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ESSAYS BY DIVERS HANDS

BEING THE  
TRANSACTIONS  
OF THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

NEW SERIES

VOL. XX

EDITED BY GORDON BOTTOMLEY, LL.D., D.LITT., F.R.S.L.

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## WINTER SUNRISE.

By LAURENCE BINYON.

It is early morning within this room ; without,  
Dark and damp ; without and within, stillness  
Waiting for day ; not a sound but a listening air.

Yellow jasmine, delicate on stiff branches,  
Stands in a Tuscan pot to delight the eye  
In spare December's patient nakedness.

Suddenly, softly, as if at a breath breathed  
On the pale wall, a magical apparition,  
The shadow of the jasmine, branch and blossom !

It was not there, it is there, in a perfect image ;  
And all is changed. It is like a memory lost  
Returning without a reason into the mind.

And it seems to me that the beauty of the shadow  
Is more beautiful than the flower; a strange beauty,  
Pencilled and silently deepening to distinctness.

As a memory stealing out of the mind's slumber,  
A memory floating up from a dark water,  
Can be more beautiful than the thing remembered.

## INTRODUCTION.

BY GORDON BOTTOMLEY, LL.D., D.LITT., F.R.S.L.

IN the fourth year of the Reign of Terror that has been attempted upon our world—with " threats of pain and ruin " and

" a long array  
Of woe and degradation hand in hand "—

this annual volume of the Royal Society of Literature's ' Transactions ' takes on an aspect that it would not have shown in peace-time. To the future it will be some evidence that Britain's steady courage through mounting danger was served by her cultural life having been maintained with determination ; to the present it can be a reminder that things of the mind and spirit are part of a way of life so precious that we willingly fight to preserve it, one source of the energy by which we can hope to fight well enough.

But the spirit of the hour appears to have had a further intention. Previous volumes have shown felicities of relationship, unintended in the ordinary traffic of the lecturers' year ; but this time it might have had an urgent purpose of unity to be fulfilled. A dominant question of the time has been a secondary theme controlling the aims of most of these papers—as Elgar's " Enigma Variations " are controlled by a theme other than the ostensible one.

Yet not enigmatically here. It is indeed Dr. Routh's explicit as well as his implicit theme. " If we can judge by the experience of last war we shall need both the word Humanism and the idea as soon as the present nightmare is over." Humanism—which began life as an antithesis to Theology in medieval Universities ; then focused the study of two dead languages, finally enlarging its scope to include their literatures and find there our supreme teachers of wisdom and good government. As Dr. Routh says, ' By humanism I mean the study of man as revealed in men . . . the adjustment of what is changeful to what is permanent ; in other words, culture's comment on

civilization." " Since war has been a scientific, or, at any rate, a practical business, there will be plenty of voices to persuade us not to relapse into humanism." " The younger generation will have unlearned the habit; the older generation will distrust it. . . . Our heads will be full of economic and social reconstruction and scientific progress." (They were in 1919.) " The more urgently a growing group will insist that progress without humanism is progress in the wrong direction."

It was, then, the Renaissance Humanists who made the word significant for us, in spite of discredit having fallen on their idea of education. Erasmus and his friends and colleagues may often have been content to live among grammars ; but their life was a life of the spirit; they are almost the authors of our civilization. On this account Mr. Henry J. Cowell's paper on ' Erasmus and His English Friends ' comes as a luminous unintended comment on Dr. Routh's. He depicts the attractive grace of intercourse of this group of learned men—Blount, Colet, Warham, More, Tunstall—of whom Erasmus said, "The English are constantly thought to be heretical, but they are not so in point of friendship, and I have the greatest reason to love them." The greatest reason, for we can assume they held with him that " If we want truth, every man ought to be free to say what he thinks without fear."

England is still fortunate that modern education here began in the intercourse of such men ; things taught change with men's preoccupations, but vigilance should preserve the spirit in which those men taught, and by which they became Humanists.

Matthew Arnold preserved it, and Mr. Geoffrey Tillotson's revaluation of him as critic and advocate links naturally his purpose with that of Erasmus. The Industrial Age had begun to threaten the values for which Erasmus had stood : two Scotsmen, Carlyle and Ruskin, saw danger to intellectual morality; a Welshman, William Morris, saw danger to man's marvellous hands ; but Arnold, the first complete Humanist since Industrialism had diverted the purposes of thought, saw that thought itself was endangered, and linked himself, in his earliest opposition, with those Englishmen of the Renaissance, and drew near to them in Humanism. Few have been quite kind to Arnold : his father had been in the succession of John Colet; teaching was in his blood ; but the authors of our modern education finding that he was also a poet—which is suspiciously near to being a Humanist—tried to make him harmless by turning him into an examiner.

Lacking the detail of that side of his life, we have tended to visualize him, in the light of his merciless dealings with newspapermen and Nonconformists, as a severe, formidable scholar in his handling of elementary school-children : but a passing comment by the late Professor Selwyn Image\* surprises by a glimpse of a luminous, serene nature troubling itself with a delicate kindness to help a frightened child to do its best:

" To have seen this admirable man in his daily business of inspecting elementary schools was to be made aware in him of a perhaps unexpected charm and winningness, of just such a character as one would desire to know more intimately, to see it, as it were, in its unguarded moments, in its intercourse with those nearest it. . . . Our affection came of an unflinching personal experience of his courtesy, his tender-heartedness."

One remembers that we do not outrage great poets by such appointments now ; yet Professor Image's testimony suggests that Arnold's Humanism was fulfilling itself in the Elementary Schools also. Mr. Tillotson sees his importance and the necessity of reviewing his time's judgment of him—" he knit and suppled his frame till it stood that of a hero . . . with a Puritan passion for what he saw to be best." Equally his passion for disinterested thought is important now ; a re-studying of it which should begin in this paper would be important too.

While the destruction of the Eastern Empire liberated Greek and Latin for us, the shattering of such a treasure-house as Constantinople imperilled as much as it revealed. The art of Byzantium fell into disesteem when so many of its greatest examples disappeared and were forgotten ; it is only in our own day that we have learnt of the existence of many of these in Moldavia and Wallachia, where they found refuge. Their rediscovery has coincided with a re-emergence of Byzantine art in other quarters comparable with that earlier re-emergence of a lost language from Constantinople ; and Dr. Marcu Beza, who has enriched the Society's Library with his fine, authoritative volume on ' Byzantine Art in Roumania ' (as we have learnt to call Moldo-Wallachia) enriches these Transactions with a fascinating account of the legends and human interest that lie behind Byzantine fresco, enamel and tapestry—to which Mr. Laurence Binyon has appended a useful note, relating these works to the general outlook on European and Oriental art. It is more than regrettable that the rich variety of illustrations with which the lecture

\*'Ternary of Reflections': Selwyn Image. Pp. 44 5. 'The Hobby Horse' (New Series), No. 2, 1893.

was accompanied cannot continue to illuminate it here ; but, without these, his welcome presence in this volume is as though our Society willingly shelters many arts—as our imperial city shelters many nations—that are in peril.

Sir Stephen Gaselee, too, follows Humanism, but in that elder tradition which dealt with codices and manuscripts, readings and enclitics, sources and prototype legends. His ' Sleeping Beauty.' is not the one she was thought to be, but another lady ; and according to research, as shown in these pages, possibly older. She was certainly older before she fell asleep ; and there appears to be no record known, as yet, of her awaking. All the versions of the legend here given agree in this ; and she herself seems to have been unaware of the legal principle *Non Dormiendibus*—that is to say, *the Law does not protect the Sleeper*. In such a story without an end, the telling becomes the main attraction ; an opinion might be hazarded that felicity and delicacy put the versions by Tom Moore and Coventry Patmore easily first.

Mr. de la Mare and Mr. Rostrevor Hamilton were Humanists, instinctive yet graduated also, long ago. Neither Industrialism nor international conflagration has deflected them. Their experiences have been subtle, their delight is to communicate them—although Mr. de la Mare's unique country has scarcely ceased to be undiscovered, in spite of his having discovered it. He uses the contemplative life in order to know it. " Life transformed, distilled, personalized, given a definite issue " by creative energy is " . . . the only essential life there is," and it begins in contemplation. " The reading of books, then, like the living of life, depends entirely on what we make of them." " On what they offer we must bestow our life. All nature in its variety, all humanity with its experience, was in the world when we ourselves arrived in it. . . . To waste it is to waste our all. What have we done with it—and with our books ? " Mr. de la Mare's Humanism is of his own kind : it certainly fosters other men's in its quietism.

Mr. Hamilton, too, looks to contemplation as the end of his quest. His ingenious analysis and contrasting of verse and poetry and the difference between them brings him to the conclusion that " the aim of poetry lies simply in the experience, infinitely various, which poetry creates for the contemplative imagination." Yet it might be claimed, with equal usefulness, that poetry is the issue of creative imagination. Thus, in accepting Mr. Hamilton's integration, imagination breeds in and in upon itself, as music does in Bach's first Prelude. Indeed, poetry is as much its own

reward as music ; we possess each progressively ; and finally the progression is found to be the precious part, rather than the completion—the true object of Mr. Hamilton's contemplation.

If Humanism asserts itself successfully against the dark, disruptive forces of Neo-Utilitarianism after the War, our narrowed, disrupted Theatre should be one of the first organisms to profit. Had it not been for the presence there of a few distinguished players with the Humanistic background of the traditional Theatre, and Sir John Martin-Harvey eminent among them, there might not have been enough to salve. He is to be welcomed in the Royal Society of Literature as another sign of its unity with all the threatened arts, as well as for his contributions to the literature of his own art. The tattered fragmentary state of the British Theatre probably explains the absence of any such considered study of the art of acting as Talma achieved in France. living's " occasional " lectures and the late Louis Calvert's small book were probably the main contributions until the appearance of Sir Johns own memoirs, which speak of his art almost more than of his career. His paper in this volume is a further instalment of his essential record ; it might well be the foundation of a volume that would make him our English Talma.

This volume was ready for press when the death was announced of a specially beloved Vice-President of the Society, Dr. Laurence Binyon. His supreme gift of poetry was far from being his only qualification in Literature ; yet when the Poet Laureate so appropriately made known his singularly beautiful last poem, at a recent Poetry Reading in London in which he had promised to take part, its poignant delicacy suggested a particular suitability for his farewell appearance in these ' Transactions ' ; and those who are responsible for the preparation of this volume are deeply grateful to Mrs. Binyon for the gracious permission which has made possible its use as a Prelude to our labours.



## HUMANISM: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

BY H. V. ROUTH, M.A., D.LITT, F.R.S.L.

(Read February 25th, 1942.)

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

I was most relieved to hear that these lectures should not exceed forty-five minutes, because this period (which may seem long to you) is nevertheless too short to do justice to any theme—however trivial. Consequently one might as well choose a really big subject, the bigger the better. The lecturer can do no more than arouse interest, present a point of view and, inevitably, provoke criticism..

That is why I propose to make a few observations on humanism. The subject is certainly appropriate as well as inexhaustible. If we can judge by the experience of the last war we shall need both the word and the idea as soon as the present nightmare is over, and civilization, in the guise of a housemaid, enters the national bedroom, arouses the somnambulist, draws up the blinds, and serves your morning tea—no longer to be rationed.

As soon as we are really awake, and have looked out of the window at the rising sun, we shall (as you know) behold a desolate and disordered landscape urgently in need of reconstruction and rearrangement. We shall have to start the morning in a practical frame of mind. And since war has been a scientific, or at any rate, a practical business, there will be plenty of voices to persuade us not to relapse into humanism. The younger generation will have unlearnt the habit, the older generation will distrust it after the experience of the last twenty-five years. Our heads will be full of economic and social reconstruction and scientific progress.

God forbid that anyone should breathe a word against these or similar tendencies. But every movement provokes a reaction. So the more practically progressive the nation becomes, the more urgently a group will insist that progress without humanism is progress in the wrong direction. The group will grow in numbers and influence, and the word *humanism* will be in many people's mouths.

So we ought to agree as to the meaning of that word, and its function in the twentieth century.

Now, whenever we want to understand the spirit behind a word, the shortest way is to begin with its derivation. For that reason I must ask you to go back (for a few minutes only) to the Middle Ages. Under the old scholastic system at, say, Paris or Oxford, the "Cursus" was divided into two parts. First came the study of God, that is, of all that could be learned of God's will and wisdom—in other words, theological studies. Thereafter came the *human* studies; merely a few oddments of learning indispensable to our transitory existence on this earth, amongst other acquirements a smattering of law, logic and medicine. Such was the origin of humanism, but only the origin; like the trickle of a tiny stream, which might, or might not, grow into a river. After all, it was hardly worth while to learn much about the human aspect of our species, since to-morrow our species might be swallowed up in the conflagration of the earth. For instance, the Nurnberg Chronicler in the fifteenth century declares that obviously the world was so evil and the times waxing so late, that God was coming immediately to judgment. So he left a few blank pages for any mundane event which might be worth recording, and then fully described what the end of the world would be like. Even apart from this expectation, pious men were so preoccupied with eternity, that they could not spare time to bother about this uncomfortable, insanitary life. You remember that in the later seventeenth century, in 'Paradise Lost,' the angel warned Adam not to fill his head with scientific nonsense, since man's proper study was not man, but the will and wisdom of God.

However, the Nurnberg Chronicler, and much more Milton, were behind the times. In reality, they would have been behind the times if they had lived in the thirteenth century. From that period onwards money began to talk, and Europe became modern. In other words, people began to think much more about this transitory, mortal existence, and to make the best of life before they died. Consequently they began to take as much interest in the nature of man as in the attributes of God. Above all they tried to make existence as easy and efficient as possible. That is to say, technology began to be an important factor in European life. Human studies were now as necessary as the study of theology. Thus the prospects of humanism were brightening.

But now what do we mean by humanism? If anyone here were

to fall asleep (as might easily happen) and to wake up in the later Middle Ages (not so easy to imagine), they would be surprised to find that science and technology were still an inheritance from the bronze age. Appliances, machines, and cosmic ideas had been improved, but still within the traditional limits. But if you woke up in the seventeenth century, you would find that the scientific notions of the present day, whether speculative or practical, were being mooted, guessed at, dreamed of—if not contrived or experimented. All except the Fourth Dimension, Relativity, and Radio ; and of these, we still know nothing of the first two, and could very well do without the third.

It is not generally realized that the age of science, and indeed the so-called industrial revolution, began so early. In fact, the tendency began yet earlier, but was retarded by a series of disasters (including the feudal wars, the peasant risings, and the Black Death). The thirteenth century was ready for the Renaissance, and that Renaissance would, first and foremost, have brought science and technology into daily life.'

When the Renaissance at last dawned, towards the end of the sixteenth century, such was still its tendency. It was an age of scientific speculation and experiment, especially with a view towards increasing man's power on earth—giving him control over his environment, as we should now say. One has only to quote the names of Galileo, da Vinci, Caxton, Bacon, and if you include civil administration, Sir Thomas More, and Hobbes. So we should expect a humanist to be not necessarily one who contributed to scientific progress, but one who studied its movement and examined its value for human life. The Renaissance was a rebirth, but a rebirth of practical knowledge. Science was in the air. Modern Europe would enter upon an age of logic and research. The humanistic attitude of mind would be what in the eighteenth century we call Voltairean, in the nineteenth, Benthamite or Darwinian, in the twentieth, Shavian.

But, as everyone knows, the age which was so interested in practical inventions became even more interested in classical scholarship. Such an interest was quite natural. The classics had never been quite forgotten, thanks partly to the Moors and partly to the monks. But as you also know, Greek was almost entirely a closed book. In fact, one erudite commentator on the Justinian Code, when he encountered a Greek expression, merely wrote : " Graecum est, non potest legi." Hence the proverb " It was Greek to me," which Casca quoted so effectively in ' Julius Caesar.' So it was quite in the order of things that this

inquiring age should want to know as much as possible about two ancient languages which had been tantalizing their ancestors for centuries, especially Greek.

I need not remind this audience how the opportunity came with the fall of Constantinople, the activities of the printing press and the decay of monasteries. As one might expect, full use was made of these facilities. But what no contemporary could have foreseen, the rediscovery of these literatures overwhelmed the sentiment and imagination of the age, usurped education, dominated art, and redirected the thoughts and speculations of men so completely, that most of them forgot the scientific movement which was already beginning to change the face of the earth and to increase the happiness of the human race.

Only fragments remained of these two dead and difficult languages ; the relics were preserved in tattered MSS., in a crabbed and half illegible script ; they talked of a life quite unfamiliar to the Middle Ages ; many phrases and sometimes whole passages were inexplicable. Yet they became *The Human Studies*. The word *humanist* was now coined to indicate a scholar who could translate and interpret two languages, one of which had been perverted into dog-Latin and the other forgotten.

Nevertheless, the movement was so irresistible that men of learning became incapable of learning anything else. (Browning's 'Grammarians' Funeral' is hardly an exaggeration.) If you prefer an example from real life, you have only to remember that Erasmus, a wit, a thinker and a humanitarian, with an intellect which cut like a razor, was content to pass half his active life editing texts and compiling school grammars. Since his day, despite the absorbing and unbroken progress of rationalism, science and technology, culture continued to be founded on the classics. (For instance, Milton was considered to be a greater poet than Shakespeare.) Ancient literature (or modern literature inspired by the ancient) easily held its own, and kept science at bay, till 1870 or (if you prefer) till 1900. Most remarkable of all, the words *humanist* and *humanism* no longer suggested human studies, which should include science and philosophy, but classical studies. You would not have called a surgeon a rationalist, or a playwright a humanist. One does not apply the title to Fielding, Adam Smith, Shelley, De Quincey, Carlyle, Mill, George Eliot, Herbert Spencer. The classification is reserved for men like Montaigne, Ascham, Scaliger, Bentley, Jowett, Sir Richard Jebb, Dr. Merry, J. B. Mayor. Possibly Browning might be included because he produced some fine translations and adaptations from

the Greek, so might a few other poets and prose writers who wrote in sympathy with the antique world. Even to-day, if your eye travels down that advertisement column headed "Public Appointments," you will occasionally note that a great Scottish University wants someone to fill their "Chair of Humanities." If you make further inquiries, you will learn that what they really want is a professor of Latin; their "humanist" may be a scholar whose special study is Juvenal, Lucan, or Plautus.

So a *humanist* generally means one who studies Greek and Latin for its own sake and the sake of posterity. This application or misapplication of the term is all the more remarkable when we reflect that in this sense of the word there were hardly any humanists in the Ancient World; perhaps Longinus and Pausanias in Greek, and Cicero and Quintilian in Latin.

Such, I submit, was humanism in the past; more or less. In a few minutes we shall have to consider what the term is worth to us in our own age, and what we hope it will mean in the future. But before we answer these questions, we must first ask why classical studies came to exercise so unexpected an influence, and succeeded for so long in keeping modern learning at bay.

Now, of course, everyone knows one half of the explanation. The Classics prevailed because they taught the world clear-headedness, lucidity, scepticism, and, above all, the arts of literary expression. The Athenians, and after them the Romans (the conquered conquerors), could say anything they wanted to say better than anybody else, and it was more worth considering. Moreover, their style seemed to be even more subtle and elegant than it really was, because it had the charm of strangeness and erudition. No Greek or Latin word need ever be associated with the vulgarity of our ordinary day-to-day experiences and humdrum lives.

But we must also inquire what else was hidden behind their level-headed vision and artistic form, and I think that we shall find something only accidentally classical but essentially humanistic; something vitally necessary to civilization, but not obtainable elsewhere—at least not at the Renaissance.

I have already pointed out that towards the end of the Middle Ages, Europe began to awake to a sense of the pleasures and possibilities of life; and that therefore they began to mix much more with each other and to combine and compete for the prizes of civilization; and that consequently they took as much interest in the nature of man as in the nature of God. Now this expansion means of course that they were perfecting their adaptation to

their environment (if I may use the modern formula which is already becoming ancient). But unlike animals, they were discovering that the most important part of their environment was **made up of** other human beings. Adaptation was not only a matter of getting food from the earth or salvation from God, but of getting money from each other ; and not only nor always money, but also help and encouragement. Has it not occurred to you that a very large part of our waking lives is spent in talking to our fellow-creatures, or about them, and furthermore that each son of Adam is something of a puzzle ? We are all alike, yet all different. So we have to acquire the knack of adjusting ourselves to hundreds of individualities. Over and over again our success, even our lives, may depend on knowing by instinct what is passing in somebody else's mind. So it becomes a biological necessity to understand our fellow men.

There is another and yet more important consideration. We are each a puzzle to ourselves. Everyone here must have noticed that in any enterprise or even occupation, worth the name, we have to know a lot about ourselves. In any trial of skill, courage, or endurance, a ghost slips in between us and our object—I mean our other self. It is an elusive personality which escapes the control of our will ; hesitates ; goes off at a tangent ; introduces irrelevant thoughts ; often surprises us with fears, regrets, enthusiasms, of which we thought ourselves incapable. That ghost, like Proteus, is so slippery that we cannot catch it fair and square. But we can snapshot it, or something very like it, in the behaviour of other people. Every touch of eccentricity is a touch of nature which makes the whole world kin—or grin ; a glimpse into the inexhaustible welter of human wilfulness and individuality. So we study other people not only because we have to deal with them, but because we have to deal with ourselves. That, I suggest, is our second reason for needing humanism.

There is a third reason. Ever since man became sufficiently intelligent to manufacture tools and to live in community with his fellows—that is to say twenty to forty thousand years ago—he has obviously become not only a conscious individuality but a part of a social machine. As I have said, he works in with other people for the common good, because it happens also to be his personal good ; or at least, so he hopes. It is also obvious that when a number of people pool their ideas (however rudimentary), those ideas coalesce into a single common idea, which becomes an institution. It is even more obvious that these

combined practices or conventions, composed of only bits and pieces of individuals, each take on a composite character of its own ; a community lives a life different from that of its members.

It is not so obvious, and it is a melancholy fact, that whenever human beings work like that together, they rarely hit upon the best plan or even a good plan at first shot. When joining others they seem to leave the best part of themselves behind. Consequently the human race has successively been burdened with observances and procedures which seem to be wise, and were based on the best available knowledge, but only the knowledge of man as a component part. This community-knowledge has nearly always proved to be unreliable till checked by some deeper insight into human nature, especially its individuality and variability.

You will find examples of what I mean in such well-accredited practices as human sacrifice, witchcraft, the dogma that man is endowed with a sovereign reason almost as infallible as divine reason, public floggings, the curative properties of gold, the " iron law of wages," totalitarianism, red-tape. I could continue the list for the next hour, and expend many days in discussing the fallacies on which the examples are based. How do these institutions come into force ? Through observation and induction, according to the knowledge of the time. How and why were they abandoned ? Not because the premises were false to the facts, but because they were false to human nature. They represented the best intentions of the community, but not the experiences of the individual when left to his own better self. An ever-increasing group of humanists consulted their own idea of righteousness, decency, fellow-feeling and moral dignity and found that " the heart has its reasons which the reason cannot understand." Take the first example, human sacrifice. It was based on the inference that human blood, the source of life in you and me, would also be the source of life to the soil, if its virtue was transfused at the time when the crops ought to appear. If we can trust folk-lore and legendry, for example in the case of Abraham's forbidden sacrifice of Isaac, there is no hint that the validity of the rite was being questioned, but only its rectitude, as symbolized in God's will. The age had become more humanistic ; it was felt that the immolation of our kind is unseemly. Intuition had got the better of dogmatism. Take our last example, totalitarianism. According to the logic of history and the experience of administrators, no other government can survive the phase through which we are now passing.

The arguments are unanswerable. Yet certain races feel in their bones that the arguments are one-sided. If you are still unconvinced you have only to remember how we are all classified according to our corporate capacities. We are tax-payers, church-goers, consumers, wage-earners, wine-drinkers, teetotalers, rate-payers, investors, middle-men, landlords, tenants, and so on and so forth ; yet the entire aggregate of administrative classifications leave you as ignorant of man's potentialities as you were at the start.

What I mean by humanism ought now to be clear. I mean the study of man as revealed in men, in the fascinating and inexhaustible variations of our species, which, nevertheless, prove us to be all alike in so far as we are human. These qualities cannot be appreciated in text-books. They can be represented only in myths, allegories, symbols, images and aspirations. So humanism has always been linked to literature.

At the Renaissance the Classics were the chief inspiration, because the Athenians, and after them the Romans, had already travelled the same way, and their footsteps were stamped in gold. They had discovered just what modern Europe was seeking, that is : how to value man for his own sake—his vices, virtues, wisdom, folly, passion, and apathy ; just as if these were the only things that mattered—that immaterial environment of which I spoke. Above all, our forefathers appreciated the cult of personality, I mean the fascinating examples and illustrations of the ways in which we express ourselves, give free vent to what would otherwise be overlooked in the effacement imposed by society. That is why Plutarch's 'Lives' and Cicero's 'Letters' were so eagerly studied. Thus Northern Europe gained insight into a culture in which everyone was bent on becoming his complete self, whatever his collective illusions might be, because self-development means efficiency leading to happiness.

Before this audience I need not add that Greek and Latin literature also taught the art and technique by which these secrets could be revealed.

Let us then conclude that humanism is the adjustment of what is changeful to what is permanent; in other words, culture's comment on civilization. It enables us to control and direct social progress, by deepening our knowledge of ourselves. Or we can borrow the simile of the Epicurean philosophers : the mind is a receptacle into which learning and experience are poured. The content will be vitiated unless the vessel is constantly cleansed. Curiously enough, Sir Arthur Eddington un-

consciously paraphrases the same idea in our modern scientific style : " Whatever we have to apprehend must be apprehended in a way for which our intellectual equipment has made provision."

So the Classics were studied as a means to an end. Every contribution to our knowledge of Greek or Latin culture was a contribution to our knowledge of humanity. Or, at least, so it was assumed. Such was humanism in the past. But what about the present ? It seems to me that these studies began to lose prestige from about 1870 onwards ; till nowadays they are a specialized pursuit ; Gladstone, I believe, was the last public man to quote Latin in a Parliamentary speech. Nothing seems to have taken their place ; least of all modern literature. The explanation is not far to seek. You notice that 1870 was about the date at which science began to force its way into the national habit of mind. The new phase began with the general recognition of Darwinism and Spencer's doctrine of evolution, and has continued up to the present enormous output of popular manuals. It was even proposed at a recent meeting of the British Association that research should be a state department, since it affects every member of the State. At any rate we are now all scientifically minded, whether or no we are men of science. It is quite inevitable that this neo-humanism should impinge on classical humanism. In fact science and literature have been rivals since the Renaissance and science is now winning the day. It seems to strike more deeply into humanity.

To begin with, ancient literature (and modern literature conceived in the same ancient tradition) told us a lot about the human spirit, but little or nothing about its relations to modern science, it was designed for people ignorant of our vast communities, of our laws of health (including the cult of the bathroom), and quite ignorant of cosmic and technological ideas, all so dangerously stimulating to human thought. It told us nothing about spiritual adjustments to the new doctrines. For instance, even Browning, when asked for his opinion of Darwinism, replied with a sniff that you would find all you needed about evolution in ' Paracelsus,' composed thirty years earlier. Matthew Arnold was even less adaptable. He declared in his ' American Lectures ' that the whole lesson of science was reflected in the one line of the ' Iliad '—

*τλητὸν γὰρ θύμον θεὸι θέσσει ἀνθρωπῶσιν.*

Edwardian and Georgian literature seems to have persevered in

much the same attitude, and inter-war literature does not seem to have cultivated any attitude whatever.

This aloofness is disconcerting because it prevents us from considering how far scientific truth can be adjusted to what is true of human nature. To my thinking Tennyson failed in 'In Memoriam.' His science was even then out of date. His celebrated verses beginning "Are God and Nature then at strife  
?" were based on a passage in Butler's 'Analogy.' Hardy, I venture to suggest, was even more un-humanistic. He appears (in my opinion) to have assimilated science only so far as it flattered his melancholy; sometimes, it is to be feared, for artistic effect. Most of our twentieth century writers are just as disappointing. As far as I can ascertain, they simply ignore the background of thought and vision without which no human judgments or moods can really be sincere—at least, most of them **do**.

