He was appointed Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1841, but died suddenly in the following year with his *History of Rome* unfinished. It was completed, in seven volumes, by Charles Merivale, and published in 1864. Arnold was greatly attracted by the historical writing of Niebuhr, although a translation of it was not favourably received by most readers in the early part of the century. Arnold had a good sense of narrative and the ability to form a plain but interesting style.

Of other historians of the time we may mention Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), whose *The History*

of the Jews (1829) was regarded as wicked because of its " scientific " approach to the events of the Biblical narrative. Like Arnold, Milman was influenced by the critical methods of German writers. His judgment was never narrow and his history was built on broad foundations. His other works, relating the rise and spread of Christianity, have not the value of his first and greatest book.

In spite of their scientific methods, these writers are properly to be classified as Romantic, since the pageant of history was their real theme. Their knowledge of truly scientific method, moreover, was imperfect. They were not the deliberate and whole-hearted Romantics who might be likened to Macaulay, but their works, in effect, were more concerned with the people of the older races than with the events which befell them and the meaning of those events.

Of this Romantic school of historians, the last and one of the greatest was James Anthony Froude (1818-94). While at Oxford he came under the influence of Newman, as also did his brother, Hurrell Froude, who was one of the Tractarians. Although he gave some assistance to Newman in his preparation of the *Uves of the Saints,* J. A. Froude found that their lines of thought were divergent and he broke off their association. He took Deacon's Orders in 1844 but later forsook organised religion. In 1849 he published the anonymous *The Nemesis of Faith,* which was so restated that copies were publicly burned in the hall of Exeter College, and Froude resigned his Fellowship.

After a period during which he contributed to the *Westminster Review* and *Eraser's Magazine* (he edited the latter 1860-74), he published works which gave him a place among the great writers of the time. His contributions were later published as *Short Studies on Great Subjects,* between 1867 and 1882, while his *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey* appeared at intervals between 1856 and 1870. His *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* followed in 1874 and Froude's popularity was undiminished while he continued to publish *Caesar* (1879), *The Divorce of Catherine of Aragon* (1891), *The Spanish Story of the Armada* (1892), *The Life and Letters of Erasmus* (1894), and his highly enjoyable *English Seamen* (1895). His other books are less important, although they include *Lectures on the Council of Trent* (1896).

Froude is, no doubt, the most brilliant of the Romantic school of historians. It is this literary brilliance, combined with his great unreliability in matters of fact, that made him the centre of battles waged between the picturesque and scientific writers. A careful examination of his work, including his famous *Life of Carlyle,* must bring us to admit that his inaccuracies were both many and serious. Moreover, he had the misfortune to convey to his readers a feeling of unreliability. This is not merely a question of factual accuracy but something indefinable in his manner of writing, which makes the reader hesitate to give his trust to the brilliant author. This is a curious quality perhaps not to be found in any other writer of his standing. It is

destructive of most of the literary value of his work and precludes his entry into the first rank of historians.

When this has been said, we acknowledge that Froude made the Elizabethan period live; if the circumstances of the Spanish Armada were not all he suggested, no one has yet given us a better picture of the attempted invasion; in the same way, if Henry VIIFs character is over-coloured and one-sided, yet the man is alive and not merely a name in a history book. Froude, moreover, while in some ways equalling Macaulay in holding our interest by sheer imaginative power, excels his contemporary in breadth of outlook.

The beauty of Froude's literary style is beyond dispute. It is at once strong and restrained, simple and sumptuous. His periods glow with a subdued and chastened richness. In place of the showy but metallic brilliance of Macaulay, we have a delicately plastic and exquisitely modulated style. Its perfect taste and sure art may be gathered from the fact that we are rarely made conscious of it.

An even more attractive personality is John Richard Green (1837-83), whose *A History of the English People* was an enlargement of his *Short History* of 1874. The book aimed at telling the story, as his powers of narrative and description well fitted him to do, of the English people rather than of their government. Into it he brought almost every movement which affected them, in politics, literature, social progress, and art, with an ease which hid the learning so amply

unfolded. Green's *History* has always been one of the first favourites of the reading public. With the help of his wife, Alice Stopford Green (herself an historian), he wrote *The Making of England* (1882) and she completed *The Conquest of England* (1883) which his early death interrupted.

(ii) The Scientific School

One of Froude's bitterest opponents was Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-92), whose name brings us to those writers who sought the historic method, at which Lingard had earlier aimed, of presenting factual history rather than drama and pageantry. His main works were the *History of the Norman Conquest* (1876), *William Rufus* (1882), and a *History of Sicily* (1894).

It is curious that the man who so unsparingly attacked Froude should have been no less partisan than his victim. Teutonism was as much an obsession with Freeman as the heroic qualities of Henry VIII were with Froude. He did good work in pointing out, with a wealth of illustration, the important work accomplished by the Saxon. He did scant justice to the Celtic and Latin influences. His style is at times cumbrous and unattractive, but it is usually adequate and is enlivened by the author's great pride in his country and passionate interest in its welfare. Freeman's ideas are not without interest in the twentieth century, when the relationship between England and Europe is again, as at the time of

the Norman invasion, being fundamentally altered. His theories are by no means without value to the student of current affairs.

A doughtier representative of the scientific school is found in William Stubbs (1825-1901), who became Bishop of Chester in 1884. His *Constitutional History of England* (1874-78), which carried its subject to the close of the Middle Ages, is a storehouse of erudition and, especially in the later volumes, throws fresh and valuable sidelights upon a tangled period of our history. In tracing the gradual development of town life, in discussing the power of the Church in the Middle Ages, in analysing the relation between national and international politics, Stubbs has no peer. From the literary point of view his work is burdened by excessive detail.

As an authority on the ecclesiasticism of the Middle Ages, Stubbs has been called into question by F. W. Maitland (1850-1906), a scholar who specialised in the legal aspects of history, and whose indictment of Stubbs on certain points of Church law has never been seriously combated.

A man of remarkable personality was Bishop Mandell Creighton (1843-1901) who strengthened the scientific school which Stubbs had promoted at Oxford. Almost the whole of his life was given to arduous work at Cambridge and in the Sees of Peterborough and London. His *History of the Papacy during the Reformation*, completed in 1894, was impartial and painstaking. Unfortunately almost all

the qualities which made him invaluable as a lecturer disappeared when he took up a pen. The *History* is dry and flat, devoid of the wit and shrewd comment which had delighted his audiences at Cambridge and elsewhere. Of him, as to some extent also of Stubbs, it may be said that his main work was done by his personal influence rather than by his books.

It will have been noticed that the Romantic historians usually preferred a broad canvas for the painting of pictures and that the scientific writers chose to specialise in limited subjects. This is also the case with Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829-1902), who concentrated the energies of a lifetime upon the earlier Stuart and Commonwealth periods. A gifted writer of trained ability in historical research, he was completely impartial and is in the best tradition of fine historical writing. The general reader finds him too specialised and remote, since his work is quite detached and he examines its matter almost microscopically. His monumental *magium opus* was finally gathered out of many revisions and instalments into the *History of England from* 1603 *to* 1640, to which were added a *History of the Great Civil War* (1891) and a *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate* (1901). The volumes give the full satisfaction which comes from a scrupulous examination of facts and a judicial assessment of their value.

Among the military historians of the era, Sir William Napier (1785-1860) and Alexander William Kinglake (1809-91) must be noted. Napier is the greater, for

he was a soldier and a man endowed with a wide scientific knowledge of his subject. His *History of the War in the Peninsula* (1840) is not without predilections but is a great book, simple and direct in style. Napier could rise to a high level of writing when inspired by the dramatic events of his narrative or by various scenes of action. He is eloquent and impressive without ever becoming flamboyant or verbose. Kinglake was a traveller and a man of letters who is better remembered for his *Eothen* (1844) than for his *The History of the War in the Crimea* (1863-87). His personal prejudices are undisguised and the work is badly proportioned. Yet Kinglake is closely observant, capable of handling masses of detail and writing picturesquely.