What we want is a group of authors who can give free play to the aspirations, affinities and artistic impulses, even after they have absorbed the implications of modern learning, whether the news is bad or good. Perhaps the proposition can be expressed in this way. Science, in the nineteenth century, was defined as "the edifice of knowledge built up in the human mind"; both knowledge towards enlightenment, and knowledge towards power. Either faculty is indispensable to modern existence. But in both cases, science has developed in such a way that it can no longer be housed in the mind, but only in the brain. For instance, on the one hand we now know that an apparently proximate star is really two thousand million light-years distant, and that some microbes undoubtedly exist, though they are too small to be discerned by the most powerful microscope. On the other hand, Bertrand Russell in 'The Scientific Outlook' is constrained to warn us that a few specially trained human beings may soon have reason to think that they can mechanize our whole human existence on man-made principles, or destroy it if preferred. These and such-like propositions need adjustment and assimilation, otherwise the mind of the modern individual will be split in two, one half occupied with calculations which justify logic and stagger comprehension, the other half occupied with artistic and sentimental values which leave him much where Sophocles, Cicero and Shakespeare were left—good company, no doubt, but chiefly in moments of self-realization from within. Between us we should know everything, but not solely on the authority of induction and deduction. Even when individual experience is

hopelessly and extravagantly inadequate, facts can be brought home to the imagination and sympathies as well as to the intellect. Cannot humanists be trained to soften and define the rugged, nebulous, or elusive outlines, so that they might fit into the nooks and crannies of the human spirit ?

Such a reconciliation can undoubtedly be effected, for it has already begun. In fact the fusion might have been inaugurated by Huxley, Haeckel and their opponent Samuel Butler, if each gladiator had not persuaded himself that argumentative triumphs meant universal enlightenment. But George Romanes, the disciple of Darwin, in 'Thoughts on Religion,' argued that science cannot reveal the truth except through the intuitions of the spirit, and the bacteriologist, Elie Metchnikoff, in 'La Nature de l'Homme,' proved that physiology could help us to heal human despondency as well as toxic poisons. Karl Pearson, in his frequently re-edited 'Grammar of Science,' admitted that science could not in itself become an explanation of existence ; it was only a classified index of phenomena ; but its ordered body of facts should serve to clarify the imagination and help the humanist to see more clearly through his impressions of life.

These were straws which show the direction of the stream. But since the Four Years War a most encouraging advance has been made. In 1929 Sir William Dampier's 'History of Science' demonstrated, with 4000 years of evidence, that ascertained facts can never represent the whole of experience ; they must join forces with art, ethics, and philosophy ; only thus could they lead to the apprehension of a sacred mystery. In 1935 J. B. Haldane published 'The Philosophy of a Biologist.' This booklet reviews the whole range of science almost as comprehensively as the sixteen compact volumes of Spencer's 'Synthetic Philosophy,' but the reader will at once perceive that he is being carried far beyond Victorian departmentalism. Haldane argues that the study of physics, biology and psychology lead on to art and religion. The more accurately evolution is established by observation and experiment, the more surely it culminates in an aspiration towards beauty, truth, and righteousness. Sir Charles Sherrington's 'Man on his Nature' (1940) discusses how the spirit of man has reacted to his discoveries in anatomy and physiology, how the wisdom of the body can grow into the wisdom of the mind. This interpretation is beginning to be felt so deeply that some scientifically trained intellects are impelled to invoke poetry to complete their message, as for instance Dr. Stopes and Colin Tolly.

Nor is the general reading public irresponsive to the new humanism. For proof one has only to note that these thoughtful and erudite treatises have commanded big sales, and that an even readier welcome has greeted the scientific journalism which has sprung up since the last war, the work of serious and well-established authors, some eminent, for instance Sir James Jeans, Needham, Paget, J. B. S. Haldane, Crowther, Sullivan, Levy, and the originators of 'The Science of Life,' Julian Huxley and H. G. Wells.

Thus science is not altogether blind to its opportunity of enriching and completing culture. On the other hand the men of letters have been less ready to play their part. None have succeeded in appreciating the possibilities of the new humanism as Goethe was able to do, more than a century ago. A few have realized that another door has been opened. Of these Robert Bridges has made the most courageous attempt in 'The Testament of Beauty,' perhaps because he was a student of science, as well as of literature, language and art. Shaw in 'Man and Superman' and 'Back to Methuselah' has at any rate tried of set purpose to interpret a scientific idea by the light of sentiment, without being false to either. Some others have yielded to the influence, as if unconsciously or unwillingly; for instance, W. H. Hudson. His essays on birds have all the old-world sense of pantheism and beauty, yet he is as scientifically searching and ruthless as the most vindictively uncompromising ornithologist. D. H. Lawrence is the most notable example. He professed an abhorrence of science from Darwin to Freud; his proper study was the secret urges fermenting in the darkest depths of the soul; yet his inspiration was fed on certain physiological facts which have hardly yet found their way into the literary consciousness. How many men of culture are aware of the hypogastric plexus, the sacral ganglion, the vermicular motion of the intestines, the chemistry of the blood stream, or the researches of ethnologists into the "pristine unconscious"? Aldous Huxley has also learnt much from sources equally unliterary. Some of his later stories and essays reveal or betray his concern with the human "Hinterland," in unexpected glimpses. But quite apart from his vivid and pardonably unsympathetic 'O Brave New World!' the consciousness of man's origin and inheritance seems to haunt rather than stimulate his talent; witness 'Diary of Anthony Beavis.' Herbert Read has perhaps attained to a more constructive idea, especially since he studied D'Arcy Thompson's 'Growth and Form' and Whitehead's

' Principles of Natural Knowledge,' in which we are taught that the structure of matter corresponds to the morphology of art ; that a valid analogy exists between the order of the universe, the order of art, and the order of conduct. Much more has been accomplished by Santayana (whom Read admired), the materialist who clung to super-material values, who makes no account of truths beyond the scale and scope of our senses, and yet believes in " the realm of essences," and insists that science " would add no dignity to the mind unless that mind possessed a clear humanity and could discuss what facts and logic are good for and what not." One recognizes also a single-hearted two-sightedness in such a composition as Dorothy Wellesley's ' Matrix,' which Yeats valued as " the most moving philosophical poem of our time."

Yet these efforts are only a beginning. They indicate a receptiveness to scientific suggestion, but not a readiness to repay what they have borrowed, in their own coin. Can the man of letters so shape his ideas and ideals that his inspiration will find a way into the opposite camp ? Sometimes one thinks that Somerset Maugham (haunted throughout life by his early medical experiences) may now and then have got near to the right tone. It is needed. Our age is often denoted or deplored as materialistic, and certainly there is nowadays a temptation to be so impressed by what science can do, that the majority hardly cares to look beyond. This one-sided attitude is exemplified by Lancelot Hogben, who is so absorbed in our mathematically contrived civilization (undoubtedly indispensable to the betterment of society) that he has become a scientific philistine, arrogantly contemptuous of those other essences and implications which cannot be measured by instruments, though as real as the humanity for which he schemes and plans. His intolerance is all the more regrettable because it is still shared by many of his brethren, and thereby exposes progress to yet another danger. Scientific research is partly devoted to the discovery of causes, nor would we have it otherwise ; for to explain the cause is often to control the effect. Such is the beneficial result in the physical and physiological fields—for instance, in the war against flood, fire and disease. But in the moral world, to explain the cause is often to condone the effect—for instance, vice, perversion, crime, malignity seem less black when traced to heredity, complexes, and ductless glands. To understand is to forgive, even oneself, and possibly those scientists who ignore the testimony of art are ignoring certain qualities of the mind—its resilience, self-direction, responsiveness, and versatility—and therefore, by their one-

sided researches into causation, have contributed to the moral slackness and complacent fatalism of the interwar generation. Must the monist be indisputably right, simply because he cannot understand dualism ?

To sum up. It seems that science and literature are like two long-lost brothers, reunited by the force of circumstances, and as yet only vaguely aware of their kinship. They have lived so long apart, and seen such different sights, that neither can realize his need of the other. Science must not only believe in the spirit, but understand its manifestations ; literature must not only accept the logic of facts, but learn how they could enlarge the imagination and purify the emotions. After the experience of this war we shall realize that truth is only to be seen in a double light. Such will be the tenor of humanism, at least for the next generation or so.

Possibly our best hopes of a synthesis rest on a re-study of the Classics ; not so much because of their stylistic and historical values, as for their reasoned conviction of human worth. Perhaps we can absorb and apply it to modern problems of which the Ancients sometimes had more than an inkling. After all, humanists need not be creative, but they must create an atmosphere in which creativeness can thrive.

Before some such consummation can be achieved we may have to reckon with the *anti-humanism* inaugurated by T. E. Hulme. This restless and rather reckless thinker devoted his early manhood (1908-12) to elaborating notes for a philosophy of aesthetics and impressing his convictions on the rising generation of Georgian poets. He borrowed the word *humanism* and narrowed its meaning to denote the post-Renaissance cult of self-sufficiency and unlimited perfectability, first assumed (in his opinion) by Montaigne, then amplified by Rousseau and then glorified by the Romantic Movement. These undiscerning pretensions had blinded us to reality, and our regeneration would have to begin by recognizing that we have waded out far beyond our depth. He asserted that literature and especially poetry will not resume its proper function (a form of imagism) till we revert to the religion of Pascal and recognize high above us a Spiritual Power, The Absolute, which we can never understand, much less equal, since the human race is still poisoned by original sin. Hulme was killed at the Front in 1917 ; his notes were edited by Herbert Read and published in 1924 as ' Speculations ' ; and his doctrine has, not unreasonably, wakened echoes among the inter-war generation in America as well as in England.

In view of their and our experiences during the last twenty-five years we are not likely to exaggerate man's capacity for perfection, not in the immediate future. But, on the other hand, even if we agree with Pascal, Hulme, T. S. Eliot and the other anti-"humanists," even if we admit that man is no more than "a reed which thinks," there can be no irreparable damage in following those thoughts whither-so-ever they may lead—especially among the discoveries of science.

## ERASMUS AND HIS ENGLISH FRIENDS.

BY HENRY J. COWELL, F.R.S.A., F.R.S.L.

[Read December 9th, 1942.]

WE are not to give ourselves this afternoon simply to delving into the dim and distant past, nor to occupy ourselves with fusty manuscripts or dusty tomes. On the contrary, we are to live for a little while with one of the most vitalizing spirits who ever came into the world of human kind, and with a spirit whose influence on the thinking world of our day is still a living and vital factor.

Erasmus once wrote : " The English are constantly thought to be heretical, but they are not so in point of friendship, and [ have the greatest reason to love them."

" Erasmus has many claims to fame," says Dr. P. S. Allen, one of the great humanist's most sympathetic students. " I believe that, of all that life brought him, he valued nothing more highly than the devoted attachment of his friends."

Some time ago I made a study of " Erasmus's Personal and Literary Associations with England." The present paper is a further and more intimate study of " Erasmus and his English Friends." A man's friendships are part of himself, and a consideration of his English friendships is essential to a true estimate of the life and work of Erasmus. Chief among his English friends were William Blount (Lord Mountjoy), John Colet, William Warham, John Fisher, Thomas More, Cuthbert Tunstall ; and it is to these six men in particular that I am inviting attention.

### ERASMUS AND MOUNTJOY.

In the summer or autumn of 1498 we find among Erasmus's pupils in Paris a cultured young Englishman named William Blount, afterwards Lord Mountjoy. It was this student who first induced Erasmus to visit England. A letter from Erasmus to Mountjoy, written from Oxford during this first visit to England, indicates the happy impression which this country made upon the young Dutchman. He wrote :

" I am getting on here splendidly, and better every day. I cannot tell you how delighted I am with your England—partly through custom, which softens all things ; partly through the kindness of Colet and Prior Charnock, for there was never anything more gentle, sweeter or more lovable than their characters."

Erasmus was indebted to Mountjoy for long-continued kindness, and in 1500 he dedicated to him the ' *Adagiorum Collectanea*.' On the accession of Henry VIII, Mountjoy wrote enthusiastically to Erasmus :

" Oh, my Erasmus, if you could see how all the world here is rejoicing in the possession of so great a prince, how his love is all their desire, you could not contain your tears for joy. The heavens laugh ; the earth exults ; all things are full of milk, of honey and of nectar. Our new King does not desire gold or gems or precious metals, but virtue, glory, immortality. . . . Make up your mind that the last day of your wretchedness has dawned. Come quickly, therefore, and do not torture us with expectation.<sup>1</sup>"

#### ERASMUS AND COLET.

The life and thought of Erasmus were profoundly affected by his intercourse with John Colet, at Oxford. A. J. Mason goes so far as to say that " Colet was the man to whom Erasmus owed his soul." In his ' *Life of Dean Colet* ' Dr. J. H. Lupton writes :

" In the spring or summer of 1498, there came to Oxford a scholar from the Continent, of about the same age as Colet, little known in the world then, but destined to become, before many years were over, perhaps the greatest teacher of his age. This was Desiderius Erasmus. He had come over from Paris with the object of improving his knowledge of Greek, at the instance of Lord Mountjoy. Erasmus took up his abode in St. Mary's College of Augustinian Canons, of which Richard Charnock was then prior, and here he was hospitably entertained. Charnock seems to have been at once struck with the ability of his new visitor, and to have given a favourable account of him to Colet."

This drew from Colet the following letter to Erasmus :

" My friend Brumus commends you highly in a letter I have had from him. And you have been commended to me already both by the reputation in which your name is held and by the testimony of your own writings. For when I was in Paris, Erasmus was a name often heard in the conversation of learned men. . . . But the strongest recommendation to me of all is that the venerable prior of the House and Church of Jesus Christ, with whom you are staying here, assured me yesterday how great, in his judgment, is your worth and how distinguished your goodness. I am glad you have now come to England, and I hope that our country may be a source of as much pleasure to you as I believe that you, by your learning, can be a source of profit to it. Be assured that I am at your service, and shall always be so, as in duty bound in the case of one of whose worth and learning I have the highest opinion."

To this, Erasmus replied :

" If I recognize anything at all in myself deserving of even slender praise . I should certainly rejoice at being praised by you, the object of all praises. For I set so high a value on your opinion that your single approbation of me is far pleasanter than if the whole Forum of Rome were shouting its applause. . . . This England of yours is pleasing to me on many accounts, but on none more than this—that it abounds in men fully conversant with good learning. And among them you are accounted the chief. For such is your learning that, even without the recommendation of your high character, you would of necessity be admired of all. Such is the holiness of your life, that, even if you had no learning to recommend you, you could not fail to be held in love and respect and reverence by everyone. I have been much struck and delighted with your quiet, composed, unaffected style, welling forth from a clear fountain from a richly stored mind, flowing equably and uniformly, ever transparent, simple, and full of moderation, with nothing at any time rough, or strained, or agitated. . . . In short, with a happy ease, you utter without premeditation that which another could hardly express with the utmost care."

In June, 1506, Erasmus wrote to Colet from Paris :

" When, after leaving England, I arrived once more in France, it is hard to say how mingled were my feelings. I cannot easily tell you which preponderated—my joy in visiting again the friends I had before left in France or my sadness in leaving those whom I had recently found in England. For this I can say truly, that there is no whole country which has found me friends so numerous, so sincere, learned, obliging, so noble and accomplished in every way, as the one city of London has done, every one of whom has so vied in loving and assisting me that I know not whom I should prefer to another, and am bound to return an equal affection to them all."

Colet died in September, 1519. The intimacy of this friendship finds frequent proof in his correspondence.

Colet to Erasmus, October, 1511 :

" I have run through that epistle of yours about studies, and as I read it I not only approve it all but I truly admire your genius, and art, and learning, and copiousness, and eloquence. I have often wished the boys at our school could be taught in the way you explain. . . . Oh, Erasmus, how I wished that we had *you* as a teacher in our school! "

Yet again Colet to Erasmus, June, 1516 :

" You cannot easily believe, my dear Erasmus, how much joy your letter gave me. For I learned from it where you are, and also that you are likely to return to us, which would be very delightful both to me and to your other friends, of whom you have a great many here. . . . You say you would like to be settled quietly somewhere. I should like you to have your final residence with us, but you have experienced too often what sort of people we are. Nevertheless you have some friends here who esteem you most highly. My lord of Canterbury, when I was with him a few days ago, spoke of you a great deal, and desired your presence here very much.

" I marvel that you should call me happy. I *should* count myself happy if I had a thousandth part of that learning and wisdom which you possess. . . . Love me as ever, and if you *should* return to us, count upon my devotion to your service.

" Co on, Erasmus. As you have given us the New Testament in Latin, illustrate it by your expositions. You will confer a great boon upon those who delight to read your writings if you will explain the meaning of the Gospels—which no one can do better than you. And in so doing you will make your name immortal. Immortal, did I say ? The name of Erasmus will never perish."

It is obvious that the friendship between Erasmus and Colet was of the warmest possible character, based upon mutual admiration and genuine appreciation. I may remind you that Dean Milman speaks of Colet as " the greatest of all Deans of St. Paul's."

#### ERASMUS AND WARHAM.

Erasmus appreciated greatly the uncommon kindness of Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury. Writing from London in February, 1512, to the Cardinal of Nantes, he said :

" The Archbishop of Canterbury did all for me that was possible. He is one of the best of men—wise, judicious, willing, energetic, laborious. Besides being Primate, he is Lord Chancellor, yet with all his greatness he has been father and mother to me."

In the same month he wrote from London to the Abbot of St. Bertin :

" If you want to hear of our condition, Erasmus is almost entirely turned into an Englishman, with such marked kindness am I treated, but chiefly by the Archbishop of Canterbury, my special patron. How happy, how fertile, how ready, is that man's mind ! What uncommon erudition ! What unheard-of gentleness to everybody ! He has the royal privilege of never sending anyone away sad. And lastly, in so great a pre-eminence of fortune, how complete an absence of pretension ! He seems the only person who is unaware of his own greatness. No one is more loyal to his friends, or more constant in protecting them."

In the same year (1512) Warham presented Erasmus with the living of Aldington, in Kent, valued at £38 6s. 8d. per annum (or in present-day values say £760). After six months, Erasmus resigned the living for conscientious reasons, pointing out that he could not preach in English. Warham then charged upon the tithes of the parish a pension of £20 ; this sum (in present-day values say £400) was paid yearly until the death of Erasmus in 1536.

Lord Mount joy had granted a pension of like amount, so that

from these two English sources alone Erasmus drew something like £800 per annum over a long period. Mountjoy's pension was punctually paid for nearly forty years.

In June, 1516, Warham wrote from Otford to Erasmus :

" When I think of the honour that you have everywhere attributed to me—whether in my presence by word of mouth, in my absence by letters, or in public by your books—the weight is more than I can sustain. I have communicated your publication on the New Testament to several of my brother bishops and doctors of theology, who agree in declaring that you have executed a work exceedingly well worth doing. Adhering to their judgment, I exalt it with every praise, as well as those important labours upon Jerome which you have now nearly completed."

After Warham's passing, Erasmus's beautiful tribute to his friend was :

"All who have gathered good from my writings must thank Archbishop Warham for it. . . . I loved him in life and I love him none the less in death. For what I loved in him is not dead."

It is a happy thing to know that in the parish church of Aldington, to the cure of which the Archbishop appointed Erasmus, there yet remain associations with each of the two men. The fine perpendicular tower of the church was commenced by Warham in 1507, while in 1911 a battlemented top was added in memory of Erasmus.

#### ERASMUS AND FISHER.

To John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, Erasmus makes deep and sincere acknowledgment of indebtedness. Writing to the Cardinal of Nantes in February, 1512, Erasmus said :

" Several other prelates of this kingdom are also among my friends—especially the Bishop of Rochester, a man who, not to speak of his blameless life, has various and recondite learning, and a generous heart, and is highly esteemed here for his qualities."

In the same month he wrote from London to Thomas Halsey :

" Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, is, in my opinion, the one person with whom no living man can be compared either for integrity of life, or for erudition, or for greatness of soul. I except only the Archbishop of Canterbury, who alone keeps me here—somewhat indeed against my will."

In June, 1516, Fisher wrote to Erasmus from Rochester :

" You have made me your debtor in a vast amount of thanks by presenting me with the New Testament translated by you out of the Greek. As soon as I

received it, and had seen the notes in several places in which you extol your Maecenas of Canterbury with such ample praises, I went off to him myself and showed him these passages. When he had read them, he promised that he would do a great deal for you and exhorted me to persuade you to return. And indeed I do not doubt that, if you do so, he will be more liberal to you than ever. Take care of your health, and hasten your return to us, which will be welcome to everybody."

Exactly a year later, Fisher wrote once more to Erasmus :

" The New Testament, translated by you for the common benefit of all, cannot give offence to any wise person. You have not only cleared up innumerable passages by your erudition, but have also supplied a very complete commentation of the whole work, so that it may now be read and understood by everyone with much more satisfaction and pleasure than it could be before."

#### ERASMUS AND MORE.

Concerning 'The Praise of Folly,' a work which was put together by Erasmus in the house of Thomas More in Bucklersbury, Professor Huizinga, a Dutch biographer of Erasmus, has said :

" 'The Praise of Folly' is Erasmus's best work. He wrote other books - some, perhaps, of equal or greater influence upon his time. But each has had its day. 'Moriae Encomium' alone was to be immortal. In 'The Praise of Folly' Erasmus gave something that no one else could have given to the world. Erasmus seemed to his contemporaries the bearer of a new liberty of the mind ; a new clearness, purity, and simplicity of knowledge, a new harmony of healthy and right living."

Erasmus himself, in a letter to More dated June, 1510, describes the way in which this book came into being :

" When I was returning from Italy to England, being unwilling to waste the whole time that I had to spend on horseback in illiterate talk, I sometimes preferred either to think over some of our common studies or to enjoy the recollection of the friends, no less amiable and learned, that I had left here. Of these, my More, you were among the first I called to mind, being wont to enjoy the remembrance of you in your absence as I had, when you were present, enjoyed your company, than which I protest I have never met with anything more delightful in my life. Therefore, since at any rate something had to be done, and the occasion did not seem suitable for serious meditation, I chose to amuse myself with 'The Praise of Folly.' What Pallas, you will say, put that idea into your head ? Well, the first thing that struck me was your surname of More, which is just as near the name of Moria, or Folly, as you are far from the tiling, from which by general acclamation you are remote indeed. . . . Such is your incredible sweetness and good nature that you are able to be on terms of fellowship with all mankind. You will therefore not only willingly receive this little declaration, as a memento of your comrade, but will adopt and protect it as dedicated to you and become not mine but yours."

In the course of a piquant and picturesque character sketch of More, written for Ulrich von Hutten, Erasmus says :

" He seems to be born and made for friendship, of which he is the sincerest and most persistent devotee. While he is somewhat neglectful of his own interest, no one takes more pains in attending to the concerns of his friends. If anyone requires a perfect example of true friendship it is in More that he will best find it. . . . It has always been part of his character to be most obliging to everybody and marvellously ready with his sympathy, and this disposition is more conspicuous than ever now that his power of doing good is greater. . . . He is a steady adherent of true piety, having regular hours for his prayers, which are not uttered by rote, but from the heart. He talks with his friends about a future life in such a way as to make you feel that he believes what he says."

For Margaret Roper, More's devoted daughter, Erasmus had also the greatest regard. He calls her " the flower of all the learned matrons of England."

#### ERASMUS AND TUNSTALL.

Cuthbert Tunstall and Erasmus met in Brussels in June, 1516. From that time their friendship grew apace. Writing to another friend concerning Tunstall, Erasmus named in particular Tunstall's exceptional scholarship and keen critical faculty, combined with unusual modesty and manners, humorous and charming, yet always dignified. When Tunstall reached Brussels in the month just mentioned, the first edition of Erasmus's Greek-Latin New Testament was already in circulation. In the preparation of the second edition of that epoch-making work, Tunstall was closely associated with Erasmus. Erasmus had begun this Greek-Latin version under Colet's influence at least ten years earlier. The first edition had been hurriedly—in fact, far too hurriedly—rushed through the press, and scarcely was it issued before Erasmus set to work on a second and corrected edition, in regard to which Tunstall gave him much help. They worked together during the latter months of 1516 and the first half of 1517 at Brussels, Ghent and Bruges. This new edition, however, did not appear until March, 1519. Of the three copies printed on vellum, one was presented to Tunstall. That copy has since crossed the Atlantic, and is preserved in Philadelphia.

In July, 1517, when Tunstall had to go on to Middelburg, Erasmus was considering how to thank him for his willing and valuable aid in regard to the Greek-Latin New Testament, when Tunstall placed his friend under a new obligation by a gift of fifty French crowns. This was but one of many such favours. "As I live," writes Erasmus, " this age has nothing to compare with this man."

*In* September, 1517, Tunstall wrote to Erasmus : " Having deserved well of profane literature, and won immortal fame in its service, you will do well if you spend the remainder of your life in the illustration of sacred letters. Posterity will infer that the studies which concern the salvation of the soul have been dearer to you than those which afford mere amusement, and it will never let the name of Erasmus perish."

Tunstall was a classical scholar of European fame ; a mathematician of repute ; judge, diplomatist, statesman, administrator, theologian, bishop ; eloquent, witty, human, lovable. He was not of the stuff of which martyrs were made, for he was peace-loving and somewhat timid, and he shared with Erasmus an " invincible moderation." In his own time there was universal acknowledgment of Tunstall's ability, versatility, learning, tender-heartedness, and high personal character.

#### ERASMUS'S ITALIAN FRIEND.

*In* any consideration of the friends of Erasmus in England, mention should be made of Andreas Ammonius, an Italian who, towards the close of his life, became Latin secretary to Henry VIII. Congenial tastes drew the two strangers together, and Ammonius became one of the most devoted and sympathetic of all Erasmus's friends. In a letter written from London to Erasmus in May, 1511, Ammonius said :

" You are marvellously missed here. As people know that we lodge together, I am deafened with the cries of ' What of Erasmus ? When will he return ? ' Take care of yourself, and come back to us safe and sound."

Five months later Ammonius wrote—once more from London :

" Your letters, Erasmus, have surpassed my expectation without satisfying my appetite. You have written to me more often than I thought you would, but much less frequently than I wished. . . . To-morrow I am going to Court, and will not fail to look after your interests there."

Then we have a letter written from Cambridge by Erasmus to Ammonius :

" Your letters, my Andreas, make me long to fly to you that I may enjoy more closely so charming a friend. At the same time they make it possible for me to hold on here, because they so frequently refresh me with honeyed talk that I am not so conscious of my absence from London."

#### ERASMUS AND HENRY VIII.

Erasmus's personal relations with Henry VIII began with great promise, but ended in frustration. His appreciation of the

King is evident from the letter which Erasmus wrote to Henry in September, 1517 :

" You scarcely let a day pass but you bestow some time upon reading, and you choose especially those books from which you may rise a better and a wiser man. . . . A sovereign is an exceptional being among mortals, and yet he is a man. . . . I do not cease to bear witness with all the pains I can to the interest which your Majesty has been pleased to take in me. What, indeed, do I not owe you, having been invited, when lately with you, to enter your service upon such generous terms ! I think it in itself no small distinction that so insignificant a person as myself is approved, recognized and loved by so great a sovereign."

Seven months later Erasmus wrote from Louvain to Richard Pace :

" Your King's Court in Britain is brilliant indeed, the seat and citadel of the best studies and of the highest characters. I congratulate you upon having such a sovereign, and I congratulate the Prince himself whose reign is made illustrious by so many lights of genius ; and on both accounts I congratulate your England, a fortunate country in many ways besides, but so excelling in those respects that no reign in the world can be compared with it."

Once more, in May, 1519, Erasmus wrote to Henry :

" You make yourself the pattern of what you prescribe for others. The King's command goes far, but the King's example goes farther. Future ages will tell how England thrived, how virtue flourished, in the reign of Henry VIII, how piety revived, how learning grew to a height which Italy might *envy*. Once I avoided Kings and Courts, now I would gladly migrate to England if my infirmities allowed. I am not a native of England and yet, when I consider how many years I have lived in that country, and how many excellent and sincere friends I owe to it, I have as hearty a love and esteem for it as if I had drawn my first breath in it."