(iii) **The Philosophic School**

The first writer to be noticed is Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-62), a man largely self-educated by the aid of voracious reading and exceptional memory. His purpose in studying was to separate and examine the laws which govern human progress, since he believed that these were as infallible as those which control the world of Nature. The result was *The History of Civilisation in England*, the two volumes of which were published in 1857 and 1861, followed by a third volume, published after his death, extending his study to Scotland, Spain, and France. The connectio'n between his purpose and the work of Hume and Adam Smith is evident. He attempted on the largest

scale that research into sociological progress which they had suggested.

What he set out to do for society at large Sir Henry Sumner Maine (1822-88) tried to do for man's political framework. Firmly believing in man's evolutionary origin and progress, Maine sketched out laws and political institutions from their primitive forms to their modern complexities. To this material he added a good deal of useful comment in *Ancient Law* (1861), *Village Communities in the East and West* (1871), and the *"Early History of Institutions* (1875).

Walter Bagehot (1826-77), whose literary criticism is noted elsewhere, did not bring to history the formidable scholarship of the writers we have mentioned. His supreme faculty was his incomparable lightness in dealing with heavy subjects. Many writers have skimmed the surface of politics or business deftly and entertainingly; to trifle airily yet accurately with the intricate problems of the money market, and to frolic in the distracting labyrinth of English political institutions, have been vouchsafed only to one man—Bagehot. Not that levity was a mark of the man—we recall that he took a volume of sermons with him on his honeymoon. But he had the enviable gift of writing *Lombard Street* (1873, a description of the money market) and *The English Constitution* (1867) in a style of great interest and ease. The latter book is an admirable introduction to the study of English politics, since the author puts into amusing opposition the theory of government and the fact of government,

and makes us realise as no other writer does where the real power of government lies.

A writer who was content to accept his facts from the researches of others and to concentrate, by the method of comparison, on the interrelation between national and foreign policies was John Robert Seeley (1834-95). His best works are his *Expansion of England* (1883) and the *Growth of British Policy* (1895). While the historians of our constitution take us from room to room in the house and point out the utilities, Seeley bids us come out into the garden and view the house as compared with its neighbours. He shows us its size, situation, general merits and defects. For the most part Seeley wrote in a clear, agreeable, and arresting style.

Another philosophic historian was William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903). When he had sown his literary wild oats in verse, he settled down as a writer of striking ability. His main work was the *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Nationalism in Europe* (1865), an amazing piece of work from a man under thirty. Its freshness and vigour commanded immediate attention. The *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1890) and his examination of democratic problems, *Democracy and Liberty* (1896), were also well received. He was more Whig than Liberal in his sympathies and did not countenance the Socialistic tendencies of his time. Whatever one's own opinions of his views may be, we find in him an admirable debater, free from slavery to any theory, and a cool

upholder of his case—in short, almost the ideal philosophic historian.

James (Viscount) Bryce (1838-1922) published *The Holy Roman Empire* in 1864 and the book has been respected ever since. His other writings do not require notice but we must mention *The American Commomwealth*, published in 1888 and considerably revised in 1920.

(iv) Biography

Various biographies have received incidental notice in the course of this book. Here we may group the more important of them and the works of authors not previously included. In the earlier years of the century the most satisfactory biographies were, not surprisingly, written by novelists. Thus we have Mrs. Gaskell's Life of her friend Charlotte Bronte and Mrs. Oliphant's more than satisfactory Lives of Edward Irving, of Laurence Oliphant, and of " the Blackwood Family ". Mrs. Gaskell wrote with considerable insight, and Mrs. Oliphant's biographies were marked by an almost instinctively correct visualisation of character.

The discrimination of the public in biography was not exacting, in spite of several excellent models. So long as a Life was readable, reasonably accurate, and was of good moral effect it was acceptable. Thus it is not surprising to find that a good deal of biography was written which has long been replaced by books which are in every way superior, at least according to present ideas of what biography should be. Whether