#### OTHER ENGLISHMEN.

There are a few examples of Erasmus's letters to Englishmen less known to fame. While on his first visit to England, he wrote to Robert Fisher, then in Italy :

" ' How do you like our England ? ' you will ask me. Believe me when I answer that I have never liked anything so much before. I find the climate both pleasant and wholesome ; and I have met with so much kindness, and so much learning, that but for the curiosity of seeing it I do not now so much care for Italy. When I hear my Colet, I seem to be listening to Plato himself. In Grocyn, who does not marvel at such a perfect round of learning ? What can be more acute, profound, and delicate than the judgment of Linacre ? What has Nature ever created more gentle, more sweet, more happy, than the genius of Thomas More ? "

In June, 1506, Erasmus wrote to Roger Wentford, master of

St. Anthony's School in London, where Thomas More is said to have been educated :

"Among the many most agreeable friends with whom Britain has made me acquainted, you, my dear Roger, are one of the first to come to my mind. Your love has been so constant, your society so delightful, your services so useful, that to whatever quarter of the world my fates may lead me I shall carry with me the most agreeable recollection of my Roger."

And in February, 1518, Erasmus wrote to William Latimer :

" I know it has been wisely and rightly said ' Deliberate before you begin, and after you have done that, do promptly what you have resolved ' ; but I observe that many people do nothing but deliberate until it is too late to carry out their resolve. We all know the case of men who deliberate whether to marry or not, and then deliberate what lady they shall choose ; meanwhile time is on the wing, and, before they have made up their minds, they become confirmed old bachelors. Do not let your excessive bashfulness—F had almost said your immodest modesty—restrain you from giving your assistance to public studies."

Amid the multitude of statues on the west front of Canterbury Cathedral there is one which is obviously meant for Erasmus. I do not know of any other figure in stone in this country representing the great humanist. Erasmus, of course, was no stranger to the Cathedral.

The real fact seems to be that Erasmus was neither happy in England nor happy away from it. Writing in 1518 to Archbishop Warham, Erasmus proposed to end his days in England ; he wrote in the same strain to Colet ; and in a letter to Fisher he asked for a horse and talked of settling in England. In a similar way he wrote to Cardinal Wolsey :

" Fool that I was to have rejected the King's and your kind offers. Had I accepted the hand which was held out to me, I might have been living happily in a cultivated circle of friends, instead of struggling with ungrateful calumniators. What a thing it is to cultivate literature ! Better far grow cabbages in a garden !"

And yet we know that when he was in England he was gravely dissatisfied, and that he left the country of his own free will.

Erasmus was no imprisoned scholar, confined to desk or closet. He was out in the world, travelling from city to city, gathering materials among all places and all persons from palace to village alehouse, and missing nothing which had meaning or amusement in it. In ail literary history, there is no more extraordinary figure. He had the true artist's gift of so handling everything that he touched, vulgar or sublime, that human interest is immediately awakened. Among the best and brightest are his word-pictures of England.

When Erasmus made his will in January, 1527, directions were given for the presentation of twenty copies of his works. At the head of the list were six destined for England. These were to go to Warham, Fisher, Tunstall, More, Longland, and the Library of Queens' College, Cambridge. These instructions were confirmed in February, 1536.

Erasmus was an inveterate traveller, and had a great experience of horses. It would be interesting to trace, in his voluminous correspondence, the references he makes to these animals—in his day so useful and, indeed, so indispensable. I find in a letter to Battus these words : "I *must* have a better horse. I don't want a Bucephalus, but I require a beast which I shall not be ashamed to ride." So also, from St. Omer, in June, 1510, while waiting to cross to England, Erasmus wrote to Christopher Urswick :

" Your horse is a genius and has been very lucky to me. He has twice carried me safe and sound backwards and forwards to Basle—not only a tedious but a dangerous journey. He has visited so many universities that he has grown as wise as Homer's Ulysses. While I was almost killing myself with my labours at Basle for ten months, he has grown so fat and so idle he could scarcely get in at the city gates."

There is a further witty letter from Erasmus to Warham concerning a horse sent by the Archbishop to his friend :

" I have received your horse, who, while not very handsome, is a good creature, for he is free from all the mortal sins save gluttony and laziness ; moreover, he is endowed with the qualities of a holy father confessor ; being prudent, modest humble, chaste, peaceable, and one who neither bites nor kicks."

Of course, to Erasmus books were the *very* breath of life. He counted them among his true friends. To a student he wrote :

" Read first the best books on the subject which you have in hand. Why learn what you will have to unlearn ? The important thing for you is not how much you know, but the quality of what you know. Divide your day, and give to each part of it a special occupation. Noer work at night; it dulls the brain and hurts the health."

I have been dealing in particular with <sup>i</sup> Erasmus and his English Friends," but [ add a few words by way of tribute to a great humanist.

Erasmus was truly a genius, but he could be practical enough when he chose. And while he was constitutionally timid, shrinking not only from hardship, but from discomfort, he is not to be regarded as a coward. Take this letter written by him from Lou vain in February 1518, to George Bude ;

" When I am attacked by name, and am described as an adversary of the glory of Christ—for whoso glory, sinful man as I am, I would face the utmost danger and would not refuse to die—will you still bid me be silent ? Jo you judge that it is to be my lot to be the one person in the world to be attacked with impunity and trodden under foot by all, so that henceforth there shall be no dog so cowardly as not to venture to bark at Erasmus, no ass so stupid that he fears to bray, no pig that dares not grunt ? The mice defend themselves with their little teeth ; the bees are ready with their stings ; I alone am not to be allowed to raise a shield in my own defence, and that in a question of faith ! Believe me, the man who can lightly bear the imputation of impiety has not much piety to defend."

Moreover, at a time when war was accepted by practically everybody as unavoidable, and as quite the permissible and customary thing, he took up a manful stand against it. Thus he wrote from Cambridge :

" I often wonder how human beings, especially Christian human beings, can be so mad as to go righting with one another. Beasts do not fight, or only the most savage kinds of them, and they only fight for food with the weapons which Nature has given them. Men fight for ambition, for anger, for lust, or other folly, and the justest war can hardly approve itself to any reasonable person. I would give all that I possess in England to see Christendom at peace."

And in a letter to the Abbot of St. Bertin he said : Oh that God would deign to still the tempest of war ! What madness it is ! "

Erasmus was said to be " the envy of his own age and the wonder of all succeeding ages." Dr. P. S. Allen essays to reply to the question, Why are people so interested in Erasmus ? He points out concerning Erasmus that his character was not free from blemishes ; such is the way of men. Besides his high and noble gifts there were the defects of his qualities. With his ardent, impulsive nature, it was not easy for him to practise reserve. What he thought, he said ; what he felt came bursting out.

" Erasmus was happy in expounding the Scriptures, in persuading men to self-mastery and moderation, to the good manners which spring from real consideration for others, to high ideals of Christian marriage, to the pure affection which seeketh its neighbours' good. The scholar, the theologian, the grammarian, all recognize the importance of his work ; the historian turns over his pages with delight ; the peacemakers repeat his exhortations in that great cause from generation to generation ; lovers of literature find his lighter works ever new."

The most impressive view of the resting-place of Erasmus in the cathedral at Basle is obtained from the ambulatory of the

south transept, the baptistery being seen filled with light from the windows in the north wall. The reddish marble slab on the tomb bears a Latin epitaph : " Dedicated to Christ the Saviour. To Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, a man in all ways pre-eminent, whose unique learning in every branch of letters, combined with an equal discretion, posterity will both wonder and extol ; . . . to him who will live while the world shall stand, and will hold conversation with the learned of all nations. . . . "

Close to the Cathedral, in the Historical Museum, there are preserved a number of the cups presented to him by friends and patrons ; articles of jewellery ; his table-knife ; and his hour-glass.

When Erasmus was living, every letter from him was folded in brocade by the recipient to be displayed as a precious relic before the admiring gaze of friends ; and after the lapse of four hundred years, a scholar like Professor A. J. Faulkner can write :

" No scholar the world has ever known is so sure of immortality. More and more with every passing year, whether we will or no, his ashes still rule us from their urn. More and more the Erasmian spirit is coming to its own. For better or for worse, modern Christendom is penetrated through and through with the Erasmian spirit."

A tribute such as I have prepared should conclude, [ feel, with the veritable words of Erasmus himself. Here, then, are a few sample sentences :

" I am a lover of liberty."

" I love a jest, but I have no taste for ribaldry."

" I would not change my freedom for the best bishopric in the world."

" A man's faith should be looked for in the life he leads, not in the creed he professes."

" If we want truth, every man ought to be free to say what he thinks without fear."

" We must neither sit down in idle security, relying on Divine grace, nor, in view of the hardness of the struggle, lay down our arms in despair."

Towards the end of his life he wrote :

" From all parts of the world I am daily thanked by many because they have been kindled by my works into zeal for a good disposition and sacred literature ; and they who have never seen Erasmus yet know and love him from his books."

**Well** may we say with his well-beloved friend John Colet, "**The** name of Erasmus will never perish."

## THE TREDEGAR MEMORIAL LECTURE.

The Tredegar Lecture perpetuates the honoured memory of the first Viscount Tredegar of the second creation. It was founded in 1935 by his son, the second Viscount, a Fellow of this Society since 1928.

### MATTHEW ARNOLD : THE CRITIC AND THE ADVOCATE.

BY GEOFFREY TLLLOTSON, F.R.S.L.

[Read March 30th, 1942.]

WHAT I am going to say about Matthew Arnold is little more than a footnote to be affixed to that solid chapter which in the last few years so many pioneer critics and scholars have been busy putting together. We have had a mass of books, articles, lectures on Arnold, and we shall have more and more as time goes on : the subject, totally considered, is almost as inexhaustible and rewarding as, say, the subject Samuel Johnson. I am engaged in saying one or two small things, in affixing a footnote.

#### I.

In his lectures ' On the Study of Celtic Literature ' Matthew Arnold settles for a moment on this distinction :

" the difference there is between an interested and a disinterested critical habit. [The scholar concerned] deals with this fragment [Arnold is speaking of ' the *Jurencus* manuscript at Cambridge ']; but, in spite of all his great acuteness and learning, because he has a bias, because he does not bring to these matters the disinterested spirit they need, he is capable of getting rid, quite unwarrantably, of a particular word in a fragment which does not suit him ; his dealing with the verses is an advocate's dealing, not a critic's."

This distinction is a clear one and it is drawn here at its clearest: the distinction between black and white is scarcely clearer than that between a critic who sees what is there and an advocate who chooses to miss what is there. But the distinction is harder to draw clearly when the object is a bigger and subtler matter than the presence or absence of a series of pen-strokes in a manuscript, when the object is a piece of literature, when we leave scholarship

for literary criticism. But still the distinction can be drawn. We can draw it between some of the spoken criticism of Dr. Johnson and the criticism, spoken or written, of Coleridge. Coleridge had a gift for penetrating into the object (to use the terms Arnold liked), for losing himself in finding the content of written words and of the mind behind them, for finding, say in the writings of Shakespeare or of Wordsworth, qualities subtle and massive which later readers have agreed to be fairly and squarely there. If Aristotle presides over the object like a sun pouring down unobstructed beams, Coleridge is like the wind licking in and out of the object, knowing it thoroughly, even (to use Keats's words about him) the "penetralia of [its] mystery." Aristotle and Coleridge are, in this more complicated sense, critics, not advocates.

There is ample evidence that Arnold could have been this kind of critic substantially, as well as brilliantly, if he had wanted to. When it is a matter of this kind of criticism, and especially when the object lies in certain fields—I shall revert to this—everybody would agree that Arnold's criticism can be as disinterested as it is penetrating. Arnold can be so good a critic of this kind that he can make us feel that the object of the criticism is itself speaking with his words, saying,<sup>4</sup> "This is my nature : my 'secret,' for better or worse, is out." The following, for example : Arnold's perception of the impure bravado of much of Burns's bacchanalian poetry, his perception of Wordsworth's having encouraged poets to think aloud rather than to make something, his perception of Tennyson's curiousness even in 'simple' passages. And in the Homer lectures this power of perception is pinned down by an elaborate pattern of hard thinking. In these four lectures Arnold's power of co-ordination, of *architectonice*, is probably more complicated than anything he demanded of the architectonic powers of the poet. In those lectures he resembles a champion chess-player who has taken on half-a-dozen opponents each with his board, and moves from one to the other with the minimum of visible effort. His power of penetration, here functioning along with a remarkable architectonic power, is the power of all good critics, and Arnold takes his place with perfect ease among them.

But Arnold is not mainly a critic of this kind. For this is literary criticism and Arnold claims to write criticism. Indeed, whenever he speaks of literary criticism or of the literary critic, he prefixes, like Newman himself, a derogative and speaks of "mere literary criticism," the "mere literary critic." Literature was a criticism of life, and the critic of that criticism was a critic

of literature and life together. Arnold's 'Essays in Criticism' are criticisms of literature and life together. But as soon as Arnold left "mere" literary criticism for this larger field, he ceased to be disinterested though he did not cease to claim to be disinterested.

The essay placed in the forefront of the 'Essays in Criticism' is an essay on criticism. That essay is not entitled 'The Nature of Criticism' nor even 'The Function of Criticism'; it is entitled 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time.' Its purport is clear enough if we read it carefully, and especially if we read it alongside 'Culture and Anarchy.' But it was not found clear enough at the time and, together with the essay 'Sweetness and Light,' earned Arnold some notoriety as an ineffectual angel with little to offer beyond a sprinkling of rose water.\* It was his Haunted term *disinterestedness* that was chiefly to blame. Splendid, "ardent" and lively as the essay is, it is loose where it should be tight. It failed to specify just how Arnold was putting this disinterestedness to use. You ought not to speak in the same breath of function and of disinterestedness unless you relate them. Arnold considered that what was most needed at that particular time and in this particular island was "a free play of the mind on all subjects which [criticism] touches," the knowing of "the best that is known and thought in the world," and the creating of "a current of true and fresh ideas." What was scarcely satisfactory was the grouping of all this wriggling life under the abstract heading *disinterestedness*, a disinterestedness which has reached the point of marking off from all that is known and thought in the world "the best that is known and thought in the world" is already partisan. And Arnold's other definitions of his term complicate the matter still further. It all amounts to this: that *disinterestedness*, always a relative term, is here very much a relative term. Arnold is disinterested only because other propagandists are interested more directly and with less grace and tact. By such words as "keeping aloof from practice," "steadily refusing to lend [criticism] to any . . . ulterior, political, practical considerations," Arnold meant merely that practical ends at that time and in this island would best be served by calling attention to something which the armies clashing by night had, since they were ignorant armies, lost sight of, and which, when remembered, would affect the fight. The key to Arnold's position lies in the

\* 'Culture and Anarchy,' ed. J. Dover Wilson, 1935, pp. 72f. My references throughout are to this edition.

words which follow those I have just quoted : criticism, he says. steadily refuses—

"to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with."

It is because practical interests are already quite sufficiently secured that Arnold is free to pose as an ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in an empyrean of pure ideas. He has no intention of stopping the fight, but wishes to make the end better worth fighting for.

Speaking generally, however varied were its subjects, Arnold's highly interested disinterestedness had a single aim : to produce a certain effect on the British middle class.

## II.

Great Britain, as Arnold saw the case, badly required reinstating in a Europe dominated by the democratic intelligence of the French and by the regimented vigour of the Germans. The British aristocracy had ceased to count ; their heydey had guttered with the last candles of the eighteenth century, and they now qualified for the nickname *barbarians*. If their class had still held power, Arnold no doubt would have offered a different criticism ; his object would have been to cajole them into effective sympathy with the industrial masses, the "populace." But they had ceased to count. And, on the other hand, the power of the populace had not yet begun to count. They were shifting, they were even kicking, in their sleep, but they were still, like Shelley and perhaps himself, ineffectual, and, in Arnold's prophetic eye, were doomed for a long time to remain so. If this class had been in power, no doubt Arnold would have offered a different criticism again ; his object would have been to induce them to save what could still be saved of the toppling culture of the eighteenth century. But they had not yet begun to count. What had begun to count, and to count only too patently, was the middle class. It was this class which was in power, and the career of Arnold's criticism was determined accordingly. In his essay on 'The Future of Liberalism,' he contrasted his own field with that of Cobbett:

"Cobbett's politics were at bottom always governed by one master-thought—the evil condition of the English labourer—the master-thought by which my

politics are governed is rather this, the thought of the bad civilization of the English middle class."

" The English *bourgeoisie* had never been isolated long enough to frame, except in the spheres of comfort and carnal morality, ideals and standards of its own."\* This lack Arnold set himself to remedy. He set himself the task of refining, of arnoldizing† the British‡ middle-class, " the great representative of trade and Dissent,"§ of endowing this class with " culture . . . by means of reading."|| The position is elaborated in ' Culture and Anarchy.'

### III.

When Arnold speaks of literature he speaks as he does because the middle class are in power. Arnold guessed what Weber and Tawney have regularly proved, that the middle-class Briton of the nineteenth century was descended from the Puritan of the seventeenth.¶ In the descent he had lost both his manly fire and his scars and had gained all that paraphernalia of prosperity which the satiric eye of Arnold was so quick to turn against him. But he was still interested in the old questions ; in practical morality, in solid demonstrable values, in ways of succeeding, in religious questions when those questions were tied up with something in the Bible. And because of this, Arnold the advocate could rest confident that his agenda included nothing hopeless. If, in his poems, he had rebelled against the buoyant, if serious, mood of Rugby, in his prose he was his father's son busying himself cheerfully and optimistically. This course was possible because of his fundamental sympathy with much that lay in and around the " bad civilization " he sought to improve. He was himself a member of the class he addressed. Like his audience he was interested in practical morality —as he read of " the occurrences of Shelley's private life," the exclamation that broke from him, as it broke from them, was " What a set ! what a world ! "\*\*\* He, too, admired and shared the wish to succeed and to succeed

\* G. M. Young, ' Victorian England : Portrait of an Age,' ed. 1937, p. 85.

† *Of*. ' Culture and Anarchy,' p. 48 : " The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward."

‡ *Of. op. cit.*, p. 49.

§ *Cf. op. cit.*, p. 75.

|| *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

¶ [*cf. op. cit.*, PP. 55 and 56.

\*\*\* ' Essays in Criticism,' second series, essay on Shelley.

by means of hard work ; he, too, revered the Bible and even took up Hebrew to study it more closely. And so, for all his high-hat persiflage, he descended among them not to destroy but to fulfil. He offered the middle class the beautiful high-serious poetry of the world not as the rival of their Hebraic male religion, but as its queenly complement. He did not ask them to change their ground, but only to realize that their chosen oasis was part of a rich plain. Poetry was religious, too. If consolation and joy were the products of religion (Arnold and the bourgeoisie agreed to ignore the theme of *quantus tremor est futururus* which rattled like bullets from the pale lips of Newman), consolation and joy were also the products of poetry. Arnold had long believed this. In the preface to the 'Poems' of 1853, his first prose piece and the map of so much of his mind, he had quoted Hesiod's divination that "the Muses . . . were born that they might be 'a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares'." Words on this subject came powerfully from a writer whose poems had earnestly sought to console the tedious questioning of a young man's intellect. And, in addition to consolation, the best poetry offered joy. The 1853 preface had also quoted Schiller's dictum that "All art . . . is dedicated to joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem than how to make men happy." Newman wished religion to suck all things into its fearful and purifying furnace. Arnold wished religion to spread its intensity more widely, even though more thinly, so that it played like a happy breeze over the pleasant savannahs of all human thinking and feeling.\* Newman offered a deferred "white throne of God," but Arnold a paradise at least as accessible as the city of dreaming spires. Poetry is presented as the fulfilment of a lack which Arnold recognized elsewhere :

"And yet men have such need of joy !  
But joy whose grounds are true."

Poetry alone seems fixed true in a world of changes. It is founded in the heart of man. Arnold, therefore, does not present its powers as accidental or miraculous : its "grounds are true." Like Shelley, he believes the doctrine of Longinus which asserted

\* Arnold had his whole mind behind him here. While he is still in the twenties he tells Clough that—

"The religious sentiment . . . now, [I think, is best not regarded alone, but considered in conjunction with the grandeur of the world, love of kindred, love, gratitude, etc.]"

in a further letter to Clough and in the preface to the 1853 'Poems,' the view is applied to modern poetry. And it is developed further in the Celtic lectures.

that great poetry is literally sincere, the direct echo of a great soul. Poetry, the source of all this consolation and joy, was, after all, the speech of members of the British middle class, i.e., of members purified and ennobled, and speaking, equally with English, the tongues of Europe. Since it was understood that man was working towards perfection, here was not only a handy vehicle to take him nearer his destination, but a vehicle reassuringly home-made. Different things had been believed in the eighteenth century ; Swift had only a momentary illusion that ' Gulliver's Travels ' would " wonderfully mend the world," Pope ceased to write since he could not hope " to amend . . . any," and Dr. Johnson agreed that the moral poetry of " neither Boileau nor Pope had made the world much better than [it] found it." At the close of his brilliant essay ' Democracy,' Arnold admitted that " Perfection will never be reached." But the British middle class was obviously capable of marching a good deal nearer to it than it had marched so far.

If Arnold's mingling of religion and poetry slighted religion as Newman, for instance, understood it, it slighted also a great deal of poetry as everybody understood it. For the religious functions which Arnold attributed to poetry entailed the rigid corollary that what did not exercise them might well be other " excellent and indispensable " things, but was not poetry. If poetry shared the functions of religion, only poetry of a certain kind could be allowed the name. By its fruits of joy and consolation ye shall know it. Authentic poetry was solemn as church. Charles Lamb's fancy that we should say a grace before opening the ' Faerie Queene ' had been translated into earnest. But though Arnold could say a grace before opening Spenser or Milton or Dante, he felt a difference, almost a guiltiness, when his fingers touched the binding of his Chaucer ; Chaucer seemed to resist being put on his honour by the priest. And so Arnold had to rule out Chaucer, and with him all poets lacking " high seriousness," from among the greatest, the religious, " the glorious class of the best." And Moliere, and the poets of the eighteenth century, who are dismissed below stairs to join the prose writers (poets who looked to satire seemed mean and dirty beside Arnold's angels). And the metaphysical poets, poets already part of the mind of Browning and a number of others (poetry for Arnold the priest is concerned closely with the soul and not closely with the intellect). No more than the satirists did Donne offer consolation. Nor could he be said to offer joy. For, as Arnold saw it, joy was a primary human emotion, four-square, sane,

bland, harmonious—and the joy we get from Donne is more alarming than this Hellenic " sunshine of the breast."

We can see Arnold as a clever salesman, a " portly jeweller from Cheapside," a Bottles as clever as any of those he sought to charm into hearing him. We can see him creating the demand for those particular goods of which he holds stock. If " no race needs . . . refining and elevation . . . more than ours,"\* why does Arnold speak almost solely of poetry when there are also the other potent influences of art and music ? The answer is, of course, that Arnold had only poetry and criticism to sell; he betrays his ignorance whenever he speaks of painting or music. The need of England, her critic-advocate simultaneously warned and tendered, was a need for criticism if she did not want to see herself left behind in the European " march towards perfection." If criticism was needed, so was literature and poetry (Arnold did not always trouble to discriminate them), which at their " best " are also a criticism, a " criticism of life." How can the Philistines fail to oppose demand to supply ? If they bought—and buy many of them did—they bought because they had been got at by a salesman as expert as themselves. For Arnold draws on all the machinery of salesmanship to carry through his great deal. He is a great selling personality, the Shaw of his age; and, as Professor Garrod has seen,† what are the constantly recurring phrases—" grand style," "high seriousness," "primary human emotions," " sweetness and light"—what are they but the slogans which undermine resistance to sales ?

#### IV.

With all this at stake, then, Arnold could scarcely be less disinterested as a critic, could scarcely be more an advocate. Criticism was the means for advertising the best and for making it prevail. Arnold hadn't it in him to be disinterested with Coleridge's degree of purity. His bent towards advocacy is the bent of his whole nature, and even when the advocacy seems to be blowing less like a trade wind, it is not often that we are given disinterested criticism, even disinterested literary criticism.

For one thing, Arnold was a satirist. His limited view of poetry did not allow his gifts full scope in his poems. We know that his friends were surprised to find the dandy publishing poetry at all; they had been led to expect something more dashing and brilliant, more waggish, something in Peacock's

\* ' Essays in Criticism,' second series, essay on Milton.

† ' Poetry and the Criticism of Life,' 1931, pp. 72f.

vein, perhaps a 'Coningsby,' or the 'Friendship's Garland' which they got later. Arnold christened his first volume after one of its constituents, 'The Strayed Reveller.' The reason for this preference is obscure unless Arnold promoted the words as a sort of *apologia*, Matt Arnold the reveller having strayed into poetry. Arnold's view of poetry was, from the start, Wordsworthian. From the start poetry for him was solemn as church. But prose was delightful. Arnold was solemn as an iron bar by nature, and by nature also he was flippant, gay, loud. He had it in him to be a delicious satirist. He had all the necessary sensitiveness (he was one of the first of the aesthetes), and he had the wish to inflict pain. And this potential satirist was actualized in flashes and stretches of his prose. We are all familiar with the satire in his social criticism, but satire exists in the more purely literary criticism too. Whereas Pope put most of his literary satire into verse, Arnold put almost all of his into prose. Arnold dubbed Macaulay "the great apostle of the Philistines," which, being already a pentameter, might have gone straight into a satire of Dryden. Or, from among the other digs at Macaulay, there is the Popian dig at his "pinchbeck Roman ballads." Or we read of "an abyss of platitude . . . and the German nation swimming calmly about in it." Or Arnold tells Clough that their fellow poet Burbidge sits apart from the general stream of poetry "under a little gourd." And so on. We have to discount from Arnold's disinterestedness the element of his vivacity—it is his own word for the dangerous element—discounting it as fun first and criticism, if at all, only after that. It is regrettable in the Homer lectures; regrettable simply because out of place—in itself it is delicious :

" ' To grunt and sweat under a weary load [*sic*];—that does perfectly well where it comes in Shakespeare; but if the translator of Homer . . . were to employ . . . this figure of 'grunting' and 'sweating,' we should say, *He Neivmanises.*"

That, surely, is one of the most risible moments in our literature; the metamorphosis of a cranky professor into a household word, a verb. The unpleasantest pages in Arnold are those in which he pleads that no offence was intended. What he meant was that no offence was intended consciously. That he could be so offensive without knowing it is final proof of the force of this most unscrupulous of talents. Powers were working in him deeper than his famous politeness.

Arnold's wicked gifts, suppressed in verse, jetted in prose. The gift of the satirist, however, is no solid help to the critic

because the satirist sees things too quickly, too summarily, with little of the loafing sympathy that ends in understanding. And he may see everything so even when he does not use what he sees to raise a laugh. Arnold's quick gift produced, without a grin, such judgments as " a street blank with all the ennui of the middle ages," Marcus Aurelius " perhaps the most beautiful figure in history," the famous sentence on Shelley.

And there are other subtle deflections from disinterestedness. Arnold, as I have already said, is an egotist. There is always a strong presence in his essays. His way of writing compels attention, but that attention is centred, not on his object, but on himself and his object together. In the essay on Amiel he stands like an unyielding rock washed around by the waves of Amiel. His essays are monologues. We cannot imagine him employing, as Dryden did, the dialogue form. Arnold's egotism accounts for the high-pitched conversational tone, like that of civil servants heard on the top of buses, the ripple of inspired extemporization, the French grace, the lizard slickness. It accounts for the posturings. We sometimes find him hovering in pretended apprehension when his theme nears a knot that he is perfectly well prepared for. And there are the aesthetic shrinkings. Newman is the only earlier writer I know of who publicly " shrinks back into his shelly cave with pain " when his sense of the beautiful and the fitting is too rudely brushed. It all makes away from criticism, because you cannot show off and be disinterested at the same time.

Then again, speaking relatively, there is Arnold's ignorance. Obviously Arnold knows a great deal. Nevertheless, placed against Dr. Johnson or Coleridge, he is unlearned. He freely confesses so himself. One of the keys to understanding him lies in the phrase he used in a letter to Clough : " my . . . want of intellectual robustness." The negatived noun is beautifully chosen. Elsewhere, this time in public, he calls himself " an unlearned belletristic trifler," and his evident pleasure in the phrase prepares us for those occasions when he not only admits his lack of robust intellect and knowledge but makes light of it. Which is scarcely the Arnold who subscribed to Joubert's remark that " ignorance in intellectual matters is a crime of the first order." No critic, we feel, was ever the worse for knowledge so long as he remained a critic. Sometimes, indeed often, we suspect that Arnold's knowledge is partial for the sake of interest. For example, when Arnold is depressing English prose in the eighteenth century in favour of French prose, he brings forward

Addison as the best the English Augustan age can show. Arnold allows that Addison's prose, as a ribbon of words and syntax, is admirable, but discredits him, and his century with him, because of the insufficiency of his matter. If the argument is to stand at all, it must stand against the best that can be said in the defence ; and Arnold takes Addison. When there was Swift.

• Arnold forgets inconvenient things when he has a point to make. Or he may never have known them. You cannot be sure when it's an advocate you're dealing with, an advocate who sometimes seems to be interested not so much in an object as in what he can make of his half-perception of it.

There is still another deflection. For Arnold, like many of his contemporaries, has almost no sense of the historical. He thinks he has. But what he possesses is a much flimsier thing : a sense of the spirit of the age. Arnold preferred reading books that philosophized about the past rather than books that doggedly recorded or recreated it. If one has an active mind, a creative mind, nothing is easier than to let it draw coloured fume out of a few " significant " facts and to treasure that distorting mirage as history. And accordingly there are times when one feels that Arnold knows as much about the English past as a dervish does. When he wishes, for example, to show how well the Elizabethans liked the fantastic, he mentions the testimony afforded by their portraits, but relies otherwise on Scott's ' Kenilworth.' Or he will create such a phrase as " a street blank with all the ennui of the middle ages." And we find Arnold comparing a hymn in an idyll of Theocritus with the canticle of St. Francis. His comparison takes the form of knocking their astonished heads together. Anyone who really understood those two religious lyrics would edge them together after years of preparation, perhaps after half a volume of print. Arnold lacks an adequate sense of the places originally occupied by old things and by things in foreign lands, and when he criticizes them, he is a critic not so much of them themselves as of his personal reactions to them. The data are his *ad hoc* reactions. He will group together lines from Homer, Chaucer, Milton, because they have in common a capacity to make a similar impression on Matthew Arnold in the nineteenth century. It follows that Arnold can only be a good critic or literary critic within certain limits—i.e. when the quality of the things criticized exists independently of time, or when, criticizing contemporary things, he is an authentic historical critic without knowing it.

Arnold's sense of the nineteenth century is historically sound

because he had lived in it and was still engaged in doing so. Outside his memory and his sense of the present, history scarcely existed. But within those shining limits, it existed comprehensively, substantially and vividly. Arnold is extraordinarily sensitive to his times, to what he calls "the modern spirit," "how the world is going."\* His pages, whatever their stated subject, are a sort of meteorological chart tracing the intellectual weather of Europe and especially the intellectual weather of Britain. To take one small instance. In his essay on Heine, Arnold says :

"The modern spirit is now awake almost everywhere . . . almost everyone now perceives [this] . . . people are even beginning to be shy of denying it."

Later, in the preface to 'God and the Bible,' we read that people  
 "grow more shy of recourse to the preternatural."

Shelley had seen the direct connection between literature and morals ; but Shelley did not see with Arnold's almost journalistic eye (or is it still the eye of the diner-out and the satirist here well employed in the service of criticism ?) how intellectual matters, literature and poetry, affect not only morals but manners, and manners even at their most delicate, how they can have their say in bringing the blood to the cheek. It is this sort of sensitiveness to a quite new area of intellectual and literary evidence that compensates for Arnold's lack of a robust intellect. He begins catching his worms before it is known that the dawn has broken.† It seems that here Arnold often gives us criticism and not advocacy. He tells the contemporary truth as a barometer does. Or rather as a seasoned sailor, since for the detection of these conditions of opinion there are no mechanical short cuts ; the weather-wise work by instinct.

## V.

Arnold ended his 'Last Words' on Homer with his magnificent testimonial to the virtues of Clough, his dead friend and dear enemy. Arnold drew the substance of that testimonial from layers of thinking and feeling which make 'Thyrsis' seem, in comparison, a turning to favour and to prettiness :

"And how, then, can I help being reminded what a student of this sort we have just lost in Mr. Clough, whose name I have already mentioned in these lectures ? He, too, was busy with Homer, but it is not on that account that I now speak of him. Nor do I speak of him in order to call attention to his qualities and

\* 'Culture and Anarchy,' pp. 76 and 83.

Arnold's tombstone bears the words "Awake, thou Lute and Harp ! I will awake right early " (see D.N.B.).

powers in general, admirable as these were. I mention him because, in so eminent a degree, he possessed these two invaluable literary qualities,—a true sense for his object of study, and a single-hearted care for it. . . . In the study of art, poetry, or philosophy, he had the most undivided and disinterested love for his object in itself, the greatest aversion to mixing up with it anything accidental or personal. His interest was in literature itself; and it was this which gave so rare a stamp to his character. . . ."

That particular stamp was not the stamp given to the character of Matthew Arnold, though some part of his praise of Clough may be transferred to the author of the superb 1853 preface and of the superb Homer lectures which that testimonial rounds off. Arnold, who at thirty avowed that he was three parts iced over, did not freeze any further. He did not shrivel up into the desolate carcass foreseen in his poem 'Growing Old.' Instead of shrivelling, he knit and suppled his frame till it stood that of a hero, indefatigable, more striking than Clough's, vivid with a passion rather than a "love," a Puritan passion for what he saw to be best, and a missionary passion for making what he saw to be best prevail. What Arnold saw drew a multitude of eyes the way his were looking; and still draws our eyes; for the Victorian age, despite all the jibes of its grandchildren and all the bombs and tanks of its great-grandchildren, recedes from us very slowly.

# SACRED LEGENDS IN BYZANTINE ART.

BY DR. MARCU BEZA.

[Read June 25th, 1942.]

## INTRODUCTION.

*By Laurence Binyon, C.H., F.R.S.L.*

We are met this afternoon to welcome Dr. Marcu Beza, who is to talk to us on 'Sacred Legends in Byzantine Art.' This is a subject on which he can speak with authority, having studied remaining monuments on the spot and travelled much to study them in various countries, especially in his own country of Rumania. In the normal course of things Dr. Beza's lecture would have been illustrated by lantern-slides, but owing to difficulties connected with the black-out we have had to dispense with these. However, he has brought with him a selection of photographs which adequately illustrate his theme.

The title of the lecture emphasizes of itself the character of Byzantine art. It is always essentially a religious art. Till a few decades ago, and during most of the nineteenth century, this art was hardly thought worthy of study and interest, except by a few scholars. It belonged to the Dark Ages, and as such was disdained and dismissed. The accepted view was that the Italian Renaissance was a splendid and victorious emancipation of painting from the petrifying bonds of Byzantine tradition; and this tradition was supposed to have sprung from the decadence of classic art. But the art we call Byzantine, though it owed something to Greek and Roman art, was a compound of various elements, largely Oriental. It was not a tradition belonging to any one people or city; it spread and took root far and wide. What unified it was the inspiration of the Christian faith, which knew no political frontiers.

What the nineteenth and preceding centuries failed to perceive was that the forms of Byzantine art were naturally expressive of religious feeling and imagination, far more so than the naturalism and science which the Renaissance fostered. Mosaic was the special medium of Byzantine art, and Mosaic of its very nature forbade naturalistic representation. I do not see how anyone who contemplates, say, the mosaic of the Virgin and Child, in the apse of the church at Torcello, could help feeling that this was a much more expressive mode of rendering than theme than we find in the most famous Madonnas of Renaissance painting. Again, when one stands amid the immense spaces of Santa Sophia at Constantinople, what an overwhelming impression one receives of severity combined with splendour, of breadth combined with mystery! It is surely one of the grandest churches in the world. Then, too, we may recall how widely diffused is the influence of Byzantine form and ornament, how fruitful in the mediaeval art of Europe, in the early art of these islands. And, since this is a literary society, I might remind you of W. B. Yeats's impressive poems on the theme of Byzantium, which had become for him a symbol of the kind of poetry he wished to write in his old age. It would have been impossible in his youth.

But I am no expert in these matters (and I dare say have already made some inaccurate statements); so I will not trespass further on the lecturer's time and will call on Dr. Beza to discourse to us.

I SPENT a week at Mount Sinai. The silence of the monastery, charged with ancient memories, was both soothing and inspiring. I felt as if the past itself span around me gossamer-like webs of stories and legends. One of them related to the founding of the monastery.

A hermit of those who lived in the caves of Sinai once had a marvellous dream. It seemed as though angels commenced to sing, and amidst the sound of divine music he saw a host of boys. Clad in white robes, bearing lighted candles in their hands, they ascended the valley towards the place where now the monastery stands.

While the monks were showing me an ornate Arabic script of the legend, I said to myself, puzzled : " Where have I heard the same legend, ascribed however to a different monastery ?"

On looking through the records of Sinai, I came across the name of a Wallachian nobleman, Michael Cantacuzene, who journeyed thither in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, accompanied by his mother, his wife and a large escort. Only a very strong faith could have prompted the undertaking of such a long journey, full of hardships and dangers in those days. The pilgrimage, of course, meant a great deal in the life of Michael Cantacuzene. He decided therefore to perpetuate its memory by various rich gifts to Sinai, and by himself raising on the Wallachian hills of the Carpathians a monastery which he called by the same name of Sinai. Michael Cantacuzene knew all about the aforesaid legend. He imparted it to his own people at home. And in course of time, by an often-recurring folklore process the Sinai legend was transferred to the newly erected monastery. So that at the present day you would be told :

" A hermit of those who lived on the Wallachian hills once had a marvellous dream. It seemed as though angels commenced to sing, and amidst the sound of divine music he saw a host of boys. Clad in white robes, bearing lighted candles in their hands, they ascended the valley towards the place where now the monastery stands."

As you know, St. George is buried at the Palestinian town of Lydda, not far from storm-beaten Jaffa, where now and again marine monsters used to appear. Did not a giant fish swallow Jonah of the Bible ? And, as the legend of Perseus had been located there, on the sea-rocks of Jaffa, it was natural that St.

George should be identified with the Greek hero. The old Byzantine biographies of St. George give at the end a poem, under the title of ' St. George's Hymn,' which is in fact nothing but a story very similar to Perseus and Andromeda :

Somewhere in Eastern lands a maiden was brought every year to be sacrificed to a dragon, the guardian of the waters. When the turn came of the Emperor's daughter, they took her by force, clothed her in bridal garments and then, according to the Byzantine poem—

" Into the marble fountain they flung a chain  
And with the iron bound the lovely maid."

But while the dragon was lying in wait, St. George arrived to thrust his lance through its throat. In gratitude the Emperor offered St. George his daughter together with the crown.

Within the fairy setting of this legend St. George is represented in many of the Byzantine images. You see him on horseback in the act of slaying the dragon, being preceded by the princess, above whom on a crenellated tower appear the Emperor and the Empress holding out to St. George the keys of the town.

In the church at Lydda, on a St. George icon as well as on the frescoes round the tomb, you can observe among other things a column being lifted at one end by St. George while a woman bends over the other. The woman is the widow from Alexandria, and this is her story :

At the time of the building of the church there lived in Alexandria a rich and pious widow who fervently desired to present to it a marble column. She went to the captain of a ship about to sail and besought him to bear her gift. But the captain would not accept it on the ground of his ship being too heavily laden. The poor woman stood very dejected, with tears in her eyes. Thereupon in a kind of dream St. George himself appeared to her, saying : " Woman, weep not ! Take one end of the column while I take the other, and we will bear it to the sea ; after that have no more care . . ." Thus it was that the waves themselves transported the column which can be seen to-day, marked with a cross, in the church at Lydda.

Now, this legend closely resembles one given in the Talmud. Instead of the widow from Alexandria we have a rich Jew named Nicanor, who sends as a present to the Temple of Jerusalem at the time of its rebuilding by Herod a pair of bronze gates inlaid with plaques of gold and silver. They were likewise miraculously driven ashore by the waves.

Then it happened that pilgrims passing through Lydda carried the legend beyond the Danube ; and I do not know under what circumstances it became subsequently connected with the wooden door of a Wallachian monastery on Lake Snagov, which, I should add, from an artistic point of view is worthy of such a legend. Divided into six panels, framed by arabesque carvings and arabesque-like inscriptions, it is covered with exquisitely wrought sacred figures.

St. George is often associated with St. Demetrius.

I can to this day recapture the sense of awe and piety I felt as a child when I first entered the church of St. Demetrius in Salonica. It was then a mosque. The rays from the little windows revealed the mysterious colouring of tiles, the frescoes, a candelabrum with fugitive sparkle, the bright veining of the pillars—a double row rising towards the shadow of the ornaments in the aisles.

" Put your hand here . . ." said someone, touching the marble of a column upon which cold drops were gliding. " Thus they weep ever since they killed him there." Then he took me into a vault containing the saint's tomb : " This was a bath-room once, and at the moment when they shut him in an angel appeared to him saying, ' Rejoice, Demetrius, defender of Christ! ' After his death a sacred oil began to flow from his body, so that the sick continually came to be healed, among them being Leontius, a chief of Illyria."

I listened with wonder to the words, as we walked to and fro under the watchful eye of a Turkish Khoja, whose bland countenance under his turban seemed to me to be the symbol of the whole Turkish domination, quickened now and again by the breath of Christian miracles. Suddenly one would hear of some burning prophecy, some concealed icon which by means of knockings in the house at night asked to be brought into the light. But above everything else the conversation would turn to the martyr Demetrius and his deeds.

One could tell how after his cure Leontius wished to take a part of the saint's body, but the latter said to him in a dream : " Do not dismember me, Leontius ! " And so Leontius put the ring and the kerchief left by the saint into a shrine, and carried it with him to his command beyond the Danube, where he founded another church. Thus the saint remained to be the guardian of the city, protecting it and saving it from grave dangers.

" Once, unnoticed, there camped before the walls with seven towers some powerful adversaries . . ."

I read this in a Greek book bearing the name ' Martirologhion ' above a black cross. I still have it. And when I turn the pages of tiny print, yellow with age, it is curious how I recall the church and the grave of the most holy Demetrius, and even places connected with those lines of the book :

" Once, unnoticed, there encamped before the walls with seven towers some powerful adversaries, and when they attacked, behold, there arose at that spot, in the shining armour of a warrior, on a swift white horse, Demetrius himself, and with his sharp spear he struck to death the captain of the hosts, which withdrew dismayed."

That is why St. Demetrius is depicted in Byzantine art just like St. George ; but instead of the dragon there is a man, a crowned leader, who is pierced by the spear.

Then, as both St. George and St. Demetrius in a way personify the struggle with and triumph over evil, they often appear on church banners and on many a Byzantine talisman.

Apart from the legends disseminated by means of direct contact between the people, there are a number of others that come from widely read books. Such was the ' Lives of the Saints,' in which the account of one saint is shortly as follows :

The only son of an emperor was seized on his wedding day by a sudden impulse to flee away from his surroundings. Returning the ring to his bride and exchanging garments with a beggar, he set out unrecognized and sought a monastery. Later he became a hermit, and after many years of solitary life he started back home. And lo, he met his own father on the road and knelt before him, saying : " O Lord Emperor, take me into thine house, for I have heard that thou also hast a son wandering through the world." The emperor spoke : " Let him be taken into my house." The attendants lodged him in a swineherd's hovel. And then one morning the bells began to ring of their own accord and a voice called from above : " Bear the Man of God to the church, for his soul has left his body." The emperor found the poor stranger dead, holding in his hand a paper with the story of his life written therein. At the end of it were these words as signature : " I am your long-lost son, Alexis."

There is in this tale a queer feeling which helped it to be diffused throughout the Eastern Orthodoxy. From a peasant woman Princess Bibescu heard it and gave it in her French book entitled ' Isvor.' Being greatly impressed and not knowing the origin of the tale, Princess Bibescu continued with all sorts of enquiries

and suppositions. " Who is this Alexis ? A solar myth ? The spring ? A new personification, or one more ancient, of Pandora ? . . . "\*

As a matter of fact Alexis or Alexius ranks among the saints, and it is as such that he is pictured in Byzantine ecclesiastical art.

'Another book which at one time also met with great favour was 'Barlaam and Ioasaph,' a christianized, rather fanciful version of the life of Buddha, ascribed to St. John Damascene. Episodes from it, incidents like that of the Caskets in Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice,' legends and tales full of Eastern lore, succeeded in being so largely circulated that they became popular, stripped of any connection with the book from which they had been detached. Here is one story :

A certain King felt much aggrieved because he had no male issue. And when to his great joy he was favoured with a son, wizards came to warn him that during twelve years not a single sunbeam must touch the boy, lest his sight should be lost. The king therefore caused to be fitted a blindly dark house, where the boy lived, attended by his guardians. After the passing of twelve years, the King took his son out and ordered the waiting men to show him everything there was to be seen in the town. The boy gazed around him in astonishment: rich buildings here, rows of shops there ; in one place objects of gold and silver, in another sparkling stones ; then women and men walking to and fro : and chariots drawn by splendid horses and oxen, and flocks of sheep.

Now, as all were made known to the boy by their own names, when the turn of women came, he inquired :

" What are these called ? "

" Devils that deceive men."

In the boy's heart there stirred a sweetly ardent feeling. And so, returning home and being asked by his father what really pleased him most, he answered : " The devils that deceive men."

Into how many parts of the world did not this story find its way ! I heard a variant of it in the mountains of Macedonia :

The King promised his son to present him with whatever took his fancy most in his sightseeing, and, coming across a creature the like of which he had never met before, the lad was startled and eagerly inquired :

" What do you call this ? "

" Oh, we call this ' woman.' She is the devil."

" The devil . . ." sighed the boy. " And how very enchanting ! "

When, on his arrival home his father asked him what he had liked above all things, he said :

" The creature called ' woman ' ."

" But that is the devil, my son . . . ."

" Never mind, Father, give me the devil."

Let us substitute here for the boy an angel or a band of angels. In their heavenly abode they heard so many wonderful accounts of the world upon which they looked from afar. One day they presented themselves before God Almighty :

" Lord, permit us to descend and see the world more closely ! "

God Almighty granted their wish, and the angels came down, mingled with men and women and fully partook of their earthly ways. Soon after they were called back to heaven. Then it befell that one of the angels was no longer himself. Alone and perplexed he stood, burdened by heavy thoughts. God Almighty asked for the reason of his unhappiness. The angel replied that he had encountered a fair daughter of the world, that she had smiled at him as no one had done before, and, when he gazed into her deep ravishing eyes, he felt he could never suffer to be away from her.

" And who was she ? " inquired God Almighty.

" A shepherdess."

" Hast thou spoken to her ? "

" I could not refrain."

" What didst thou tell her ? "

" That I would rather renounce my angelic state than leave her."

Whereupon God Almighty changed the angel into a star and cast it to the earth. It broke into a fiery shower of sparks which never died out; to this day they are carried about by the glow-worms.

Except for the star motif at the end, the legend might be reduced into the familiar one, with innumerable variations, concerning the marriage of a deity with a mortal maiden.\* In the Byzantine conception the enamoured angel generally hides under his celestial garb a wicked character, being a deviser of snares, as we see in Alfred de Vigny's miracle poem ' Eloa,' where the angel, who is later discovered to be a demon, tempts a beautifully innocent soul:

\* See my ' Paganism in Rumanian Folklore,' pp. 95-117, Dent, 1928.

Toi seul m'apparus comme une jeune étoile  
 Qui de la vaste nuit perce à l'écart le voile ;  
 Toi seul m'apparus ce qu'on cherche toujours,  
 Ce que l'homme poursuit dans l'ombre de ses jours.

The Manichaeans and the Bogomils made great use of this type of legend, to illustrate the contention between a good and an evil spirit, which formed the essence of their doctrine.

Again, in 'Barlaam and Ioasaph' we find the celebrated allegory of the man fleeing from a unicorn. He climbs up a tree where he presumes he is safe. But suddenly he notices that the tree hangs over a precipice and that two mice, one white and one black, are gnawing at its roots, whilst at the very bottom of the chasm a fire-breathing dragon waits to devour him. Then, lifting his eyes, behold, from the branches there fall sweet drops of honey ; whereupon, his whole attention being concentrated on the honey, he no longer thinks about the troubles around him.

The tree here symbolizes life in its precarious character ; on one side pursued by death—the unicorn ; on the other opening a view towards hell, represented by the pit and the dragon. Double-faced time, ceaselessly by day and night, frets the core of life and allows only a few rare delights, similar to the drops of honey, with no other object but to deceive and allure us.

A supremely gloomy picture indeed ! The fleeting, dream-like quality of life, surrounded by so many fears and sorrows, is put forward not as a detached, metaphysical conception ; nor does it serve to emphasize the much-desired escape into a Buddhistic Nirvana ; although the allegory itself originated in 'Mahabharata.' But one is urged to follow an ascetic ideal—to renounce the world's illusory happiness for the attainment of an ever enduring felicity hereafter ; in the words of St. John Damascene :

*τῶν προσκαίρων μὲν ὑπεριδέειν, ὄλον δὲ ἑμαυτὸν ταῖς αἰωνίοις ἐπιδοῦναι ἐλπίζειν.\**

In this sense the story of the man fleeing from the unicorn is artistically embodied in works at such places as Venice—St. Mark's Chapel of St. Isidore, and Parma—the Baptistery—which were once under the influence of Byzantium. In the Greek Eastern Church the story enters as a motif in the illustrating of the so-called 'Sinodica.' They comprise most strange visions referring to both the present and the nether worlds.

This brings me to the legend of the soul's journey after death.

\* " To despise things temporal, and to devote myself to the hope of things eternal."—' Barlaam and Joasaph,' p. 18, in Loeb Classical Library.

I had often heard a Christmas carol sung to various tunes :

" The flower of the sun  
 Stands ready watching, on  
 The gate of Paradise,  
 To ask the other flowers  
 That journey to their doom  
 What each of them has done  
 With its perfume."

I could not make out the meaning of the verses until I discovered that they were part of a far longer carol which, associating the soul with a fragrant flower, begins :

" Rosebush, rosebush,  
 Why hast thou not budded  
 Since yesterday morn ?  
 Rosebush, rosebush,  
 How grieved the soul feels  
 Out of the body torn,  
 Departing on its way  
 Far from earth's horizon  
 And from the shining sky !

" Rosebush, rosebush,  
 Why hast thou not budded  
 Since yesterday morn ?  
 ' I've budded in haste,  
 As time comes and time flies,  
 Also it is time  
 For me to go to where  
 The flower of the sun  
 Stands ready watching, on  
 The gate of Paradise,  
 To ask the other flowers  
 That journey to their doom  
 What each of them has done  
 With its perfume.'

" Rosebush, rosebush,  
 Just like thyself, the soul  
 Tarries on earth no more,  
 Perturbed and desolate,  
 Approaches the sea-shore . . . ."

As in other mythologies, the first stage in the soul's journey is the crossing of water, either sea or river. In our case a tempest rages, and in its utter loneliness the soul does not find any refuge but a marvellous pine-tree to which it has recourse :

" O stretch, O stretch thy boughs  
 To give a hold of thee,  
 That I should thus traverse  
 The wildly storming sea ! "

The pine-tree would not comply with this request for, it replies, among its foliage, its trunk and its roots there are nesting an eagle, an otter and a dragon, and they might get very angry at being disturbed.

Let it be observed that in many respects this world's unique tree is like the one in Norse tradition called Yggdrasil.

After fervent entreaties the pine-tree agrees, not only to stretch out its branches and carry the soul to the other side of the water, but also to give advice regarding the direction to be further pursued. First the soul would have to proceed for a while as far as the parting of the roads ; there to follow the right-hand path which will lead to delightful meadows, resplendent with flowers—chosen flowers, growing in the shade, never gazed on by the sun nor touched by the wind. Nearby towers a mighty apple tree, reminiscent of other such trees mentioned in the Apocrypha. Its fruit-laden boughs overhang a cool, magic fountain, where the Mother of God sits—may Her mercy be with us ! She will let the soul drink the water of oblivion and will guide it straight forward to where—

" The flower of the sun  
 Stands ready watching, on  
 The gate of paradise,  
 To ask the other flowers  
 That journey to their doom  
 What each of them has done  
 With its perfume."

According to another legend, the soul has to ascend through twenty-four tall houses, allegorized by a ladder stretching from earth to heaven like the ladder of which Jacob dreamed. Along one side of the ladder wait the angels, along the other—the devils. Holding in their hands records in which are written respectively the virtues and the sins, they contend for the soul of the deceased.

Aspects of the soul's journey after death are often intermingled in Byzantine art with the fearful and bewildering representations of the Last Judgment.

## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.

BY SIR STEPHEN GASELEE, K.C.M.G., C.B.E., F.B.A., F.R.S.L.

[Read November 4th, 1942.]

IN spite of the labours of John Dunlop ('The History of Fiction,' 1814, described as "criticized with unwarranted severity by Hazlitt"), A. Chassang ('Histoire du Roman . . . dans l'Antiquite grecque et latine,' Paris, 1862) and Erwin Rohde ('Der Griechische Roman,' second—and best—edition, Leipzig, 1900), I feel that there is still much to be done in the investigation of the Greek and Latin novel; and I am vain enough still to think that the best introduction to the subject, for all but professional classical scholars, may be found in the 'Appendix on the Greek Novel' with which I concluded the volume in the Loeb series (1916) containing the edition and translation of the 'Daphnis and Chloe' by Mr. J. M. Edmonds and of Parthenius, of the 'Alexandrian Erotic Fragment' and of the Ninus Romance by me. I am perhaps coming more and more to the conclusion that in Greek and Latin (as not in Egyptian) the novel was developed from short stories or even anecdotes; not in the sense that these were expanded into novels, but that collections of them were strung together by a somewhat tenuous thread of connecting narration: the hero relates them as having happened to his friends or acquaintances, or the author pours into them the contents of his note-books: and the *junctura* is not always *callida*.

I have for very many years intended to bring out an edition of the Latin author Petronius—his exact date is uncertain, but we can put him down with tolerable accuracy to the reign of the Emperor Nero, at about A.D. 65. I have ready the critical apparatus for the Latin text (though there is really little to be done since the admirable editions of Buecheler); but I have always wished to add a literary commentary as well; and some of this would run into excursus which would overload an ordinary edition of a classical author. I did deal with one passage in the *Criterion* (April, 1924) of my friend Mr. T. S. Eliot; the article is called 'The Soul in the Kiss,' and treats of the pretty

conceit that when lovers kiss, their souls migrate from one body to the other ; the idea seems to originate with Plato, and can be traced through the ages down to that remarkable book of poems, ' The Spoon River Anthology ' of the still living Edgar Lee Masters.

In the second century B.C. a Greek writer, Aristides of Miletus, put together a collection of anecdotes, rather of the nature—though on a somewhat higher literary level—of the stories that commercial travellers relate, to my great pleasure, in the tap-room. These were translated into Latin by the historian Lucius Cornelius Sisenna (119-67 B.C.), who did not hesitate, we are told by Ovid, to make his translations even more " spicy " than the originals by insertions of his own. This collection had an important influence on Latin literature : Apuleius indeed in the first sentence of his ' Golden Ass ' (I still prefer this title to ' The Metamorphoses ') admitted his debt : " In this Milesian tale I shall string together divers stories, and delight your kindly ears with a pleasant history." In the course of the ' Golden Ass ' we find many anecdotes, short and long, clearly coming from Aristides, either direct or through Sisenna ; and thence taken by Boccaccio, they have not been without influence on modern letters from the Renaissance onwards.

Apuleius however was not the only Latin writer who drew upon the ' Milesiaca ' or ' Milesia ' (both forms are used); Petronius, long before the time of Apuleius, inserted at least two in his Picaresque novel. One is ' The Widow of Ephesus,' which has a whole literature of its own (and a Chinese parallel) with which I shall not deal on the present occasion ; the other is the story of ' The Quaestor's Son at Pergamus' (the French call it ' L'ephebe de Pergame '), and my intention is to indicate some derivatives from or analogies with it.