those are wholly valid ideas is another matter. It may be that the biographer should strip his subject, seek his most intimate letters and confidences, assort all available evidence about him, and exhibit him naked in body, mind, and soul. Or it may be that biography should observe the limits Dr. Johnson approved in prefacing his short Life of Addison. These may be summarised in the statement that the biographer owes something to his readers and something to his subject, both of which obligations he should be scrupulous to fulfil. Presumably the middle course should be followed between these extremes, at least by biographers in doubt, since they are certainly not historians and equally certainly not panderers to the interest of those about whom St. Augustine of Hippo remarked, " Eager to see the lives of others, slow to amend their own ". If we take this middle line as our standard, we find a good deal of honest and comfortable biography in the iSoo's which we may be happy to meet but need not look for. None the less, it is good to know that some of it is still read and enjoyed. For instance, we may quote the *Lives of the Queens of England* (1848) by Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland. Much of this work and of its companion on the Scottish Queens, with the volume on Mary Stuart, is highly readable. It possesses a charm and a human warmth which cannot fail to please as biography. The similar *Lives of the Princesses of England* (185 5) by Mary Anne Wood was scarcely less popular in its day.

Above the mass of Victorian biography stands the

writing of a few authors whose work introduces the more detached and methodical biography of our own time. First among these was John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854). His Life of Burns (1828) is satisfactory; his Life of Napoleon (1829) is forgotten; his Life of his father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott, brought him permanent celebrity when it appeared in 1838. Eminently distinguished by its tact and good taste, detached in judgment, it is generally held to be second only to Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson among the best of our biographical writing.

Also within the period here covered is the biography of Byron, by Thomas Moore (1830), a competent piece of work by the man who, rightly or wrongly, but certainly with honest courage, fulfilled his duty as Byron's literary executor by editing his complete works and destroying his memoirs. We must also note the Life of Goethe (1855) by George Henry Lewes, and Carlyle's biography of Sterling (1851). Still available is the *Life of Arnold* by Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster. It owes more to its subject than to its method but is pleasant reading.

Outstanding among the biographers was John Forster (1812-76) whose *Life of Charles Dickens* (1874) is as well known as Lockhart's Life of Scott. This is not to say that Forster ever equalled Lockhart, although his biographies are more numerous—Swift, Lamb, Goldsmith, Landor—and at least as carefully prepared. Forster can rarely make his subject live, except in a spasmodic way; we are given important

glimpses of a man but, for the rest, we see a figure lacking vitality. In all else his unfailing industry supplies a wealth of detail well handled, even if occasionally completeness becomes too complete and we find ourselves with a few pages of unimportant facts which should have been omitted. The *Life and 'Times of Walter Savage Landor* (1869) has been held to be his best work after the biography of Dickens. However, one may enter a plea for the strangely neglected *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith* (1854), which has most of Forster's defects and yet draws us back to itself again and again.

Right at the close of our period come several works worthy of record. Sir Theodore Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort* was written at the request of Queen Victoria and published in 1880. The year saw also the appearance of *The Early History of Charles James Fox* by Sir George Otto Trevelyan (1838-1928), the bulk of whose work is dealt with in the following volume. It saw also the monumental work of David Masson's *Life of Milton, narrated in connection with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of his Time.* In other words, everything known about Milton, in six large volumes which took over twenty years to compile. The book is invaluable for reference and is readable, even enjoyable, in parts.

(v) **Conclusion**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century changes of the first importance were becoming apparent which

resolved themselves into literary movements or factors of considerable effect in the twentieth century. For instance, literature was expanding, both in subject and in method, and expansion sooner or later implies specialisation. The stream widened but each current in it split rather than spread out. This was becoming evident in poetry by 1880. Again, a certain almost "precious" anxiety about words was felt. We have seen it in the more mannered parts of R. L. Stevenson; it continues in Pater and others. Yet again, the pessimistic shade of thought began to prevail. We saw it emerging into a factor in the "reportage" or documentary realism of Reade and Kingsley; we shall find it again in Gissing and Bennett until it is almost a law. To take this movement, partly evolutionary and partly revolutionary, no farther, we may finally point out that the vitality of creative power was lessening rapidly as we pass from Dickens and Thackeray to the more technically perfect Hardy and Conrad, so that we are completely surprised to find it emerging briefly but unmistakably in J. B. Priestley. The changes were no less marked as poetry began to be more a matter of word and form than of content, moving through the excesses of the Decadents to the experiments of the Imagists and the more promising exercises in Free Verse. In brief, we have drawn a line at 1880, so that, with a minimum of necessary repetition, we may deal adequately, in our next volume, with Contemporary Literature.

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