As to the story itself, I do not choose to translate and recite it to you, the setting being somewhat repugnant to modern ideas ; you can find it in chapters 85-87 of the ' Satyricon.' It is sufficient to say that The Sleeping Beauty, accosted by The Lover, prefers (greatly to his satisfaction) not to wake up ! There is a really excellent translation of it into French verse, which was printed in various frivolous French anthologies early in this century. It is called ' Un Chapitre de Petrone,' and begins—

" Au temps de ma jeunesse, il me prit fantaisie  
De quitter Rome un jour et (Taller en Asie ;  
J'accomplis ce dessein, je hatai mon depart,  
En sans choix arrete, guide par le hasard,

J'arrive dans Pergame, une cite fertile  
 En plaisirs, ou la vie est heureuse et facile ;  
 Mais ce qui m'y retint, je le dis sans detour,  
 —A quoi bon s'en cacher ?—ce fut surtout l'amour."

This elegant version of the ' Chapter of Petronius ' is always described as " Attributed to Gustave Droz " ; and probably you **will** remember a novel of his, ' Monsieur, Madame et Bebe,' which many of us found very touching about 35 years ago.

I should say at once that I know of no Greek antecedent or parallel ; though I think there must have been this in the tales of Aristides and so in their translation by Sisenna ; but ' Anth. Pal.,' 5, 275 (by the Byzantine Agathias) merely describes how the lovely Menecratis was awaked from sleep one afternoon by the attentions of her admirer, and seems, after tearing out some of his hair, to have become reconciled to the position.

No ; we must come to the Renaissance before we find any exact derivative or parallel ; and I think we shall find it first in the ' Facetiae ' of Henry Bebel (1472-1518), a Swabian who became a Lutheran and a Professor at Tubingen. This is his anecdote : A girl much bothered by her lover said, " It is not a bit of good coming to me to-night : I keep a knife underneath my pillow, to **kill** any invader." But he came at night-time, and found her feigning a deep sleep ; so he artfully pretended to be just going, when the girl equally pretending to wake up, cried " Stop : I haven't really got a knife."\*

We must now come to this country and turn to Thomas Campion (who was not related, so far as I know, to the two Jesuits, Edmund and William). We do not know much of his life, except that he died in 1619 ; he seems to have been educated abroad, and to have been a " doctor in physicke " ; he published a volume of Latin verse in 1595, and followed this later with poems on similar subjects in English. He has several variations on the theme.

\* Facetiae Bebelianae lib. iii (ed. Amst. 1651, p. 237).

#### DE PUELLA QUADEM.

Quidam minatus est puellae, se ad illam noctu clam venturum, illa sub interminatione mortis prohibuit: qua cultrum sub lecto se collocaturam, quo eum interimat, testatur. Ille vero noctu veniens, invenit eam jacentem, quae altum somnum finxerat: unde callide se Simulaverat exiturum. Cui exeunti, puella evigilanti similis, dixit; Mane: quia non habeo cultellum.

From some such collection as this may come the chapter in Martin Schurig's ' Gynaecologia ' (Dresden and Leipzig, 1770), " De stupratione in somno," and a question put to the Faculty of Medicine at Leipzig, ' An dormiens in sella virgo inscia defiorari possit ? '

In his first book of Epigrams, we find it first treated on the model of Catullus.

Ep. 60 : De Thermanio et Glaia :

" Somno compositam jacere vidit  
Glaiam Thermanius puer puellam ;  
diducit tacita manu solutas  
vestes ; illa silet, femur protendit,  
suaviumque levi dedit labello.  
illa conticuit velut sepulta ;  
subrisit puer, ultimumque tentat,  
gaudium nec adhuc movetur illa,  
sod lubens patitur dolos dolosa.  
quis novus stupor ? ante Glaia molli  
ansere, aut vigilans magis Sybilla,  
lethargo quasi jam gravi laborans  
noctes atque trahis sopores."

In his second book of epigrams he gives it twice, but now rather in the style of Martial than of Catullus.

Ep. 60 : In Lycium et Clytham :

" Somno compositam jacere Clytham  
advertens Lycius puer puellam,  
hanc furtim petit et genasprehendena  
molli basiolum dedit labello.  
immotam ut videt, altera imprimebat  
sensim suavia, moxque duriora ;  
istaec conticuit velut sepulta.  
subrisit puer, ultimumque tentat  
solamen, nec adhuc movetur illa  
sed cunctos patitur dolos dolosa.  
quis tandem stupor hie ? cui nee anser  
olim, nec par erat vigil Sibilla ;  
nunc correpta eadem novo veterno,  
ad notos redit indies sopores."

And the same in a much shorter form—an elegiac distich.

Ep. 61 : In eosdem :

" Assidue ridet Lycius Clytha ut sua dormit ;  
ridet et in somnis sed sua Clytha magis."

He also attempted it in English ; it was published in his ' Book of Ayres,' II (1610), but I do not know whether he composed it earlier or later than some or all of the Latin versions.  
P. 10:

" It fell on a sommers day,  
While sweet Bessie sleeping laie  
In her bowre, on her bed,  
Light with curtaines shadowed,  
Jamy came : shee him spies,  
Opening half her heauie eies.

## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

" Jamy stole in through the dore,  
 She lay slumbring as before ;  
 Softly to her he drew neere,  
 She heard him, yet would not heare,  
 Bessie vowed not to speake,  
 He resolv'd that dumpe to breake.

"First a soft kisse he doth take,  
 She lay still and would not wake,  
 Then his hands learn'd to woo,  
 She dreamp't not what he would doo,  
 But still slept, while he smild  
 To see love by sleep beguild.

' Jamy then began to play,  
 Bessie as one buried lay,  
 Gladly still through this sleight  
 Deceiu'd in her own deceit,  
 And since this traunce begoon,  
 She sleepes eu'rie afternoone."

Sir John Salusbery (let us keep the *u* in the second syllable of his name, to distinguish him from other members of his famous clan) is something of a mystery, and does not appear in the ' Dictionary of National Biography ' ; he was however associated with Robert Chester (about 1566-1640), who is known to Shakespearean scholars in connexion with the early history of " The Phoenix and the Turtle." Salusbery's poems were published by my friend Professor Carleton Brown in 1913 (' Bryn Mawr College Monographs,' XIV), and among them is the following :

" Of late I went my dearest deare to trie her,  
 And found her sleeping, & then began to woe her,  
 And safelie stouping gently laid me by her  
 And still my mistress slept, but did not sleepe,

" And then I tought my wanton eye to gaze  
 Ore head, on face, on legges on thighe  
 Where sweet delight remaines, I sawe the place  
 And still my mistress sawe, but wold not see

" And then I tought my tounge to blaze my paine  
 And softlie whispering tould her in her eare  
 Both of my loue and of her proud disdain  
 And still my mistress hard but would not heare

" Then I tought mine armes her neck to foulde  
 And of a gentle kisse did her beguile  
 Soe kist and kist till kissing made me bould  
 And still my mistress smilde but wold not smile

" And then I tought my Idle fingers woe  
 Each comelie part from head vnto the heele  
 Where Cupid holdes his campe I touched toe  
 And still my mistress felt, but wold not feele

" And then I tought my man to wantonnize  
 And in the boate of true delight to Roe  
 Of true delights, not Idle fantasies  
 And still my mistress did, but wold not doe

But since she slepte, smilde, felt and did in  
 deed  
 I wish I might be oftner so beguild  
 Though not in shoue  
 The substance I effect let shadowes goe."

Finis.

J. S.

Nathaniel Lee, 1653(?)-1692, educated at Westminster and Trinity College, Cambridge, was essentially a dramatist, drawing many of his plots from classical sources : his best known plays are, in chronological order, ' Nero,' ' Gloriana,' ' Sophonisba,' ' The Rival Queens,' and ' Constantine the Great.' He collaborated with Dryden in ' OEdipus,' and ' The Duke of Guise.' I quote part of the text in ' Pills to purge Melancholy,' 1707 (5, 141) of ' Philander and Sylvia, a Gentle Soft Pair '—

" Her delicate Body he clasped in his Arms,  
 He kissed her, he pressed her, heaped charms upon charms ;  
 He cried shall I now ? no never, she said,  
 Your Will you shall never enjoy till I'm dead :  
 Then as if she were dead, she slept and lay still,  
 Yet, even in Death bequeathed him a smile :  
 When (? which) emboldened the Youth his charms to apply,  
 Which he bore still about him to cure those that die."

Another similar song (anonymus this time) is also in ' Pills to purge Melancholy ' (1707), 1, 219 :

" Sabina in the dead of night  
 In restless slumbers wishing lay,  
 Cynthia was bawd, her dear Light  
 To loose desires did lead the way.  
 I step'd to her Bed-side with bended knee,  
 And sure Sabina saw,  
 And sure Sabina saw,  
 And sure Sabina saw,  
 I'm sure she saw, but would not see.

## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

i drew the curtains of the Lawn,  
 Which did her whiter Body keep,  
 But still the nearer I was drawn,  
 Methought the faster she did sleep ;  
 I call'd Sabina softly in her ear,  
 And sure Sabina heard,  
 And sure Sabina heard,  
 And sure Sabina heard,  
 I'm sure she heard, but would not hear.

" Then, as some Midnight Thief, (when all  
 Are wrapp'd into a Lethargy),  
 Silently creeps from Wall to Wall,  
 To search for hidden Treasury :  
 So mov'd my busy hand from Head to  
 Heel,  
 And sure Sabina felt,  
 And sure Sabina felt,  
 And sure Sabina felt,  
 I'm sure she felt, but would not feel.

" Thus I ev'n by a Wish enjoy,  
 And she without a Blush receives ;  
 As by dissembling most are coy,  
 She by dissembling freely gives.  
 For you may safely say, nay swear it  
 too,  
 Sabina she did hear,  
 Sabina she did see,  
 Sabina she did feel,  
 She did hear, see, feel, sigh, kiss  
 and do."

Another anonymous piece, of about the same period, is in  
 ' Wit at a venture, or, Clio's Privy Garden,' 1674 (reprinted by  
 A. H. Bullen, ' Speculum Amantis,' p. 68) :

## THE SURPRISING LOVER.

" Love, in rambling once astray,  
 Was benighted on his way ;  
 With cold and tiresome cares opprest,  
 He creeps in fair Lucina's breast  
 To shelter there & take his rest.  
 The nymph, not dreaming of her fate  
 And of an unexpected guess  
 Much less,  
 To come so late,  
 Slept on : the youth, recov'ring heat,  
 Prepares his arms to try a feat.  
 The deed scarce done, the nymph awakes,  
 And in the act the youngster takes,  
 Strangely surprised, yet well contented too  
 That she enjoyed so sweet a bed-fellow.

Then, viewing well her guess all o'er  
 She liked his presence more and more ;  
 Telling him rather than he should begone,  
 She'd nurse and keep him as her own :  
 And if he'd vow ne'er to depart,  
 She'd find him lodging next her heart."

I should have been surprised if Wycherley had neglected the conceit. Nor did he ; in ' The Gentleman Dancing Master ' (1671 or 1672), Act IV, Scene 1, we find Prue saying to Monsieur de Paris : " Indeed it was so lively, I know not whether 'twas a dream or no.—But if you were not there, I'll undertake you may come when you will, and do anything to me you will, I sleep so fast."

It might be expected that this *motif* would appeal to Burns, and I am not surprised to find in ' The Musical Miscellany,' VI, 76 (1731) ; also in ' Merry Muses of Caledonia ' (c. 1800) collected by Robert Burns, " An old Scots countryside song." I cannot tell whether it is really old, but it is too early for Burns himself:

## THE MILL, MILL—0—.

" Beneath a green shade I fand a fair maid,  
 Was sleeping sound and still, O ;  
 A lowan wi' love, my fancy did rove  
 Around her wi' good will, O ;  
 Her bosom I prest; but sunk in her rest  
 She stirr'dna my joy to spill, O,  
 While kindly she slept, close to her I crept,  
 And kiss'd, and kiss'd her my fill, O."\*

Coming now to the nineteenth century, we find the theme twice treated by Tom Moore. Whatever we think of his part in destroying Byron's ' Memoirs,' I cannot but have an affection for this wayward Irish genius ; and it will be noticed that his touch is light and rather more delicate than some I have quoted. They are as follows :

' Little's (= Tom Moore's) Poems,' 16th ed., 1833, p. 58 :

## SONG.

" Jessy on a bank was sleeping,  
 A flow'r beside her bosom lay ;  
 Love, upon her slumber creeping  
 Stole the flow'r and flew away !

\* There is a poor piece, ' The Nameless Maiden ' (1800 ?) in the same 'Merry Muses of Caledonia ').

" Pity, then, poor Jessy's ruin,  
 Who, becalm'd by slumber's wing,  
 Never felt what Love was doing,  
 Never dream'd of such a thing ! "

p. 59 :

To A SLEEPING MAID.

" Wake, my life ! thy lover's arms  
 Are twin'd around thy sleeping charms :  
 Wake, my love ! and let desire  
 Kindle those op'ning orbs of fire.

" Yet, sweetest, though the bliss delight thee,  
 If the guilt, the shame affright thee,  
 Still those orbs in darkness keep ;  
 Sleep, my girl, or seem to sleep."

For quite modern times I will only quote a paragraph on the front page of *The Sporting Times* (the much regretted " Pink 'Un ") of May 8th, 1920 :

*John* : " Are you aware that you owe me a pair of gloves ? "

*Maud* : " I'm sure I do nothing of the kind. How do you make that out ? "

*John* : " Do you remember last Saturday afternoon you went up to your **room** for a nap ? "

*Maud* : " Yes, I had a headache. What about it ? "

*John* : " Well, later on, I crept upstairs, found you asleep, and kissed you."

*Maud* : " Kissed me ! John, I gave you credit for more sense ! "

We could be sure that the idea of *The Sleeping Beauty* would appeal to the French libertines of the eighteenth century, and we find the subject treated by the Abbe de Grecourt, who was born at Tours in 1683 and died at the same place in 1743. He was destined for, an ecclesiastical career, and actually became a Canon of St. Martin of Tours, his only piece of preferment; he is also remarkable for having only preached one sermon, in the course of which he made so many disoblising and satirical references to the ladies of the neighbourhood that he was forbidden to occupy the pulpit again. He then threw himself into the life of a man of letters, chiefly known for light verse, and became what the French knew as the " *Anacreon cynique* " of his age. The following trifle shows the way in which he handled the subject of my present investigation :

" Tircis depuis longtemps cherchait l'occasion  
 De soulager son amoureuse flamme ;  
 Le jeune objet pour qui brulait son ame  
 Avait la meme passion  
 Et n'osait pas la satisfaire.

Elle opposait, a son empressement,  
 Qu'on risque de perdre un amant,  
 Des qu'on cesse d'etre severe.  
 Tircis, transporte d'un amour  
 Qui le devorait nuit et jour,  
 Ne peut plus register a l'ardeur qui le presse  
 Et veut enfin couronner ses soupirs.  
 Il se glisse chez sa maitresse,  
 Se jette entre ses bras, contente ses desirs.  
 La belle, qui dormait pendant tout le mystere,  
 S'evella lorsque tout fut fait,  
 Et dit a son amant, d'un ton plein de colere :  
 ' Tircis, dans vos plaisirs vous etes trop discret;  
 Il fallait m'veiller, avant que de rien faire '."

It might be expected that Casanova would have, or say that he had, such an adventure ; and we find it at Aix-en-Savoie, with a beautiful lady from Turin named La Zeroli—' Memoirs,' 4, ch. 16 (p. 497, Gamier ed.) :\*

" Je la trouvai endormie. Sa femme de chambre me pria d'entrer tres doucement pour ne pas la reveiller et, me laissant seul, elle ferma la porte sur elle. Je compris le fait, car je me rappelai a l'instant que, vingt ans auparavant, une Veitienne dont j'avais sottement respecte le sommeil s'etait moque de moi et m'avait econduit. J'agis done en consequence et, l'ayant decouverte tout decemment, je me livrai avec delicatesse a ces preliminaires de l'amour qui augmentent si fort le plaisir du denouement. La Zeroli fit bien de son mieux pour dormir en apparence mais, vaincue par la force du sentiment, elle se livra a mes caresses avec une ardeur qui surpassait la mienne et qui la forca de rire de son stratageme."

Dufresney, ' La Chanson fran9aise,' p. 114 :

- " Reveillez-vous, belle dormeuse,  
 Si ce baiser vous fait plaisir ;  
 Mais si vous etes scrupuleuse,  
 Dormez, ou feignez de dormir.
- " Craignez que je ne vous eveille,  
 Favorisez ma trahison :  
 Vous soupirez, votre coeur veille,  
 Laissez dormir votre raison.
- " Pendant que la raison sommeilie,  
 On aime sans y consentir ;  
 Pourvu qu'Amour ne la reveille,  
 Qu'autant qu'il faut pour le sentir.
- " Si je vous apparais en songe,  
 Profitez d'une douce erreur ;  
 Goutez le plaisir du mensonge  
 Si la verite vous fait peur."

\* Or, in the more recent and better edition ' La Sirene,' 6, ch. 11, p. 257.

And so I bring my little study to an end. Since putting it together I have noticed a very casual allusion in Balzac's 'Contes Drolatiques' (Le Peche Veniale, Rene de Jallanges and Blanche) and a *vieille chanson anonyme* quoted by Delvau in his rather disreputable 'Dictionnaire erotique' :

" L'autre jour, au fond d'un jardin,  
 Il vous apercut endormie :  
 Il vous fit plus d'un doux larcin . . . .  
 Vous etiez done bien assoupie ?  
 So vous dormez comme cela,  
 Dites votre *mea culpa*."

And I will conclude on a note of respectability by quoting the elegant and pious Coventry Patmore—a little poem called 'The Kiss' :

" ' I saw you take his kiss ' ' 'Tis true.'  
 'O Modesty ! ' ' 'Twas strictly kept.  
 He thought me asleep : at least I knew  
 He thought I thought he thought I slept.' "

## GIFF EDMONDS MEMORIAL LECTURE.

This Lecture perpetuates the loved memory of Lieutenant Nicholas Gifford Edmonds, of the 2nd Black Watch, who was killed at Magersfontein, his first battle, December **11th**, 1899. It was founded by his sister, Miss Sophia Edmonds, a member of this Society since **1919**.

### A QUIET LIFE.

BY WALTER DE LA MARE, LL.D., D.LITT., LIT.D., F.R.S.L.

[Read May 27th, 1942.]

" Nothing," says Macaulay, "is so galling to a people, not broken in from the birth, as a paternal or, in other words, a meddling government which tells them what to read and say and eat and drink and wear."

ONE smiles a little ruefully at chancing on these words just now. They have an unpleasantly close application. We realize, even while we deplore it, the acute necessity for a meddling government which dictates to us what we may eat and drink and wear ; and what we may *not* say. But by the grace of heaven, and of good sense, no Controller of Reading has as yet been appointed ; and it is with reading that my peaceable paper is concerned. With many of us reading is an inevitable and almost automatic habit, and we seldom question our habits. Still we *may* ; and sometimes with profit. Is this habit, then, really defensible ? What is its precise status, so to speak, in relation to life ? What exactly do we do with our reading ? And what does it do with us ? How satisfactory a means is it of realizing what we are, and where we are ; our opportunities and obligations ? To what degree does it invoke and augment our more or less secret sources of vital energy and enable us to become more fully aware of the gifts and faculties of that paragon of animals, Man, and of the wonder, mystery and beauty of the world around us ? Questions are not necessarily valueless because we can only partially answer them. And needless to say any attempt I can make to do so will itself be questionable and tentative. One must beware, too, of bias.

" A man," said Dr. Johnson, who before he was forty had read enough to justify his becoming the self-appointed compiler of a

dictionary—" a man ought to read just as inclination leads him ; for what he reads as a task will do him little good." *That* he would certainly not have said about living. Life's " oughts " in his view were certainly not at the caprice of mere inclinations. Still, he prescribed a young man no fewer than " five hours of solid reading in a day." " So," he said, " he may acquire a great deal of knowledge." Any such acquisition cannot but entail of course an equivalent sacrifice of something else. Studying is not the only valuable way of using even one's solitude. There are many others—watching, listening, meditating, even day-dreaming. And there is the life of action. Knowledge is only an aid to life ; it is not life itself. He none the less deemed the sacrifice well worth while—five hours a day, of Life. He himself long after his young days were over would prowl through any unfamiliar library, opening and closing its books merely in order to discover where he would find in the future what he might need. He liked good food, good talk, good company; he liked no less good reading. He was omnivorous—a devotee. It was Dr. Johnson also who said, " I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken." On that I will venture no comment.

Books have multiplied unconscionably since 1784, when that great man died. Nowadays print is a commodity laid on, almost as universally as water, electricity or gas. We cannot, alas, hope that its quality has kept pace with its quantity. Periodical *Ramblers* cannot in essence but be as rare as Dr. Johnsons. Still, English literature is England's glory. With its knowledge alone it must have richly nourished and aided the English mind and therefore English character. How much vitality then is it now injecting into our English arteries ? What, still, is its intrinsic service ? Few of us are very skilful with our hands, with our eyes or other senses, or wholly efficient in practical workaday matters. Still fewer, I suppose, set aside a definite period every day in which to think. But we can all read ; and we do—if only the newspaper.

What of the darker, the illiterate ages ? In Elizabeth's time a house with a dozen books in it must have been more unusual than a house containing no printed matter of any kind is with us. The population of her London was some three or four hundred thousand souls. None the less, two or three thousand of them would flock to see tragedies, comedies, melodramas, not only in verse, but in a verse scintillating with poetry ; and expressed in a, language rich, vivid, racy, rhetorical, individual and prolific.

Dramatic caviare the "million" may have failed to enjoy. Nevertheless, even Shakespeare's "groundlings," by merely enjoying it, must have imbibed something of the meaning of this prodigiously varied and lively vocabulary merely by listening to and by mixing in spirit as it were with the characters on the stage—those living puppets on whom their makers, the playwrights, had lavished the verbal life-blood of their trade. The play may well have been the "thing" for most of them—action, plot, sensation, murder, sudden death. Just so it is with our thrillers, our shockers, our detective, mystery and underworld stories. But they—the Elizabethans—at least endured the poetry, the imagination, the range. About two thousand of these ventures, these plays, were, I believe, produced in fifty years, flourishing for the most part as briefly as Herrick's daffodils. Only a tithe of them achieved print, only a tithe of them have survived.

The spectacle in those days then of a human being, celled in between four walls, and as intent on a book as is a solitary angler upon his float, as is a chess-player on the drama of his silent pieces, as a sleeper secreted with his dreams, as a contemplative transported into regions beyond surmise—that phenomenon must have been unusual. Scholars, yes; and Lady Jane Grey as a girl in her early teens amongst them; but otherwise, habitual, solitary, silent readers must have been comparatively few. Not so with ourselves. Our means of reading, the supply, for any individual is inexhaustible. Well over a score of millions of books were reduced, not to ashes but to dust, in the appalling conflagration of May, two years ago—reading matter, diet of the mind.

Angler, chessmen, dreams, reverie—there seemed at first to be no reason why I should attempt to justify my title. The choice lay merely between "A Quiet Life" and "*The Quiet Life*." But faced with the safer of the two, I then began to ask myself how far it is really valid. Inert any such reader may look; but is he inactive? As for a quiet *life*, reading it may be said is an admirable amusement, a delightful recreation, a stimulant perhaps, often a sedative, even an opiate. But is it any more than mere flattery to compare it with living? Surely "book-making," even book-keeping is nearer living than that.

In our childhood we are compelled to read, and may none the less take to reading; though a boy, like Southey, who read the complete plays of Beaumont and Fletcher before he was in his teens, must; even nowadays, be an extreme exception. But so arid and so unappetizing may this enforced aliment be that a

surfeit may follow. And although minatory tract and compulsory sermon are now in the nature of Victorian souvenirs, even admirable scholastic edification may resemble the making of bricks without straw. And the mere musty presence in a great library, folio to duodecimo, of innumerable shelves of books which we never shall, and never indeed could even so much as graze, let alone assimilate, may daunt and cloud both the heart and mind, even of a lover of books, and with a melancholy comparable to that of a Durer or a Keats. "Can these dry bones live?" we may exclaim to ourselves. In their sole company, could I? That, I confess, has at times been my own experience, though, having departed with my chosen treasures, I quickly recover in the open air. What says the true student? Well, here is Robert Burton, who stuffed his great 'Anatomy of Melancholy' with thousands of quotations from hundreds of illustrious and obscure authors:

"How many poor scholars," he says, "have lost their wits, or become disards, neglecting all worldly affairs and their own health, wealth, *esse* and *bene esse*, to gain knowledge, for which after all their pains, in this world's esteem they are accounted ridiculous and silly fools, idiots, asses, and (as oft they are) rejected, contemned, derided, doting, and mad. . . . Go to Bedlam and ask . . ."

What, then, of life? Let George Chapman, the translator of the 'Iliad' and of the 'Odyssey,' reply:

"Give me a spirit that on life's rough sea  
Loves to have his sails filled with a lusty wind,  
E'en till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,  
And his rapt ship run on her side so low,  
That she drinks water and her keel ploughs air.  
There is no danger to a man, that knows  
What life and death is: there's not any law  
Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful  
That he should stoop to any other law:  
He goes before them, and commands them all,  
That to himself is a law rational . . ."

The comparison seems to be a tragic indictment of the book-lover. We know what kind of craven the escapist is now held to be—a shirker, a fugitive, at best a refugee. "Life is real! Life is earnest!" chants Longfellow. "Let us then be up and doing!" Reading is not doing. Socially and morally, surely, it is a secondary thing: a mere means to an end. Call it at best the flower compared with the fruit.

Worse: even Stevenson, who was "a great solitary when he was young," and who in devotion to his craft of letters played, as-

we are often reminded, the sedulous ape to half the finest styles in English, even Stevenson declared that although books are "good enough in their own way," they are yet "a mighty bloodless substitute for life." It is a comment that comes a little strangely from the lips of the only begetter of the young man with the cream tarts, of Mr. Hyde, of John Silver, Prince Florizel, and of the embarrassed victim of "the wrong box." Not to mention his excellent essays. We may remind ourselves that this little outburst may have been due to the fact that he was the prey of a quiet life imposed on him by ill-health, and that actually he was so ardent a spectator of life in the raw that he boasted never to have known what it is to be bored. And, in spite of our own temptations in this respect, there is no reason to assume that this was a mere gesture. "Mighty bloodless substitute," none the less, are his actual words. Even William Cory, a most original teacher, a poet and a historian, dismissed literature as a mere side-dish in the banquet of life.

Nor is there any mention of books in Wordsworth's famous Ode, unless his "shades of the prison-house" refer to libraries. It was Nature that was Wordsworth's ideal counsellor. And she ?

" Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse : and with me  
The girl in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle and restrain. . . .

" The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her ; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face. . . ."

Books, that is, in the running brooks, out in the open, not cooped up in the droning tedium of a village school, or the amenities of a woman's college.

But even Nature is not the whole of life ; even if it be the pleasantest part of it. How about the rest ? Life is concerned with things, objects, fellow creatures, money, events, pains, troubles. Not much of that is wholly of our own choice, and less of it is what we can more than partially control. We ourselves are the centre of a circumference, narrow or wide, in which everything is in perpetual change and motion. This is our microcosm, our universe. What comes of commerce with it is called experience ; what we keep of that experience is the remembered ; and

that even at its richest is no more than a minute fragment. We may stake our all on free will, but it is hard to oust its antithesis. And Henley's " I am the master of my fate " is only a less unusual challenge than his "I am the captain of my soul." Blessed indeed is the man who is even its effective lance-corporal. Is reading, then, nothing more than a pleasing interruption, a substitute *ersatz* ? Before, however, dismissing either claim of Henley's as fine talk, let us remember that when he wrote these lines the skies shrouding his spirit were " black as the pit from pole to pole." As must Mr. Cypress's in ' Nightmare Abbey ' have been :

" I have no hope for myself or for others. Our life is a false nature ; it is not in, the harmony of things ; it is an all-blasting upas, whose root is earth, and whose leaves are the skies which rain their poison-dews upon mankind. We wither from our youth; we gasp with unslaked thirst for unattainable good; lured from the first to the last by phantoms—love, fame, ambition, avarice—all idle, and all ill—one meteor of many names, that vanishes in the smoke of death ..."

The verdict is bleak, black, concise and final ; and like most such verdicts, it comes from a book. So does what follows ; but at the other extreme. It is from a collection of poems by Robert Bridges ; and where else, except in a book, or in our own hearts, are we to look for our evidence ?

" The idle life I lead  
Is like a pleasant sleep,  
Wherein I rest and heed  
The dreams that by me sweep.

" And still of all my dreams  
In turn so swiftly past,  
Each in its fancy seems  
A nobler than the last.

" And every eve I say,  
Noting my step in bliss,  
That I have known no day  
In all my life like this."

*Idle, dreams, noble, bliss* ; not many of us attain a serenity so pure and so complete. Here we are made momentary sharers of it—in a book.

Life itself, of course, is all we have. It is indefinitely limited in quantity, insecure in quality. Its volume and pressure depend on sources we can neither discover nor control. Again and again it may appear to be extravagant, absurd, monotonous, imbecile, a tale told by an idiot—and a voice within us may murmur, " It

is not what I have been accustomed to." One of the prettiest compliments we can pay it is to compare it to a dream. And yet when in an instant of candour self regards self, each can only seldom declare, "It is not my fault." In life's untidy inconsequence, too, it is not easy to detect a plot, a scheme, or much of a story. Indeed a good deal of it is spent by many of us in merely sectoring, as it were, "refills." Life, with its drowsy sentinels and erratic custodians, Will and Character ; with its quarrelsome counsellors, Instinct and Reason ; with its sovereign Graces, Good Humour, Good Nature and Good Sense ; with its elusive diviners, Insight and Imagination ; its guardian angels, Goodness and Evil ; its mysteries, Love and Death. "How is it possible," one may ask oneself, "that I am here, on earth, alone ; yet in so much company, seen and unseen ; and for the first time ?" "How is it possible that I shall leave it in a deathly sleep from which there may be no awakening ? And if wake I do ; then where, and what kind of me ?" Certainly life is nothing to be sentimental about. Irony may help us to season its frustrations ; cynicism is too easy. It has hours, prolonged periods even perhaps, when it is so haphazard, dead-alive, fractious, even offensive ; and there are all but complete existences that *appear* to be so poverty-stricken in everything we value and care for most, that if our mere book were as bad as all that, we should instantly shut it up and never return to it again. And even as regards the book of life, some exhausted readers have.

It is not, then, the mere events in our lives that are of intrinsic value, but the effect and the influence they have on us. It was no more than a night of strange dreams that invoked from Descartes a vow to make a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin at Loretto. It was four words on the plaster of a wall that so confounded the mighty King Belshazzar that his knees knocked together beneath him. And it is perhaps the quiet, intense, solitary events in life that are apt to affect us most. In this we may compare Thomas Traherne, meditating as a child on how "the earth did end" ; and terrified to the soul when alone in a field one lowering and sad evening : "I was a weak and little child and had forgotten there was a man alive in the earth"—we may compare this small creature with Christian and *his* book : "And as he read, he wept and trembled : and not being able longer to contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying: 'What shall I do ?'" Is even the Chicago bandit, at bay with his sawn-off shot-gun—and at however extreme a pitch of emotion—positively more *alive*, in any pregnant meaning of

the word, than was Isaac Newton pondering on the fall of his apple, or confronting the ocean of truth ; or Pasteur stooping over his stubborn test-tubes ; or Milton face to face with his Apollyon ; or Dante pacing his imaginary Hell ? To what degree then are we alive when in imagination we share these experiences, real or imagined, in a book ?

Life, like our sensational fiction, may indulge at times in obscene expletives. That is for most of us a recent experience. But is mere violence, solely because it is violent, more moving and meaningful than the lull after the storm, or even than a " Well, here I am at home again." As we ourselves may be when this present violent and appalling catastrophe is over.

The value of an experience rests first on its own nature ; next, on how we meet it ; next, on what of this survives in memory ; and last on its enduring influence on our minds and hearts *as* an experience, though much of that may remain hidden from us. On what of the experience, that is, is actively potential when its onset is over. We may merely live from hand to mouth ; but even at that some rudimentary digestion is involved.

What kind of experience, then, is the reading of a fine book ? How does it pass the tests we bring to bear on any other concentration of our faculties, any other order of living ? What is its fabric, its substance, its effluence ? That, surely, of its writer's life—though not of that life in the raw. It is what in the act of bringing his conception to the birth he was creating out of this raw material, whether actual or imagined, whether recollected in tranquillity, or in anguish, in a condensed impassive absorption, or with every nerve on edge. Autobiography, essay, fiction, tragedy, comedy, lyric—their radical theme in various forms, degrees and disguises is life, but a life transformed, distilled, personalized, given coherence, pattern, and a definite issue. And that, strictly speaking, in whatever fashion it may be achieved, is the only essential life there is. In this we are all in our individual measure craftsmen, and are irrevocably living our own autobiographies ; and the outcome (whether we are aware of it or not) is a species of art.

As human beings, however closely we resemble one another, however similar our lives may look, we also differ even in the minutest particulars ; from our fingerprints, to the faintest tremor of our hearts, the least motion of our minds. Five sisters of one birth have recently been brought up in Canada—with their food, clothes, hygiene, exercise, toys, play, work, rest and sleep, as identical and favourable as care and skill could secure. What,

after a few years of this, should we expect these "quins" to have become? Why, five little she-beings precisely as similar as their surroundings have been. On the contrary. Whether by reason of inheritance, or because every human body cannot but harbour a unique and living soul, one steady look merely at a photograph of these sisterly forms and faces reveals that, if in days to come they should each recall and record their young lives, the five accounts would be as diverse one from another as in appearance, posture, and character the children evidently are. It is far, far less what they have shared, but what they are, and what they have done with it, that matters. Nothing of course that the body does fails to affect the mind. Nothing that affects the mind leaves unaffected every physical organ we possess. The physiologist and the psychologist are at one upon that. So must, then, even a substitute for life—if it resemble it.

The word life itself, whether high life or low life, a gay life, or a dangerous, of course connotes for most people the actively tangible, and therefore what is deemed to be the substantial. For them, it is that which ghosts and ideas are emphatically not. It is the gaudy and the garish, the loud and smart, the rapid and exciting, the vehement and expansive and expensive. And, of course, money does not whisper; it talks. Compared with a tranquil reflective existence, such as the reading of a book *seems* to be, this sort of life is what treacle is compared with nectar; a cinema organ with an aeolian harp. It is cream with our jam on bread hot from the oven. It goes quickest home.\*

External things, actual events and experiences, usually of course crash in upon us with a sharper impact than what may be called representations of them in words. But words alone at times may have an even more pungent and formidable effect. A nation may resemble a smouldering furnace; it is the words of a demagogue that are likeliest to fan it into flame—flames that tears and blood alone will at length extinguish. The set and silent face of condensed hatred or contempt, of grief or remorse is eloquent and affective enough. A speechless look of tenderness, of passion, of love, may be of inestimable consequence. But no less moving or memorable a few words may be. Take merely this brief misspelt ungrammatical letter of which I know nothing but that a friend sent it to me and that he himself found

\* "Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts," cried Keats. But then Keats had the most exquisite senses, his test of things was the pulsations of his heart; he also, even as a boy, we are told, shouldered the surges of the 'Odyssey' as the Psalmist's leviathan shoulders the sea.

it in a newspaper. It was written by a young women in a hospital to her husband :

" Dear Alf,—I seen you last night in my dream. O, my dear, I cried at waking up. What a silly girl you been and got. The pain is bad this morning but I laugh at the solum clox of the sisters and the sawbones. I can see they think I am booked but they don't know what has befallen between you and me. How could I die and leave my Dear ? I spil my medecin thinking of my Dear. Hoping this finds you well, no more now from yours truly Liz."

Was this letter for its recipient a bloodless substitute for life ? Is it even for us ? Those faces, its " solum clox," would not disgrace a tragedy of Webster's. But perhaps this farewell must be classed under low life. Well, then—

" Dear, beauteous Death ! the jewel of the just,  
Shining no where but in the dark ;  
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,  
Could man outlook that mark."

Is that to be described as a bloodless substitute for *anything* ?

Perhaps this is being unfair to Stevenson—a writer of a very rare versatility, artistry and conscience. But then he also dismissed writers as *filles de joie*. *De joie*, indeed ! Still, one must not apply too closely what may have been intended only as a half-truth or a warning. On the other hand, if even a bookworm is not merely a maggot that devours old folios, as may the silver fish and the moth our silks and fine array, then let us at least have his defences in view.

What of the other arts ? That of painting, for example. Paint is bloodless stuff enough, although as Turner acidly declared to an inquisitive lady, it may have been mixed with brains. But is being mute and alone in the company of a Rembrandt, a Piero della Francesca, a Breughel, a Goya, a Chardin, a Degas, a Gainsborough—or Frith's " Paddington Station," for that matter—only a mere substitute for life ? There is little blood, though there may be much thunder, in the works of Wagner. But are we little-alive or well-alive when we are listening to Beethoven, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Schubert; or even to " Auld Lang Syne," a jig, or a minuet ? We can of course fly to the second-hand merely to fill a vacuum—in our own minds. And life, with its aridifying self-interests, its kid-glove conventions, its tepid compromises, its timid slogan, *Safety First*, may itself at times resemble what, I believe, the physicists have said of the stellar universe—that it is nothing more respectable than holes in the

ether. As the man who just "sits" may be, in the body politic. In that case every substitute is relatively a godsend. The literary sack may be of a poor quality; but no less unwholesome and insipid, we must have agreed, may seem at times the bread of life.

The reading of books, then, like any living of life, depends entirely on what we make of them. On what they offer we must bestow *our* life, our imaginative energy and insight. All nature in its inexhaustible variety and beauty, all humanity with its treasury of experience, wisdom and works of art, was in the world when we ourselves arrived in it. It may come to mean much to us or little. That depends mainly upon ourselves. To waste it is to waste our all. What have we done with it—and with our books?

Let us turn our attention for a moment from reading to writing. In the conceiving and bringing to birth of a book (as of a picture, a symphony, a sculpture, a house)—is that, too, nothing better than a substitute for life? Even physically speaking? Not if that silkworm-like, self-immolating adept in words, Flaubert, is a credible witness. Of his most famous novel, 'Madame Bovary,' he tells us: "The taste of arsenic was so really in my mouth when I described how Emma Bovary was poisoned that it cost me two indigestions, one upon the other, quite real ones—for I vomited my dinner." Whenever I recall this tragic episode in that unique novel, no trifling experience, I am no less conscious of the grit of the mineral poison against my teeth than I am of grief and compassion for its victim and of horror at her disillusionment and despair. That Flaubert, a literary slave in the pursuit of the one apt word should, while engaged in hunting it down, be capable of simultaneously evolving his Emma and of sharing her nausea and its effects, hardly suggests the inert. His apparent quietude more closely resembles that of snow upon the slopes of a volcano. And his physical reaction was remarkable only for being so extreme. So, too, with our physical reactions in the reading of any book? "My considered opinion, after long reflection," said the District Judge who had been called on to decide whether or not James Joyce's 'Ulysses' should be subject to a libel of confiscation in the United States, "is that whilst in many places its effect on the reader is undoubtedly somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac." The judgment suggests rather more precisely than he intended, perhaps, that he had been a susceptible reader.

Emetics, love-potions—mere fiction! Well, we may dismiss

a novelist's characters as airy nothings, insubstantial as the phantoms of a dream. Engaged in his work, however, he was literally possessed by them. He was perpetually in their company, sharing in all seriousness and with extreme assiduity every impulse of their minds, every tremor of their hearts. He cannot then but react even physically to every emotion which he himself describes. He is breathing into them the breath of life. And Joseph Conrad has told of the catastrophe that ensued when some chance visitor intruded on the intensity of his solitude and absorption when he was writing his 'Nostromo,' reducing it for the time being to dust. By sheer contrast I am reminded of a poem by George Herbert who, unlike Herrick among his rustic parishioners in his barbarous Devon, was serenely content with his parsonage and his tiny church at Bemerton, a few miles over the water meadows from steepled Salisbury—a church which I entered one day years ago to discover what might well have been the inspiration of one of his poems, a minute charwoman kneeling on the altar engaged in polishing a candlestick. He tells us so in his poem called 'The Quip.'

"The merry world," it runs, "with his train bands and mates," had one day begun to sport and jeer at him, proffering their gifts of Beauty, Money, brave Glory, "puffing by in silks that whistled," and quick Wit. But he rejected them all; even—imagine it!—Conversation. This tranquil unbribable existence, none the less, enshrined another no less vital: that devoted to his poetry. And in another poem he refers to a crisis of the spirit through which he had passed, so benumbing that he cries, "Who would have thought my shrivelled heart, could have recovered greenness? It was gone." But Spring returned:

"And now in age I bud again;  
After so many deaths I live and write;  
I once more smell the dew and the rain,  
And relish versing: O my only Light,  
It cannot be  
That I am he  
On whom thy tempests fell all night."

And here is 'The House of Silence,' a poem by Thomas Hardy from his 'Moments of Vision':

"That is a quiet place—  
The house in the trees with the shady lawn."  
\* If, child, you knew what there goes on  
You would not call it a quiet place.

" ' Morning, noon, and night  
 Mid those funereal shades that seem  
 The uncanny secrecy of a dream  
 Figures dance to a mind with sight,  
 And music and laughter like floods of light  
 Make all the precincts gleam.

" ' It is a poet's bower,  
 Through which there pass, in fleet arrays,  
 Long teams of all the years and days,  
 Of joys and sorrows, of earth and heaven,  
 That meet mankind in its ages seven,  
 An aeon in an hour '."

But there is abundant evidence to prove that writing, and especially any rich creative writing, involves an intensity of heed, a focusing of energy, and an expense of spirit which are rare and exceptional in any other order of living. Also that a protracted effort of this character may be not only excruciating but exhausting—an exhaustion which usually follows its conclusion rather than accompanies it, since, I assume, the energy it utilizes, and even evokes, is itself a stimulant which fails when the ordeal is over. The virtue has gone out of the mind. The plant in seeding has for the time being spent its nature. Difficulty, Care, Toil—these are the artist's Three Fatal Sisters, and if they are not to some extent associated even with our own daily routine, what monsters of harshness are the parents who banish their young children to a boarding-school! How often indeed has life itself been compared to a school; and this with no intention of paying it a compliment, or of conferring divine graces, let alone divine rights, upon its headmaster.

I realize, but am very late in acknowledging it, that all this time I may seem to have been preaching to the converted. For no one within hearing, I am sure, would challenge the mild statement that, as with writing, so too with reading; it is a way and a manner of living life. We may go further and declare that our best and fullest reading is a full and excellent order of living. Here, I fancy, we are at odds with 'Vanity Fair' only in respect to its *relative* value, as compared with that of other occupations. Just as we can compare, let us say, how much lively living is required to see 'Hamlet,' to read 'Hamlet,' to act 'Hamlet,' or to write 'Hamlet.' The easy charge, "a waste of *time*" has often been levelled against it. But might not occasionally life itself be dismissed as a *waste* of time? Rather, surely, "our time devour, than languish in his slow-chapped power.

The reading of an excellent book, then, is a condensed way

(and art) of using life, and one as closely intertwined with delight as poetry was once deemed to be a delight intertwined with instruction. The delight indeed is itself instruction, and *vice versa*. It builds, it transforms, it vivifies. And all this "quietly" only in the sense that the growth of a flower or of an oak is quiet; that the top which a schoolboy says is asleep is quiet; and in the sense that still waters run deep. It is the quiet of the never less alone than when alone.

Needless to say, there are many obvious differences in the kind of life we lead when we are reading a book and ordinary experience. But they are not all of them to the former's disadvantage. Our moral responsibility is less conspicuous. Instead, we become arbiters of that of others. We can at any moment shut our book, stop reading. We cannot as innocently decide to stop being alive. There is a more assured expectation in books. We seem to be far less the puppets of chance. Our surroundings are being interpreted. Free to pause and consider, we are yet being steadily led and guided on. In a fine book, poetry or fiction, there is for most of us too a greater variety of contacts, characters, circumstances, richer scenery, views and visions otherwise unattainable. How can one half of the world get to know how the other half lives? Chiefly by means of books. There is, too, the relative nearness, magnitude, vividness and realizableness of our imagery to consider—a complex problem indeed.

But all this depends on the chief difference of all, namely, that books with their imagery are made of words, and that actuality is not. In living at large objects are directly experienced; in books only indirectly. We have to construct them for ourselves, out of symbols. That being so, it is fantastic, it may be repeated, to pit the outcome of reading against living in the actual—a busy London railway station, a town market on a summer's morning, the evening parlour of the "Pig and Whistle," woodland and winter snow; even a cat, a flower, a bird. But, apart from the fact that we have at least seemed to be doing this even in listening to these words, is the assertion more than superficially true? *Are* objects, in fact, Nature, humanity, deeds, actions, devitalized, disactualized when we are presented with them solely by means of words? Common sense substantially personified in our old friend Dr. Johnson may kick his stone in defiance of Bishop Berkeley; but are we so much assured of the actual as we may assume?

"The occurrences of nature," Professor Whitehead tells us, "are in some way apprehended by minds, which are associated with living bodies. Primarily, the

mental apprehension is aroused by the occurrences in certain parts of the correlated body, the occurrences in the brain for instance. But the mind in apprehending also experiences sensations which, properly speaking, are qualities of the mind alone. These sensations are projected by the mind so as to clothe appropriate bodies in external nature. Thus the bodies are perceived as with qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind. Thus nature gets credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves : the rose for its scent; the nightingale for his song ; and the sun for his radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellence of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless ; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly."

So assuredly is even the princeliest of books until it is not only read, but until it is read well.

As, then, we originate qualities in the things around us, scent, sound, colour, form, and as we ourselves, if we are to derive any value from it, must make the physical wilderness blossom like the rose, so we endow every stranger we meet with as much or as little of our own humanity as we think he deserves. Similarly, we endow a book, idealize and originate in it, all that we can persuade ourselves in our reading of it to surrender. And in the process we are confined of course to its words. Language is its sole means of communication between writer and reader.

The power of transfusing that into everything that is meant by meaning may be possessed in abundance ; it may be all but wanting. Those in whom even their mother tongue is rather a convenience than a heaven-sent boom, a night-light rather than an Aladdin's lamp, are in this degree shut out from the life of books, although they may reap their harvest in other ways of living and in other arts. Since children are chiefly taught in words, the word-deaf among them may remain apparent dunces—dull and refractory—until they find another method of expressing what they see and think and feel, and one whereby to share the thoughts and feelings of others. Imaginative children, who are also word-sensitive, are already adepts in this divination. They can turn the penny plain and the tuppence coloured into a radiant palace, a nursery rhyme into the Cap of Invisibility and Seven League Boots. So may their elders. So *may* their elders. To the word-addict, indeed, the name of an object fits it closer than a glove. At first glimpse of what he delights in, or detests, he ransacks and beats up his vocabulary like a kestrel hawking over a young green field of wheat.

He may care little for music, yet be ravished by the accordancy of words. He can hardly look at a rose without calling it one,

and will sigh on and on for the name of a flower that has already surrendered its full fragrance and beauty. Words may be a sort of talisman. The vision, for instance, under an autumnal sun, of a clump of seeding Michaelmas daisies, coroneted with a covey of small birds, fluttering, twittering, eager, avid, intent; yellow, scarlet, black ; airy as thistledown, lovely as light, near indeed yet how remote, and exquisitely *alive*—how captivating—a little experience that may be. And how peculiar an access of delight is ours when after a few moments of watching we audibly whisper to ourselves just one word—goldfinches. Are we incomparably the worse off if W. H. Hudson or Gilbert White has been our master in this little ceremony ? That is not our conviction, book in hand. Let neither delight, then, be jealous of the other.

The mere saying of the name of a thing, the very sound of it, may more than satisfy both ear and eye. It is an incantation ; and, like the thing itself, a sesame to memories beyond the exquisite immediacy of perception and recognition attained through our senses. Words indeed may add the strangest charm to things of nature and humanity that would be absent else. Water and flowers are the more magical for our having read Vaughan ; and the sea and its weeds for Shelley. Do hooting owl, rippling skylark, and nocturnal nightingale chill, enrapture, or enchant us into a mortal repining the *less* because they have been caught, and set free, in words by Shakespeare, Shelley, and Keats ? Is our London the less engaging because of Dickens, our Wessex the less lovely, earth-sweet and English because of Hardy ? Books sharpen our zest in what is near and dear, and give familiarity to the strange and the distant. They are looking-glasses that double our interest and ensure an almost magical perspective. Nor can I find any difference between my memory of Tess's last tragic talk in the daybreak twilight of Stonehenge and the memory of my last visit to these intimidating monoliths—in, I mean, this too, too solid flesh. For after all, words resemble a diaphanous mist, which, in the morning sun, becomes here and there before it vanishes globe-like dewdrops reflecting the all around them ; it is the dewdrops that endure.

What is the first thing—not always wisely, since there is a romanticalness in the unknown—what is the first thing the lover pines to hear concerning the loved one ? Her name, surely. And after that, the enchantment of using it. What was the first privilege conferred by the Lord God on Adam in the Garden of Eden, before even in fact He gave him Eve ? That of naming its inmates. " And whatsoever Adam called every living creature

that was the name thereof." Words for the fortunate are lively as dragonflies, as various in their effects and contexts as chameleons, subtle as the serpent, dangerous as dynamite. Magical formulae are of their fabric. The very noise of them shakes the heartstrings in a curse. They can numb our confidence, shatter our self-esteem, reduce us to tears, and set us flaming with rage and fury. In what does the fabulous and secret power of Solomon still reside—in the breathing of a voice.

" In the beginning was the Word . . . ."

To disparage reading, then, because its medium is words, would be tantamount to disparaging a rapier because it came from Damascus, or a rainbow because its medium is drops of rain-water, or beauty because it is only skin-deep. Why, as that sham-hater Swift discovered, the skin is the means of the beauty! " Last night," says he, " I saw a woman flayed, and you cannot imagine how much it altered her for the worse." So, too, words are the means of a book's life, and of our life in reading it.

Yet another substantial difference between the life we live with a book and that strange, inconsequent and broken medley, our daily experience, is that, immersed in a fine book, we are usually alone in one respect but never for an instant alone in another. We are by ourselves, that is, but perpetually *with* its writer. He speaks ; we listen. In this rapt and peculiar solitude, we are communing (as if by some secret agency) with a rare mind at its best. Nor, even if spellbound, need we be tongue-tied in our chosen author's company. We can indulge in an endless give-and-take. We can pause to argue, to question, to augment. By a species of divination, we can edge on into his being and nature. We share the most rapt and solitary confabulations with himself of which his mind and imagination were capable ; that which he would not and could not otherwise reveal. We can moreover explore his thoughts and feelings, and those of his characters, even more intimately than he has himself openly devised, or perhaps desired, or had need to, or even could.

We need not, as it were, enter his storied house by its front door. Instead, we may steal down the dusty area steps, or creep in by way of the ivied porch in the garden or orchard in the rear. Once within, we can ascend by the backstairs, linger in unmentioned corridors, push widely open doors left only ajar, and lay finger on key to reveal, it may be, unforeseen valuables and curios in cellar and attic. We may even surprise a long-forgotten skeleton in a

cupboard—one of our own, perhaps ; and the less unwelcome because it is not confronting and intimidating us in the bone. The place we are in—our whereabouts—is a region of the mind and of the imagination ; of two imaginations, indeed, ours and our author's. We can live in them at our leisure. Our reallest thoughts, our keenest convictions, our intensest emotions can never be a common communicable currency. We had best confide that gold, or that dross, to a closer privacy ; or, queer paradox indeed, to the whole wide world—in a book.

And what of that inscrutable radium known as genius ? It resembles the metal beryllium, now, I understand, in constant use, but which for many years proved utterly intractable until at length explorers of its potency added it to copper in the minute proportion of 2 *per cent.*, and thus produced a composite immensely more valuable and durable than steel. Genius in the home may resemble beryllium. It may be gey ill to live with. Combined with language in a book it is Eureka. It is leaven to our lump. It is of life its elixir. There it is, unique, inestimable, wild and various as Sirius in a frosty midnight ; or serene as the Morning Star. To maintain that the company of anything so pervasive, incalculable and inexhaustible is not a magical way of deriving and living life is to suggest that a woodland pool would be the lovelier without its naiad, a fire without its flame.

What, then, may be claimed as the salient qualities of a fine book ? Lucidity, order, arrangement ; balance, coherence, proportion, progression ; an evident pattern and design ; invention, originality, significance ; the pervasive presence of light, and the light of the mind ; an apt accordancy between sound and sense ; style—which is a sort of manners of the mind ; a simplicity which admits of and surrenders the complex ; humour, wit, irony, even vision ; always profound and genuine feeling, a sentient heart, and at best magnanimity. These, then, and much else are the constituents of the life we may derive from, and may, within our own capacity, *live*, in the company of a fine book.

In the life of the actual, how much of all this can we frequently count on, if we are also capable of sharing that ? Of life in general one cannot, alas, produce a rainbow-coloured phial of its quintessence and announce, " See, here it is ! " Would, indeed, that it were so. Nevertheless, it is ease itself to produce a slender volume and to say, Here is a vessel containing an essence of literature. Here is the ' Phaedo ' ; here are Sir Thomas Wyatt's poems to his unattainable Anne ; here is Beddoes' ' Death's Jest Book ' ; here is Sir Thomas Browne's ' Urn Burial ' ; here

is 'Father and Son'; here is Turgenev's 'First Love'; here is 'Ethan Frome.' And this is to mention almost at random only some smaller books; priceless kegs: not the kilderkins, the puncheons, and the tuns.

In reading worthily, moreover, what is worth reading, we are conferring on its writer, as much as lies within us, fame. We are using his condensation of living, his art and energy, as he hoped his readers would. Nor is this purely a narrow and individual outcome. We are, each of us, one of many, and of an assembly, of a long history, which we admire and love.

Gerard Hopkins, having "deliberately and before God" declared in a letter to Robert Bridges that "fame, the being known, though in itself one of the most dangerous things to man, is nevertheless the true and appointed air, element, and setting of genius and its works," adjures him therefore to aim at it, take means to it, to try to be known. "Besides," he continues, "we are Englishmen. A great work by an Englishman is like a great battle won by England. It is an unfading bay tree. It will even be admired by and praised by and do good to those who hate England (as England is most perilously hated), who do not even wish to be benefited by her. . . . Art and its fame do not really matter, spiritually they are nothing, virtue is the only good; but it is only by bringing in the infinite that to a just judgment they can be made to look infinitesimal or small or less than vastly great." "Let then your light," he concludes, "shine before men that they may see your good works (say, of art) and glorify your Father in heaven (that is, acknowledge that they have an absolute excellence in them and are steps in a scale of infinite and inexhaustible excellence)."\*

We may of course prefer a coarser, more potent and inebriating brew; or a bottle of excellent physic prescribed by the moralist. Neither is precluded. And it is quite certain, I think, that if there is anything in either manner of living life that can do us good, there is also what may do us harm. For myself—if I may venture on the personal—I confess that I could not be too grateful for my first Christmas copy of 'Gulliver's Travels,' with its full-page pictures in the primary colours, when I was aged perhaps five or six; for my having many years ago been made by a friend from El Dorado a freeman of the London Library; or for the moment when, dismally endeavouring to construe a few lines of the 'Iliad' at school, I stammered out, "And Achilles . . .

\* From 'The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges,' edited by Claud Colleer Abbott. Oxford University Press.

went out . . . black as . . . night " ; and then, in an exceedingly rare moment of insight, realized, " Why, that means, ' *black as NIGHT* '." It was a revelation : thus suddenly to have become aware that a fine poem means every single syllable and iota of what it says. As may the Creation itself.

For poetry is the sovereign charm, whether in tincture or in essence, of all literature. Its magic, like radium, like genius, seems to be incapable of waning. How often, I wonder, have I read, yet never without renewed delight, or without finding in it some minute particular actually new to me, Wordsworth's ' *Reverie of Poor Susan* ' :

" At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,  
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years :  
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard  
In the silence of morning the song of the bird."

And yet, not until the other day did I fully realize the limpid precision of that " *When daylight appears* "—try any alternative ; nor the exquisite touch of that capital T to its Thrush ; nor the loving-kindness of that unemphatic " *poor Susan* " ; nor the courageous modesty of the word " *spot* " ; nor, last, the sheer marvel of " *In the silence of morning, the song of the bird* "—with its echo of the last chapter of ' *Ecclesiastes*,' and its sesame to the memory of day's first twilight hour in how many memoried English summers, English springs.

Was *that* living life ? Or must I for sheer decency's sake trudge off this evening to make certain that Wordsworth's old by-way of Cheapside is now in ashen ruins and so check his *Poor Susan* with life as it is ? Is *that* to be a realist ? If so, which will suffer most—Susan, or life as it is ? By other tastes, of course, this particular poem may be dismissed as insignificant and insipid, a product far less of art than of artlessness. " *Another Daddy Wordsworth !* " I may be flung in exchange a rare morsel from the works of John Donne or a cynical *bon-bon* from Byron which I shall devour with the customary zest. But why despise what we cannot appreciate ? It takes many kinds of valuable and strangely assorted elements to make a life really well worth living ; and hardly fewer to make even a single poem as well worth living *into*. But it is not necessarily the poem that is the likelier to fail.

A poem, of course, as it is decreed by its words, consists not only of the images, ideas, feelings, emotions, and the sense of the presence of its maker which it may produce in us, it is a signal

and isolated work of art. As such, with its rhythms, cadences, music, form, it has a certain entity, lovely and signal, which induces a state of the spirit only its own to confer. We can analyse that no *more* than we can analyse a moment of life itself. Poetry, as Mr. George Hamilton recently declared, is not in nature, though nature herself may awaken its impulse. It is in human nature, and in the soul of man.

" Sir," said Dr. Johnson once, and like such realists as Swift and Defoe, he was himself a poet, " Sir, we [the English] are a nest of singing birds"—for birds sing and poets should. The English genius, said Matthew Arnold, is a poetic genius. But in relation to life and to reading, a printed poem far more closely resembles an egg than a poet resembles a bird? The egg of the Phoenix—that fabulous creature which, like poetry itself, may seem to perish for a while, but which, re-arising from its ashes, proves itself to be immortal.

Pacing slowly to and fro with Henry Newbolt one afternoon in spring many years ago the grass cross-shaped path, with its old stone sundial at its central point, in his old walled garden at Netherhampton, I espied in an espalier apple-tree in bud, the bead-bright eyes of a missel-thrush (which he knew well) sitting, as if in a fakir's trance, in her nest upon her eggs. She had taken them to her heart. My friend and I were certainly at that moment living life, as anyone would agree who ever had the happiness of sharing with him both himself and his lovely garden. Was the thrush also living life? If not, then this rambling discourse has been false to both terms of its title—" A Quiet Life ": for in the reading of a fine poem—the re-creation of it *out* of words—we are ourselves as it were sitting, and it depends entirely on our quiet but intensely active mastery of words, on our intellect, understanding, feelings, passions, insight, imagination, on our vital essence, that is, whether or not it will for us be addled, or whether it will prove a revived and perhaps imperishable little Phoenix shall issue out of the shell.

## VERSE AND POETRY.

BY GEORGE ROSTREVOR HAMILTON, F.R.S.L.

[Read April 22nd, 1942.]

IN this paper I propose first to distinguish between verse and poetry, then to suggest a few broad applications of the distinction, and finally to consider verse in the making and—what is more difficult—poetry in the making. I hope to persuade you that the distinction which I draw is not academic or barren; that, although it cannot be rigidly applied, it can sometimes help us in judging the aim or tendency of writers and the worth of what they write.

At present I shall take "verse" in its ordinary wide meaning, as extending to any composition in metrical form. Later I shall also use the word in a narrower sense, as meaning verse which is not poetry. But before I do so, the sense in which I understand the word "poetry" must be made reasonably clear.

Without more ado, then, I would ask you to consider verse in relation to the infinite variety of life, its light and shadow, its surface and depth; the energy and idleness of life, the tears and laughter, the wisdom, wit and nonsense, pleasure of body, aspiration of soul. Clearly the range of verse, which may in some manner reflect all these, is enormous. A wise catholicity will allow value to every sort, including the lampoon, the limerick and the nursery rhyme. But a wise discrimination will be aware of very different kinds and degrees of value. It will feel the need of distinctions for which words, despite the richness of language, are too few. It will not waste the two words verse and poetry, and will gladly accept the use of the latter for verse which has a certain quality of imagination. So far, so good; but what precisely is that distinguishing quality? We are brought up against the old teasing question as to the essential nature of poetry.

We must continue to keep in touch with life, for literature is a part of life and is related to the whole. Imagination is no monopoly of literature or of any art, and if we wish to understand what it is in verse, we shall do well to consider its place

in life, the wider whole. Let us, if only in outline, make some attempt at this task.

The energies of life may be divided into those of action, thought and contemplation. Between the three there is a continual interplay, and they combine in varying measure in the life of every man. Among our own acquaintances we can probably call to mind some who are primarily men of action, some who are thinkers, and some, maybe, who in a wide sense are contemplatives. In Chaucer's 'Prologue'—and we could not wish for a truer mirror of life—there is, for example, that man of action, the Sergeant of the Law, the busiest man anywhere, "and yet he semed bisier than he was"; there is that thinker, the Clerk of Oxenford, whose heart was set on Aristotle, yes, even his senses, so that he coveted more than rich robes the clothing, black or red, of twenty books of his master's philosophy. For the contemplative—and this may prepare you for the wide sense I shall give to contemplation—there is Chaucer himself: Chaucer, not yet as a writer, but as a man enjoying the company of his fellows.

It would, perhaps, be unfair to take the Sergeant of the Law as our specimen of the man of action, for the man of action at his best betrays no fuss, and often seems less busy than he is. We had better take a more worthy representative, let us say a good administrator. Such a man will obviously have to use his brains as well as to act, but he will use them with a view to action. Also—I emphasize the point—he will need to be imaginative, but here again imagination will have action for its end. So, too, with the man we call a thinker; he requires imagination, not for its own sake but for the development of his thought.

I must, however, qualify what I have just said. Imagination is only subordinate, in the one case to practical, in the other to intellectual ends, so far as the man of action and the thinker are true to type. But each of them is an individual, and no individual is wholly true to type. A student of philosophy like the Clerk of Oxenford, gaining some insight into the structure of mind or some vision of order in the Universe, will pause to admire, like a mountaineer who gazes on a valley that has opened out below him. Forgetting for a while the peaks of knowledge which are hidden in the clouds, he will be surprised into imaginative enjoyment of the scene, for its own beauty or perfection; he will become for the time being a contemplative. In the same way the administrator, studying the members of his staff or the people whom he has to govern, will sometimes be fascinated by the sheer play of human character. His imagination, called into activity

by the needs of action, will linger (but not too long) simply to contemplate or enjoy. As for the man whom we call a contemplative, he has to play a part in action and thought, but in contemplation he is most himself. Chaucer, we may suppose, was well served in practical affairs by his eminent gift of shrewd and humorous observation, but we may be quite certain that he passed easily to the habit of contemplation, exquisitely enjoying the flavour of the human comedy for its own sake. Contemplation so understood, a state of mind disinterested and absorbed—undisturbed by questions, Where does this lead? What do I do next?—is not peculiar to the dreamer or the introvert. All men have some share in it, and it belongs in good measure to anyone who looks about him in continued wonder at a strange world.

Thus in the wider whole of life we discern the spheres of action, thought and contemplation. Imagination is active in all three, but only in the last does it enjoy its object purely, or almost purely, for its own sake. What of the lesser whole of verse? There, too, we find a similar division. The writer may, like Chaucer, present to us a picture of his fellow-men, sometimes satirical in touch, yet with a wide acceptance of their foibles, their virtues and their faults. And as we read, our criticism of this and that character does not distract us from imaginative delight in their humanity. On the other hand, the writer may exercise his imagination to give us moral or didactic verse, and such verse, so far as it tends to improve (or, for that matter, to worsen) our morals or our learning, belongs to the sphere of action or of thought. So, again, with critical or satirical work in which the writer, far from accepting his fellow-men or his fellow-authors, is bent on pulling them to pieces. We feel a very great difference between one kind of verse and the other. Let me illustrate, in miniature, by two epigrams, both from the eighteenth century. The first, on a parish clerk (a picture which would, I think, have pleased Chaucer), is by William Shenstone :

" Here lies, within this tomb, so calm,  
 Old Giles ; pray sound his knell:  
 Who thought no song was like a psalm,  
 No music like a bell."

The second, on a maker of long epitaphs (a sally which must have pleased the author of ' The Dunciad '), is by Pope :

"*Freind*, for your epitaphs I'm griev'd,  
 Where still so much is said ;  
 One half will never be believ'd,  
 The other never read."

Most of us would agree, apart from any comparison of value, that Shenstone's quatrain is poetry in a sense in which Pope's is not. But why should we do so? The reason lies in the differing quality of our enjoyment, which is contemplative in one case and not in the other. I began this paper by asking what precisely was the quality of imagination that distinguishes poetry from verse. I now answer that it is nothing but the quality of contemplation, which verse in the narrower sense lacks.

In contemplation our experience is serene and unbroken as the smooth surface of a pond, whether it reflect a willow branch or the expanse of heaven; in the experience of verse like Pope's epigram the surface is cut clean through, irreparably, by a nicely calculated pebble. But I do not want to over-simplify. Contemplation, in a poem of any length, can survive a good many ripples. Verse from one end of the scale to the other is less poetic or more poetic, and a middle region exists where it is impossible to lay down the law and say, This is poetry, this is not. There are pieces, lyrical, reflective, dramatic and so on, which we should all agree, from the contemplative quality of our enjoyment, to be poems, but verse shades into poetry by imperceptible degrees, and room must be left for individual judgment. Suffice it that we shall know the kind of difference which we are discussing. If, for example, we are unable to agree whether Wordsworth's 'Happy Warrior' is verse or poetry—and myself I should call it verse—we shall probably agree that it is less poetic than his 'Highland Girl,' and that the latter is beyond question a poem. The fact that we cannot fix a precise borderline does not impair the value of the distinction. After all, in the wider whole of life, who is to say exactly at what point anyone can truly be called a man of action or a thinker? Yet the labels remain useful; they represent different standards which help us to judge the infinite variety of individual man. In the same way the labels verse and poetry represent different standards, which help us to judge the infinite variety of metrical compositions.

I have drawn a parallel between life and verse, but I could also call attention to a difference. Verse, as a product of art, is tidier than life; it has more definite shape. Metre and rhythm, with their balance and repetition of form, are elements which incline us, however lightly, towards the contemplative mood, and to that extent they make for poetry. We find, as we should expect, that contemplation plays a much larger part in verse than in life. Yet the influence of the formal elements, metre and

rhythm, can easily be counteracted, and the contemplative mood can only be induced when there is a harmony between many elements. As Coleridge said, "the poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity." I read this as implying that the energies of thought and action have their due place in the hierarchy, subject always to contemplation. When the work of the poet approaches this ideal inclusiveness and harmony, we get the greatest poetry ; a true but minor poem will exercise no more than a slender fraction of the "whole soul," yet only through a similar harmony on a small scale will it give us contemplative experience. Perhaps neither major nor minor poetry, not even the lyric of finest poise, ever reaches in fact to a contemplation that is entirely pure, for it may be doubted whether the human mind is capable of such a state. Nevertheless, the contemplation induced by poetry is further removed from action in pursuit of a desired end, or from thought in pursuit of knowledge, than any contemplation which we enjoy, outside the arts, in day to day life. It is less incidental, it has more stability ; it is often far richer, for it can hold in unity a greater number of elements ; its order is more remarkable for, as in tragedy, it has greater power to reconcile the turbulence of conflicting emotions.

Moral or didactic or satirical verse does not pretend to such a harmony. It has a design upon us, and must keep its lesson in the foreground, not allowing the moral or intellectual faculty to be subordinate to any other, or combination of others. It can afford only incidental flashes of poetry. The same is generally true with writers like Kipling and Newbolt. Both are good craftsmen, having in their armoury many of the elements in sound, imagery and feeling which have their place in poetry. But distraction is the enemy of contemplation. The work of these two writers certainly contains poetry as well as good verse ; yet it is full of distracting appeals, now to the love of action and adventure, now to ideas of good form or fellowship, now to a mass of sentiment connected with English tradition, with public school or Army or Empire.

Newbolt's patriotic verse, like the public school tradition at its best, encourages real virtue, but promotes action rather than contemplation—a side of life which the schools generally have done little to foster. Perhaps the emphasis on action may be defended as healthy, for from the biological point of view, as M. Maunon observes, "animal health resides, beyond doubt, in

action and in correct reflexes." " But," he adds, " man is perhaps only interesting as a sick and freakish animal."\* Sick he is, and sometimes our interest in him changes to weariness or impatience and we agree with Whitman—

" I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.  
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God . . . ."

and so on—and, we might add, they do not write poetry. The impatient mood passes and man has our allegiance again. He is so special a creature that, for a diagnosis of his sickness and a conception of his health, the biologist is too general a practitioner ; we had best call into consultation the psycho-analyst and (*pace* Whitman) the theologian. But this much we can see for ourselves, that, in health as in sickness, man is an incomplete animal. The good tiger is perfect and complete of his kind ; the good man is very far from being so. Man is so great potentially (that is, in his ideal human nature) that individual man can only be a fragment. He cannot be equally eminent in action, thought and contemplation alike. Just as the specialist is required for the advance of knowledge, so the eccentric is required for the normal poise of society. Thus the poet, often unbalanced in his own life, may yet contribute to that social balance which is sorely needed as a condition of health. Men in society may be sick from too much action or from wrong action ; from too little thought or from thought undisciplined ; from lack of the energy of contemplation or from indulgence in its counterfeit, the nerveless daydream.

Verse, in its narrower sense, has a social function over and above the enjoyment which it may give. So, too, has poetry, although it needs no such justification. Verse has a special power to affect the impulses of action, and also to crystallize the judgment of the mind. It can do these things more directly than poetry, and more forcefully, I think, than any other art outside the art of words. Poetry, like pictorial art and music in their different ways, creates a contemplative experience of unique intensity, and by so doing reinforces and deepens men's imagination. To regard it as a mere ornament of life is ridiculous, for it is both a good in itself and a means to the good life. While many high-falutin claims have been made for poetry which I

\* 'Aesthetics and Psychology,' Charles Mauron. Hogarth Press, 1935.

cannot accept, this claim I put forward soberly—that poetry discovers part of the ideal human nature by making it actual, that is to say, by developing and helping to fulfil the nature of man on its contemplative side. Poetry has an affinity here with religion and, although it is false to say that it can ever be a substitute, I think it may truly be said that religion cannot dispense with its alliance.

## II.

I have explained as clearly as I can the distinction which I make between verse and poetry. I have done this by pursuing the contrast between action and thought on the one side, and contemplation on the other. Very briefly now I will suggest a few broad applications, leaving you to work them out, if you will; I shall keep in mind, as a touchstone, the saying I have quoted from Coleridge that "the poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity." The harvest of the senses, the exciting imagery of things seen and heard, can more easily become an object of poetic contemplation than the sometimes stubborn material of action and thought. Great poetry rejoices, however, in what is less easy. Is it a case of violent action? Homer makes us contemplate the pursuit of Hector, remote and absorbed, like the gods who watched from Olympus. Is it profound speculation? Lucretius, at the points where his philosophy bears on life and death, takes us beyond thinking, beyond verse, and holds our faculties under the spell of his sombre vision. In great tragedy action and thought alike serve the deep emotional serenity of contemplation. Shakespeare comes as near as we can get to "the poet described in ideal perfection," mastering all that violence which was so dear to the men of his time. Yet we can see how in the Elizabethan playwrights the extravagance of action tends to usurp a place above its "relative worth and dignity." Thus in Webster the poetic balance is insecure; that he poises dangerously over an abyss may perhaps make his triumphs the more exhilarating.

With the metaphysical poets the danger was extravagance, not of action, but of thought. They lived at a time when the medieval system, adorned with the curious and intricate subtleties of the schoolmen, was falling into decay. To Donne, who drank of learning with "immoderate hydroptic thirst," the upstart ideas

of science meant " rather a new knowledge than a greater knowledge ; rather a singularity in a desire of proposing something that was not known at all before, than an improving, an advancing, a multiplying of former inceptions." Taking a sceptical attitude, he remained fascinated with ideas for their own sake, whatever their relation to truth, and for this very reason was the better able to linger in contemplation of their quality. I suspect it was partly on this account that he felt his thought, in Mr. Eliot's phrase, " as immediately as the odour of a rose." His great and peculiar power, a close weaving together of intellect and sensuous imagination, was made easier by a certain perversion of thought, an estrangement from the intellectual end of knowledge. Let systematic thought crumble into ruin—the metaphysicals, rather than rebuild, would delight in making new patterns out of the fragments. In the work of less passionate poets, this dallying of thought could produce only verse of minor felicity, and it led down the pathway of conceits to a frigid and absurd dandyism.

For good and for ill, the " age of reason " followed, and for more than a century intellect, restored to a rather hard sanity, occupied the throne. To taste the difference, let us listen first to Donne as, in a letter to the Countess of Bedford, he invokes her presence at rural Twickenham :

" So in the country's beauty. To this place  
 You are the season, Madam, you the day ;  
 'Tis but a grave of spices, till your face  
 Exhale them, and a thick close bud display ;  
     Widow'd and reclused else, her sweets she enshrines  
     As China, when the sun at Brazil dines.

" Out from your chariot morning breaks at night,  
 And falsifies both computations ; so,  
 Since a new world doth rise here from your light.  
 We, your new creatures, by new reckonings go.  
     This shows that you from nature lothly stray,  
     That suffer not an artificial day."

Now listen to Pope's ' Epistle to Miss Martha Blount,' another lady leaving town for the country :

" She went to plain-work, and to purling brooks,  
 Old-fashioned halls, dull aunts, and croaking rooks ;  
 She went from Opera, Park, Assembly, Play,  
 To morning walks, and prayers three hours a day ;  
 To part her time 'twixt reading and bohea,  
 To muse, and spill her solitary tea,  
 Or o'er cold coffee trifle with a spoon,  
 Count the slow clock, and dine exact at noon."

The mastery of Pope is more evident in such lucid verse than in poetry. Classically perfect in form and phrase, he approximated not to the poet, but to the verse-writer, "described in ideal perfection," and it is by the standard of verse, which has its own greatness, that we must judge the typical products of the century. Pope's loyal disciples wrote a vast amount of verse of every quality. Occasionally they deviated into poetry of real charm, but, apart from Gray's 'Elegy,' there is little to compare with the rebel work of Collins and Kit Smart, and the reason of these two men, in an age of reason, gave way.

In recent years poetry has been linked up anew with the age of Donne. Once again, an established way of thought has been in dissolution; the philosophic pretensions of science, with its evolutionary concept of progress, have been mocked and overthrown by events. Among the remains, the welter of dislocated ideas, some modern writers have aimed at a poetry where the feeling and imagery are, so to speak, internal to the thought. Mr. Eliot, like Pope, finds significance in a coffee-spoon, but he condenses in a single packed phrase the suggestion of futility given by Pope's leisurely lines, at the same time conveying a very different tone of doomed weariness. "For I have known," says Prufrock—

" For I have known them all already, known them all:  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee-spoons ;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume ? "

It is a bitter, deliberate, individual art, of deep poetic sensibility, yet with a too self-conscious intellectualism which pulls strongly towards verse. When we are looking at the way in which a poet's "faculties" are organized, its affinity with the seventeenth century is clear.

Between Pope and the present day it would be possible to fill in the gap with more of these bare illustrative pointers. I might pass from the romantic revival to the great Victorians, and thence to the poets of the 'nineties who, finding the work of their predecessors marred by the intrusion of moral judgment, created for our contemplation a pure but minor poetry of the senses. Time and proportion, however, forbid. It will be of more value now to turn from verse and poetry as we find them on the printed page, and to give some consideration to them in the making.

## III.

" Poetry," writes Shelley, " is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say ' I will compose poetry.' The greatest poet even cannot say it." On the other hand, anyone can say " I will write verse," and a great, or even a skilled verse-writer, with practice and an assured technique, can have some confidence that his verse will be good. The will asserts itself in him ; an idea strikes him which he wants to express in a telling form ; he has an opponent whom he wants to trounce, a way of life he wants to recommend, a landscape or an incident he wants faithfully to describe. And, in order to do what he wants, he is determined to remain in command of his material, and to end much as he began, with his original conception clear in the foreground " according to the determination of the will." He does not lack emotional force, and he employs all his conscious craft of rhythm and music. But he will not let the seduction of words lead him aside from the pre-ordained path ; in that is his peculiar integrity. He is not all compact of imagination, and is by no means to be classed, like the poet, with the lunatic and the lover. There is too much controlled thought and action about him for any such similitude.

The mind works at many different levels. The verse-writer deals mainly with ideas and memories and images which are readily available, and those he can find in the upper levels. Even a philosophy or a code of morals may be readily available and will not need to be fetched from the deeps, if he has thought it out beforehand and merely wants to render it in verse. For the typical verse of the eighteenth century we could not desire anything more apt than Dryden's lively metaphor in which he likens the imagination to a " nimble spaniel," which " beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after." I suppose the spaniel must be allowed to put up an occasional bird of paradise among the partridges. And yet the Dryden metaphor cannot easily be adapted to the more passionate wit of Donne or the profundity of Wordsworth. There are, as I say, so many different levels of creation that I find the sea (from which arose life according to science, Aphrodite according to myth) a more suggestive element than land. And the verse-writer working in the upper levels may perhaps be likened to a bather dipping in and out of the sea, while the poet resembles rather a deep sea diver who stays long below the surface.

The good verse-writer, it need hardly be said, will at times become the poet. Although the mind has different levels, it works vertically as well as horizontally, and sometimes from its hidden activity an unsought image or musical phrase will rise to the surface, a gift which cannot be refused. More often, especially when the original idea is strongly emotional, the conscious mind will be drawn down to those deeper levels where, even when ignored, mental processes are darkly at work and tend mysteriously to creation. There the will ceases to assert itself and is subdued, one cannot say simply to imagination, but to an emotional state of being in which both the welding force of imagination and the critical energy of judgment are awake, operating on a flow of suggestions that seek incarnation in words. No limit can be set to the profusion of material or to the swiftness with which the mind may work upon it ; both vary enormously, as does also the sense of effort involved. The state of being which I am trying to indicate may last until a poem or a stanza has emerged in something like final shape, or it may be interrupted by a fatal visitor or, without such mishap, may simply break off and give way to more deliberate and daylight purpose ; but, so long at least as it continues, the whole mind takes a set towards the creating of a work in which it may find tranquil and selfless contemplation.

The writer can hardly do other than rejoice at the enrichment so flowing into his work, and infusing it with poetic quality. Yet he does not invariably court it, for he may wish to appeal directly to the intellect or the moral sense rather than to the contemplative imagination. If he appeals to the latter, his original idea will have lost something of its naked sharpness, its power of action, its place in the foreground ; he may be unwilling to pay the price, and he may be perfectly right. Kipling, for example, was essentially a verse-writer, having high skill as a craftsman, but lacking fineness of sensibility. He was primarily interested in action, and had little gift for contemplation or for that subtler music which can only proceed from the contemplative habit. He did not strain after poetry ; but the poetic quality breaks into his verse under the stress of rare emotion, usually coming from that serious vision of empire—so little in fashion to-day—which veins his coarser qualities with a real nobility. Poets are not often so certain of their direction as Kipling. On the other hand, they are not often so divided as a greater Victorian, George Meredith. In Meredith, though richly endowed as a poet, brain and imagination were forever at odds as to their " relative

worth," and brain had the hardihood to think, if not to say, " I will compose poetry." Much of the verse of Meredith is loaded with argument, and sometimes the beauties of Nature, though perceived with exquisite clearness, seem only to exist for the sake of the poet's hard ethical doctrine, until suddenly, as at the end of 'A Meditation under Stars,' that doctrine leads to contemplation of Earth's beauty enhanced :

" Then at new flood of customary morn,  
 Look at her through her showers,  
 Her mists, her streaming gold,  
 A wonder edges the familiar face :  
 She wears no more that robe of printed hours ;  
 Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than her flowers."

For different men the ease of communication between the upper and lower levels of mind must vary beyond reckoning. For Blake there was always a Jacob's ladder, with angels ascending and descending, but for most poets that heavenly commerce, if not rare, is intermittent. One would expect it to be so with those who are doctors or civil servants or school inspectors or dons, in whom the intellect is much busied with action or thought; and there are very few among them who would agree with Meredith in asserting the lordship of brain. You will remember what the scholar-poet Housman tells us : " Having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon—beer is a sedative to the brain, and my afternoons are the least intellectual portion of my life—I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at things around me and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once, accompanied, not preceded, by a vague notion of the poem which they were destined to form part of. Then there would usually be a lull of an hour or so, then perhaps the spring would bubble up again. I say bubble up, because, so far as I could make out, the source of the suggestions thus proffered to the brain was an abyss which I have already had occasion to mention, the pit of the stomach. When I got home I wrote them down, leaving gaps, and hoping that further inspiration might be forthcoming another day. Sometimes it was, if I took my walks in a receptive and expectant frame of mind ; but sometimes the poem had to be taken in hand and completed by the brain, which was apt to be a matter of trouble and anxiety, involving trial and disappointment and sometimes ending in failure."

How unlike this revealing confession is the theory of Poe, who scouted the idea of inspiration! Taking his 'Raven' as an example, he carries through a most elaborate analysis designed "to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem." It is possible to reject the whole long account as insincere, but I think that to do so would be mistaken. There is a theatrical, an artificial element in 'The Raven' which tarnishes it in common with most of Poe's work. I have no doubt that it was, in part, deliberately manufactured, like a verse-writer's exercise. At the same time imaginative clairvoyance can go hand in hand with ingenious manufacture, as in his story 'The Gold Bug,' and I feel quite certain that Poe ignores the vital contribution of his dream-self. Poe the schemer, in fact, could do nothing without Poe the dreamer. His work, almost always, is perilously near the banal, but through it, from unplumbed depths (far deeper than a mere "pit of the stomach"), surges the vision of a wild, unearthly, macabre imagination.

How, indeed, shall we analyse the hidden mind of the poet which the poet himself may so ignore? May not the theorist in such matters be like a man who would seek to explain the nightingale's song by examining the structure of its throat? And yet there are some truths between the merely general and the merely particular which, as I have tried to indicate, we can discern. We can accept from Keats the "innumerable compositions and decompositions" that must take place before the mind "arrives at that trembling delicate and snail-horn perception of beauty." And we can see that in the subaqueous depths images and ideas have a strangely magnetic power, drawing together things that in the common light of day are apparently most diverse. It would be an amusing and not unprofitable exercise to take as a text Wordsworth's "primrose by a river's brim," and to consider how much more than the mere flower was the primrose or celandine to Wordsworth himself, the musk rose to Keats, the spurge to Rossetti, the lily to Oscar Wilde, the snapdragon to I. H. Lawrence. Before the end of such human botanizing we might echo the hackneyed lines of Tennyson about the "flower in the crannied wall," or Alice Meynell's sonnet 'To a Daisy,' with the final question—

" what will it be to look  
From God's side even of such a simple thing ? "

The extreme variety of the poets gives something away to our guesswork. Take at opposite poles Swinburne and Hardy, and think how different must have been the inward vision of each ! For one what a rush of sonorous words and shadowy exciting presences ! For the other what still, what burdened memories ! It might seem that the poetry of Swinburne lives in the sweep arid volume of orchestral sound, liberated from the bonds of meaning. And this is a near enough approach to the truth, provided we recognize that the music does not exist separately in word and rhythm, but depends on their organization with a vague and often splendid imagery. Hardy, on the other hand, has no fine singing-ropes, and might seem to owe little to felicities of language. In his soliloquies he broods again and again on the lost happiness or unfulfilled hope, with such intensity that a particular place and time and mood, without any apparent transformation, take on the stillness, the composure of art. He, a deeply contemplative poet, rivals the verse-writer in his fidelity to the original idea. The words, falling into a strict and sometimes elaborate metrical pattern, are essentially prosy. Yet this matter-of-fact language, with its touch of formality, archaism, awkwardness, is admirably suited to Hardy's genius. Intensity of vision and a wintriness of technique are the very conditions of his power to move us. We may, indeed, in Hardy as in Swinburne, find fault as often as we like with particular words. But it is somewhat futile to complain of the general diction, the crabbed style of the one, the diffuse style of the other, for the style is inseparable from the whole poetic character of each.

And everything comes back to the poetic character. We can see it sometimes overriding the express intention or ambition of the poet. "I have," wrote Keats in April, 1818, "been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious, and a love for philosophy." The desire for a philosophic poetry was indeed recurrent with him, for he always meant to be a great poet and he had a true perception of the contribution which philosophic thought can make to imaginative stature. Yet in 1819 his true genius flowered in the sensuous poetry of the great 'Odes,' while the second 'Hyperion,' later in the same year, is but an uncertain pointer to what might have been, had his life been prolonged. In other cases philosophic or religious intention has done more than seek admission ; it has entered into the very stuff of great poetry, and yet, for all its missionary fervour, has yielded to the contemplative spirit, becoming, in Milton's phrase, "musical as is Apollo's lute." I need only remind you how

Milton himself set out in 'Paradise Lost' " to justify the ways of God to men " ; and how, despite arid disquisitions designed to that end, the majestic imagination triumphed through and over the Puritan theology. Milton certainly intended to give instruction to his readers, and both before and after his time the critics engaged in long debate whether instruction or delight were the chief aim of poetry. But the question is misconceived ; for the chief aim of poetry, as distinct from that of verse, which may instruct or improve us, lies simply in the experience, infinitely various, which poetry creates for the contemplative imagination.

In my end I have returned, with what may seem fanatical insistence, to my beginning. Yet consideration of verse and poetry in the making does, I think, confirm the distinction which I set out to draw between one and the other. Verse is the more deliberate art, in which will and brain assert themselves as directing forces ; poetry is more subtle and complex, issuing in unforeseen harmony from the deeper levels of mind, down indeed to depths which the line of our reasoning cannot fathom. Verse is to be related to thought and action, poetry (including philosophic poetry and drama) to contemplation. I have hammered at this distinction, not because life and poetic experience arrange themselves in neat divisions, but rather because they do not. There is in them such a fluidity of outline, such a continuity of endless gradations, that clear thought about them is impossible without the aid of signposts—signposts for our direction, on which one word is not to be mistaken for another. We cannot always use words precisely, and the attempt may land us in pedantry ; but we should use them as precisely as we can, when we seek to appreciate real but elusive differences, remembering that words are property our servants and not our masters, and attending always to what we discover in our hearts and in our minds.

## THE PLAYER AND HIS ART.

BY Sir JOHN MARTIN-HARVEY, LL.D., F.R.S.L.

[Read October 6th, 1942.]

You may imagine with what confidence I approach the subject of my Lecture, when I remind you of the saying of a certain French Art critic, that: "In proportion as a man understands his art he ceases to talk about it."

You see how difficult my position is. Either I know very little, in which case I fear you will spend a very dull hour ; or if I know much I should be silent, which, under the circumstances, as Euclid has it, is absurd. So, the little I know, or hope I know, I will venture to tell you, and there is so much to say that I must take warning by the prolixity of Polonius who, in order to prove that Hamlet was mad, went back to the consideration of why " day was day, night night, and time was time," till he was bidden to proceed with " more matter and less art." And so, though the art of acting is the subject of these notes, I must pass swiftly over that aspect of it which embraces the culture of the vehicle of our art, viz., our body. The actor must not accept that contempt for his vehicle of expression which St. Francis felt when he referred to " Brother Ass, my body." " Brother Ass " to the actor must be respected ; its possibilities for expression explored and trained, for it is the precious instrument without which we cannot communicate our imagination to an audience. Not an organ or a limb may be despised. The eyes, the voice, every feature of the face, every movement of the limbs, the use of every visible organ, including the nose, with its flexible nostrils, and the ears, with their largely undeveloped capacity for expression, even the movement of a leg within its ridiculous trouser can be subtly indicative of character.

" But this eternal blazon must not be " if we are to keep within the one hour's traffic of the essay. So to-day I beg your kind attention only to what that vehicle, our body, aspires to express, to analyse its methods, to probe its mysteries.

For the art I follow is still something of a mystery to me, and therein lies perhaps much of its extraordinary fascination. Why

should one, in the performance of a certain role, suddenly and involuntarily, without rehearsal, without premeditation, make a movement, utter a sound, or use a modulation, which, though unprepared, yet belongs essentially to the character one is impersonating at that moment? Whence come these involuntary flashes of expression, incidental to the feeling or environment of the moment?

That is the mystery. Garrick knew of them. Said he, "I pronounce that the greatest strokes of genius have been unknown to the actor himself, till circumstances and the warmth of the scene have sprung the mine, as much to his own surprise as that of his audience." There he left the subject, content to state the phenomenon, without pursuing any inquiry as to its origin. Talma knew of them, called them "spontaneous flashes of sensibility," "spontaneous workings in his mind," "inspirations," and there he left the question. Irving said that in the exercise of his art an actor called upon a certain "duality of mind," but went no deeper into the question. Writers, too, have referred to this same phenomenon as a power in the hands of which they have performed the work of artistic creation involuntarily, helpless in the grasp of a *force majeure*. Newbolt said he received what he called a *bonus*, something beyond his conscious effort. Shaw says there are moments when he cannot control his pen (for ill and well, we can believe that!). What is this force?

I venture to think that some, if not the whole explanation of it may be found in the conclusions of psychic research. As in hypnotic suggestion the sub-consciousness appears to be ready at the call of a powerful will to answer in character with an individual habit of mind and experience of which, in its normal moments, it knows or remembers nothing, so in the interpretations of the actor, the "conceit" he has forced his own soul to may strike flashes of truth from a lower consciousness, of which the interpreter is himself, at the moment at least, ignorant.

Man is allowed to be microcosmic physically; is it too much to assume that he is so mentally? The experiments of Colonel de Rochas, as referred to by M. Maeterlinck in his work 'Our Eternity,' prove that we are ourselves composed of innumerable ancestors. Are these "flashes of truth," these "inspirations," we are considering anything else but involuntary expressions of inherited dormant personalities, or as Ingres calls them, "submerged tracts of our personality which are fetched up by the powerful self-suggestion of an artist, in the ecstatic moment of creation, out of the slumbering generations which have gone to the making

of his concrete ego ? " I know of no other way of accounting for inspiration—that rare but undeniable expression of something beyond our control. And lest the theory I venture to suggest should seem fantastic, I would remind you that Samuel Butler held similar views as to the operation of buried identities, and though these opinions were scoffed at during his life, there is now a more general acceptance of the theory of the influence of former identities existing in the ego.

I must confine myself this afternoon, however, to less speculative lines of thought. Let us consider the methods of various actors at their work.

Here we have Talma in his discourse upon ' The Actor's Art.' He says: " By repeated exercises he enters deeply into the emotions, and his speech acquires an accent proper to the personage he has to represent. This done, he goes to the theatre not only to give theatrical effect to his studies, but also to yield himself to the ' spontaneous flashes of sensibility ' and all the emotions which it involuntarily produces in him. What does he then do ? In order that his inspirations may not be lost, his memory, in the silence of repose, recalls the accent of his voice, the expression of his features, his action—in a word, the spontaneous workings in his mind, which he had suffered to have free course, and in fact everything which, in the moments of his exaltation, contributed to the effect he had produced. His intelligence then passes all these means in review, connecting them, and fixing them in his memory, to re-employ them at pleasure in succeeding representations. These impressions are often so evanescent, that, on retiring behind the scenes, he must repeat to himself what he had been playing, rather than what he had to play." I was tempted to challenge the great French actor's statement here, for in my experience the actor does not usually recall the effect his emotions produce in him, but rather that he notes those effects at the moment of their expression. I find, however, that in another part of his essay he says that he at times found himself " making a rapid and fugitive observation on the alteration of his voice, and on a certain spasmodic vibration it contracted in tears "—during his performance he obviously means.

Surely this is a curious thing. That a man will mature his interpretations through an observation of what his own sub-consciousness dictates ! And what complete command over the sensibilities of his audience does such a method presuppose. What consummate works of art must have been such performances when

repeated, say, for the hundredth time. Remember that during these hundred performances his original conception had been deepening, the expression of it maturing, becoming more elaborate, more perfect, and then (in parenthesis) let us reflect upon the adequacy of criticizing a first night's performance, and the popular opinion that the frequent repetition of a certain role renders its expression mechanical and flat ! Ladies and Gentlemen, an interpretation does not become a mature expression till it has been repeated many, many times. For an interpretation, like every other created thing, has its birth, its adolescence, its maturity, and—in obedience to the law of nature—alas ! its decay.

We must assume, of course, that (as in Talma's case) the artist's critical faculty always travels side by side with his creative faculty; for without such proportionate growth of the critical sense, no artist can develop. Without such growth the point would soon be reached, when in saying of his work " that is well enough," stagnation only has been achieved. Whereas, in the despair with which we fail to realize our conception, lies the consolation that the ideal, if unattainable, is still before us. A great poet once confessed to me that if he ever realized his limitations, there would be nothing before him but suicide. That was the greatly gifted and deeply mourned John Davidson.

Therefore, these two faculties, creative and critical, or, as they are called in Talma's essay, " sensibility " and " intelligence," must always remain evenly balanced. " Evenly balanced ! " Ah ! there's the rub. For in that " creative faculty," as well as joy, lies peril. You may create a being, but you cannot always govern his actions. If you can give him a vertebral column he will walk ; if you can give him the breath of life he will sometimes defy his creator. Beware, with Frankenstein, of that monster, your own creature ! He has a will of his own ; he is detached from his creator, and will act and think for himself. I will go so far as to say that the detachment may be so complete that the creator of a character on the stage may watch his offspring with all his critical sense and will still be sometimes bewildered by what he does. I recall the experience of an actor which illustrates this independence of mind on the part of a character represented. There was a moment when my friend, impersonating one of life's failures, was brought face to face with his successful rival in an affair of love. Now " the failure " (as we will call him) at a certain point looked long and hard at his rival and said nothing. The pause was involuntary, and his

silence puzzling to his creator ; he was at a loss to imagine what his creature was thinking about, and it was not until this strange pause had occurred in many succeeding representations, that it suddenly dawned upon the actor who was interpreting him, that this creature was realizing in that long and searching gaze all his own shortcomings in the vivid light which was at that moment thrown upon them by the proximity of his successful rival.

There was an instance where a " spontaneous flash of sensibility " could be safely used at succeeding interpretations. The actor's creature was right—he generally is—but not always.

One must learn to keep a wary eye on these re-created beings. There are some of so turbulent and so headstrong a nature that they will lead their interpreters into all manner of exaggerations. I had a curious experience of this in performing the part of Lieutenant Reresby in 'The Breed of the Treshams.' At first he was little more than the sort of romantic abstraction one meets with in a score of " cloak and sword " dramas. But, after a time, he began to express himself as a more strongly marked identity. Raffish habits acquired in the armies in which he had served, the mien of a seventeenth century " tough," the obliquity of mind which so often develops in the soldier of fortune, gradually appeared in the representation, till the authors of the play and I myself were shocked. Here was a real live man, expressing nothing that was inconsistent with the author's words, yet a creature much more vital. The authors were so horrified by what they considered a prostitution of their hero that they threatened to cancel my right to the performance of the play. In deference to their demand that I should moderate these violent traits in his character I tried to do so, but it was too late ! The authors had builded better than they knew. Reresby was a living identity and defied me ! And it was with very partial success that I tried to follow Talma's advice to select in the " quiet of repose only such flashes of sensibility as should ennoble and dignify my creation," for there was little of the " noble " or the " dignified " in that rapsallion.

I cannot help thinking that the blood of many a wild and adventurous Essex privateer and old letters of marque men on one side, and the oblique morals of remote Welsh forebears on the other, combined to express themselves in that violent Galliard.

To return now to Talma's essay. You will notice that he comes to the theatre (and he means, of course, that he comes there when the audience is assembled to witness his work), not only

to give theatrical effect to his studies, but also to yield himself to his "spontaneous flashes of sensibility," and here arises another important reservation. Upon the quality of the audience, upon the degree of sensibility or sympathy possessed by this body of people, depends the extent to which these "flashes of sensibility" can be emitted. One might say, I think, that if a people gets the king it deserves, the government it deserves, so will an audience get the acting it deserves. Whether an actor can give the highest and best that is in him depends largely, if not wholly, upon his audience. It is only when the souls of audience and actor are, as it were, fused together, that the "spontaneous flashes of sensibility" can appear. You remember Coleridge's description of the elder Kean's acting in 'Richard III'? That it was "like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning." Such a result can only be attained when the audience is willing and prepared to be impressed. When they come, in other words, as ready to give as to receive. Let the audience bring its sympathetic attention to the theatre, and, if possible, without its intelligence being obfuscated by the process of digesting too heavy a dinner! And then let it resign itself to the emotions brought forth by the play, then, and then only, can the actor gain that ascendancy over the minds of the spectators which will result in those moments of sublime emotion which remain engraved upon our memories for a lifetime. In such a moment audience and actor are fused in one. In such a moment one emotion possesses every soul in the building. The intelligence of every being is held in suspense, with one exception—that of the actor who has called the emotion forth. No matter how deeply moved he himself may be at that moment, his intelligence, his critical faculty, must be doubly alive. Real tears may be coursing down his cheeks, a real terror may be congealing his blood, but his critical intelligence is alert; he must calculate to the shadow of a shade of time how long that moment will last, for no one knows so well as he what peril lies in the very tensivity of that instant. A programme flutters from the gallery, a door bangs, a passing motor hoots, a thoughtless smoker strikes a match which illuminates the whole dark interior of the auditorium, and the exquisite poise is lost!

This unity of soul existing between audience and actor is one of the most precious consolations of our work. Who of us but treasures in his remembrance the ineradicable impressions of such moments? One arises in my mind. It is when my beloved master, Sir Henry Irving, played 'Charles the First.' The last

act is reached, and nothing remains to that sweet, misguided Stuart but to part from his Queen and children, and go forth to the scaffold. Cromwell's offers of compromise have been rejected by the King, and the usurper, apostrophising his monarch as "Thou shadow of a King," leaves the stage, consigning his master to his fate. Another scene, and the "shadow of a King" enters and we see indeed the shadow of Charles. The sweet dignity, the patient resignation, the quiet but unquenchable belief in the holiness of his anointment, shine about him like a dim aureole, as about a being of another world. Faded, colourless, unreal, how is it that, as he closes the door behind him unattended, unannounced, how is it that this wraith of kingship breathes such new humility about him? How is it that he seems already to wear that "incorruptible crown," in which not all his misfortunes and common human mistakes could dim his belief? I wonder if the author who wrote in his manuscript "Enter Charles" conceived such a spectacle of purged suffering as Sir Henry Irving presented at that moment? Or was it created by the deep sympathy of the actor for human error, evolved perhaps from the remembrance of some moment of personal emotion when, like Charles, he had bit the dust of disaster and touched the depths of worldly ruin? We cannot say, but my experience of theatre management, with its alternations of triumph and disaster, might well have given Irving the inspiration for that moment, which the marvellous command of his art he possessed would illustrate. The change in his costume from the lustrous velvet of former days to the colourless linsey he now wore, the old elegance of his bright Cavalier locks now thinned and greying, hanging in a strange tail over his meagre lace collar, conveying such a poignant note of neglect, and the air of humble but dignified acquiescence in departed attendance, as he opened and closed the door while turning his back to the audience. It was an imperishable moment, illuminating the power of creative imagination aided by a faultless technique.

This is not an instance of occasional inspiration flashing from unsuspected heredity "in the warmth of the scene" as Garrick expresses it, but the use Irving could make of a personal sorrow—a valuable and poignant fountain of inspiration, and one which my friend Cyril Maude has confessed to having used on occasion.

Another remembrance of Irving arises in my mind—Becket. Becket is aware that he is doomed, that the King's "men" are almost upon him; that in the struggle for his order he has been defeated, the work of his life a failure, and his mind wanders

back, in the few moments of mortal existence left him, to his mother's house, to a little Norman maid who died of leprosy, to a half-remembered picture of mother-love exemplified by a water-fowl sitting on her stone-cold eggs, and there arises before his eyes a vision of possible companionship of which the death of the little Norman maid perhaps deprived him ; and of which, at the moment of solitude preceding his martyrdom, he stands so greatly in need ; a vision of the faith which kept the mother-hen true to her instinct, in spite of the impossible.

These effects are not accidental; they are conjured up in our imagination by the power of the actor, who, amid a sympathetic audience, can project his own mental vision upon our own.

Let me refer to a few more treasured remembrances of my master, treasured the more deeply now because the time has come, alas ! when these are remembrances only. And perhaps I may venture to say that no one can have appreciated the delicacies, the subtleties of his art so keenly as those who had the privilege of acting with him. I have seen, in the death throes of the old tyrant Louis XT, his eyes positively glaze as the *rigor mortis* froze into immobility the hands which he stretched forth to clutch his crown for the last time. When, as Leseurques in 'The Lyons Mail,' he is under examination for a crime of which he is innocent, I have seen upon him the mantling cheek, the smarting eyes, and the sickly smile of the obviously guilty ; superb touches, for as an eminent judge has pointed out, the really innocent usually appear the most guilty.

Who does not call to mind the curious sense of tragic loneliness which enveloped his 'Hamlet,' and the under-current of fatal hesitancy in his 'Charles the First' during the famous interview with Cromwell, when one was so painfully conscious that the artistic, pleasure-loving Stuart was confronting his doom ? And so might instances be multiplied for the hallowed remembrance of us all. And I make no apologies for my frequent references to the great work of Sir Henry Irving, knowing that they are made before sympathetic listeners. Speaking personally, I can say what Thomas Davies, one of the actors under Garrick, said of his master : " I never can speak of him but with idolatry, and have ever looked upon it as one of the greatest blessings of my life that I have lived in the days of Irving."

These few instances I have recalled are the " touches of nature " which, indeed, " make the whole world kin." These are messages from his own soul, which a great artist sends forth to others for the beautifying of this work-a-day world.

I say, Ladies and Gentlemen, from his own soul, for a little reflection must show us that the actor can express nothing but himself. And here I am tempted to cross swords with an illustrious critic who said in a lecture given before the Royal Institution on the subject of the actor's art: " It is considered by some that to express ideas not one's own, and to impersonate others, was to resign the 'captaincy of the soul'." What the particular effect upon the soul, the expression of ideas not one's own would result in, I will not stop to inquire, further than to ask: " Does the barrister lose 'the captaincy of his soul' because his duty is to induce a jury to discharge the prisoner whom he may suspect to be a guilty man? Did Paderewski lose 'the captaincy of his soul' because he interpreted Beethoven?" I fear to pursue this line of thought would lead us too far astray, and draw us into regions where angels themselves might fear to tread.

But I do say that to describe the art of acting as the "expression of ideas not one's own" is to give a misleading impression of our beautiful and complex art: that art which Voltaire described as "the most beautiful—the most difficult—the most rare." An art in which we, in ourselves, may assemble the expression of all other arts. Of sculpture by movement and studied pose, of painting when we reproduce the personages of bygone days, of music and literature when we speak in verse or feel and voice the cadences of fine prose. But their use must be an expression of these arts as *he* sees them and he must express *himself* in their use.

Shakespeare has described the process once for all—we need only lay his words to heart when he speaks, as Hamlet, of the player who has "forced his soul so to his own conceit." Could anything be clearer? If there is no self-identification on the part of an actor with the character he is interpreting, there can be no artistry.

The actor is an interpreter not of words only, but of a soul; to that soul he must force his own conceit before he can interpret it; and there is assuredly no fear of his losing its captaincy in the interpretation of humanity. You might as well fear for the portrait painter losing the captaincy of *his* soul, because he interprets humanity through his paint and his palette.

It is wholly in the identification of an actor with the character he is rendering that his claim to be a creative artist consists, and the greater the variety of character he can express through himself the greater actor he is. We speak of Shakespeare as the greatest author, because his scope for the creation of diverse

character was, and is, the greatest known—a " Lear " at one moment, a " Christopher Sly " the next. We speak of Garrick as probably the greatest actor, because his artistic achievement was, as far as we can judge, the widest yet known. " Macbeth " one night, " Hamlet " the next, the evening concluding with " Abel Drugger " ! And in taking Garrick and Shakespeare, I am taking consummate artists, among whom I would certainly include Irving : below these supreme figures, we then decline upon artists of smaller scope, fine artists, undoubtedly, but of a more limited range. Let me repeat, the actor, the artist, can express nothing but himself. So soon as he endeavours to express an idea not his own, or which he has failed to make his own, he ceases to be an artist ; that is, he ceases to identify himself with his creation, no matter what form that creation may take, whether in iron, stone, in paint, in marble, on paper, or by the vehicle at the disposal of the actor, viz. his own muscular and nervous system. The measure of an actor's greatness will be the depth and completeness with which he can identify himself with the greatest number of creatures to be interpreted. Neither Shakespeare nor Garrick ever knew the man Hamlet; but the one created an immortal being in his imagination, using the vehicle of pen and ink to transfer it to paper, and Garrick identified himself with the poet's creation, using the media of voice, person, gesture, and facial play, to express the creature he had imagined. But, you may say, an actor cannot possibly be himself, a murderer such as " Macbeth " one moment, or a saintly martyr such as " Savonarola " the next. Why not ? Shakespeare drew two equally divergent characters to the point of self-identification. For a man's imagination (whether of good or evil) is as much part of himself as are his other gifts. A creative artist, therefore, projects these " conceits " of his soul.

Charles Dickens in his preface to ' A Tale of Two Cities ' said that he had so far verified the truth of his work in that story, that he had himself experienced the emotions and suffered with his characters.

Talma, also, enlightens us here. " As to the means of delineating odious characters and vile passions," he says; " the actor paints them by analogy. In fact, amongst the irregular passions which disgrace humanity, there are some which possess points of contact with those which ennoble it. Thus the sentiment of a noble emulation enables us to define what envy may feel; the just resentment of wrongs show us in miniature the excesses of **hatred and** vengeance. Reserve and prudence enable us to

paint dissimulation. The desires, the torments, and the jealousies of love enable us to conceive all its frenzies and initiate us into the secret of its crimes. These combinations, these comparisons, are the result of a rapid and imperceptible labour of sensibility, united with intelligence, which secretly operates on the actor, as on the poet, and which reveals to him what is foreign in his own nature—the viler passions of guilty and corrupt minds."

There are, too, other sources upon which an actor may build his interpretations. There are the lessons taught us by observation and by actual personal experience. A remarkable instance of the former, perhaps, was Garrick's source of inspiration for his study of the madness of Lear, as related in Mrs. Parson's delightful book, 'Garrick and his Circle.' "Garrick," it seems, "had been acquainted with an unfortunate man in Lemon Street, Goodman's Fields, who, playing one day at an upper window with his two-year-old child, accidentally let it spring from his arms, and fall into a flagged area. The child was killed, and from that moment the miserable father lost speech and reason. He passed the remainder of his existence in going to a window, playing in imagination with a child, dropping it, then bursting into tears, and filling his house with shrieks of anguish. Afterwards he would sit down, pensive and still, and at times look slowly round as if imploring compassion." "There it was," Garrick used to say, "that I learned to *imitate* madness: I copied nature and to that I owed my success as King Lear."

Perhaps the most remarkable of such *imitations* was that which Edmund Kean is said to have used with such startling effect. When he was quite a young man, and a poor strolling player, he and a comrade, tramping their way from one town to another in search of an engagement, hungry and footsore, asked a rustic who was working in a field to direct them on their journey. The rustic was a boor and, making a guess at their calling, made some offensive remark about "strolling players." This plunged Kean's young friend into a frenzy of wrath. His rage was so terrible that he could not articulate, he foamed at the mouth, the veins in his neck and forehead swelled up into ropes, his face became black and he fell down in the field in a convulsion of passion. Years afterwards, when Kean came to play Sir Giles Overreach in 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts,' he remembered and reproduced this rage of his friend with such appalling effect that the poet Byron, who was in the theatre, fainted at the spectacle, as many others are said to have done; and women not infrequently were taken shrieking from the theatre.

But personal experience, perhaps, is the greatest teacher of all. Remember Macready said he never could play *Virginius* until he had lost his daughter. And Bannister said of John Philip Kemble, with whom he was contemporary, that he was never pathetic because he had no children. A heavy price is paid for the possession of pathos. Did Macready think its possession worth the price he had paid by the loss of his daughter? Did Polus of Aegina think it worth the price when he moved an Athenian audience to the profound grief he had recalled in himself by carrying before him, in the role of *Electra*, the ashes of his son?

One thing seems certain: the heights of tragedy can never be scaled save by those whose adventurous spirit courts the sorrows, the disasters, the difficulties of life, save by those who break from the placid comforts of a middle course. What does Duse say? " Interpretation is the evidence of growth and knowledge, the latter, too often, through sorrow—that great teacher." I heard Lord Rowton once say to a lady whom he had just seen perform in a grim and pathetic little play: " My dear, I hope your interpretation of such sorrow is not the result of experience? " But his fear was right; the lady was face to face at that moment with unspeakable difficulties and sorrows of her own.

Finally, let us not forget among the sources of inspiration we have considered that other great teacher in the understanding of humanity, our own dormant possibilities. Who can tell what possibilities, repressed or undeveloped, lie but half realized, among the depths of our complex nature. Has not Goethe said that " there is something in the heart of every man, which, if we knew, would make us hate him " ? Faint exhalations from that something, however, will rise at times, as we all know, which, fanned by chance, circumstance or opportunity, might make monsters of us; fortunate for us if these indications but rouse and develop the character to repress them, or, if we are artists, but enlarge our understanding and help us to interpret humanity.

It seems to me, Ladies and Gentlemen, I can say little more. And if you are curious as to this mysterious art of acting which we love and respect so greatly, will you not let those tell you of it who understand it, perhaps a little? Those who have won eminence in it, and with that eminence, respect. Will you not learn from an Irving, a Talma, or a Duse?

Hear what that incomparable Italian actress says: " If the sight of the blue skies fills you with joy, if a blade of grass springing up in the fields has power to move you, if the simple things of nature have a message that you understand, rejoice, for your

soul is alive ; and then aspire to learn that other truth, that the least of what you receive can be divided. To help, to continually help and share, that is the sum of all knowledge ; that is the meaning of art." Hear her again :

"The artist actor gives the best of himself; through his interpretations, he unveils his inner soul. By these interpretations only should he be accepted and judged. When the final curtain drops between him and his audience, nothing can be said or done, add or detract from his performance. His work is done, his message is delivered."

It is a pity that these messages must cease with the actor, when he no longer appears publicly in the exercise of his calling ; but, I think perhaps too much stress has been laid upon this. That his messages are heard no more when the time comes for a little " folding of the hands to sleep " is a fate he shares, in a certain degree, with all human effort. How many ideal forms in perishable substance lie disintegrating in the dust of the antique world ? How many a mote glistening in the sunbeam once cohered with other atoms in the expression of some beauty conveyed by art or craft in the long distant ages. The desire to leave behind us some tangible proof of our existence, our thought, or our feeling is human indeed ; but we may reflect that of all the inspiring eloquence of bygone orators, divines, nothing remains but the dry bones of words. And for the actor, the gratitude and affection of his fellows bestowed upon him during his lifetime, and during the exercise of his art, is surely more than compensation for the *comparative* obscurity which wraps him when his work is done—a guerdon we would not exchange for an aeon of posthumous fame.

I will confess that the writing of that last phrase gave me pleasure. But it's not quite honest, for the great actor is so blessed that he gets it both ways, tangible proof during the exercise of his art, and in the thought that his influence is not lost after his death. " No *noble* influence is ever lost." In vindication of that may I conclude with some words of Sir Theodore Martin's on this very question : " The power of the actor's genius, which has been reflected to him in the palpable emotion or ringing plaudits of his audience, has opened to them a world of poetry and emotion, which but for him they would never have known. His so potent art has awakened them to a knowledge of their own hearts—shown them noble lights in their own souls, and in doing this it has communicated impulses which may exercise a lasting influence for good on the lives of thousands. Not

in vain has he lived who owes such success to having wrought with a pure aim to turn to the highest account the special gift of genius." Words which recall to me the conviction which that wayward and adorable genius Mrs. Patrick Campbell once imparted to me that " God is in the Theatre."

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