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NEW STUDIES IN LITERATURE

BY

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PREFACE.

THESE studies, chosen from a larger number which appeared during a series of years in *The Fortnightly Review*, are reprinted with the permission of the proprietors of that periodical.

The portion of the volume which deals with Goethe is derived from an examination of Goethe's mind and art, to which I gave much time and pains, but which still remains incomplete. So much new material has recently come to light, so much awaits publication, and so great has been the industry of German scholars, that delay seemed advisable. Certain fragments of my study were thrown into the shape of addresses delivered as President of the English Goethe Society; one—that on Goethe's friendship with Schiller—was read before the Manchester Goethe Society.

The article on "Literary Criticism in France" was given as one—I believe the first—of the recently established Taylorian lectures at Oxford. That on Edmond Scherer was written swiftly, but with the

advantage of an intimate acquaintance with Scherer's writings, on the occasion of his death. I have left it unaltered.

The studies of the poetry of John Donne and of Mr Meredith attempt to make access to part of the work of two difficult writers, one belonging to the past, one happily to the present, more easy for their readers. They are both writers who in their verse attract and repel, and finally give a courageous explorer an ample reward of impulse, thought, or beauty The article on Mr Bridges is modest in its aim, seeking only to extend the circle of those who enjoy that fine poet's work, lyrical and dramatic, by presenting an *aperçu* rather than what is now sometimes termed an "appreciation." The essay on Coleridge endeavours to bring out the humanity more than the romance of his poetry, and may be viewed as a supplement to the work of other critics.

In the article on Fabre d'Eglantine's diary I indulge the pleasure experienced by one who has been a somewhat fortunate "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles."

The article on the teaching of English Literature notes various points in method which it seemed useful to bring before a College class. I should like it to

be read in connection with a paper called "The Interpretation of Literature" in my "Transcripts and Studies."

The Introduction is a venture towards expressing certain hopes and fears for literature at the present day, especially as those hopes and fears are connected with the democratic tendencies and the scientific movement of our century. I glance also at what may be styled the separatist tendency, not in politics, but in literature. It has been asserted that since I wrote this article some literary errors against which I pleaded have become less prevalent. I should be glad to think that this is true; but I do not believe that my exhortations and warnings are even now altogether untimely.

E. D.

IN MEMORIAM

M. D.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHITHER is literature tending? Our weather prophets, who announce the arrival of storms and calms, with all the advantages of telegraphic stations from Haparanda to Lisbon, do not venture to predict what a month or a year will bring forth. They are well pleased if they can foretell the temper of a day; and it sometimes happens that the gale promised for Wednesday has got lost on Tuesday amid the Atlantic, or the expected sunshine travelling from Spain refuses in a sulk to cross the narrow seas from Calais to Dover. The science of spiritual meteorology has not yet found its Dalton or its Humboldt; the law of the tides of the soul has not yet been expressed in a formula. Rather the problems have increased in complexity and become more difficult of solution, as the forces of humanity have grown in energy and expanded in range, as they have differentiated themselves into new forms and advanced in the rapidity of their interaction.

In an article on "Victorian Literature," published in 'Transcripts and Studies," I spoke of the literature of our time as being that of a period of spiritual and social revolution, a revolution not the less real or important because it is being conducted without violence. And of the forces effecting this revolution, I spoke of democracy and science as among the most potent. Upon these

forces we can certainly reckon; but when we ask the question, How are they related to literature? the answer is neither prompt nor sure.

Men of letters reply as might be expected from the members of an intellectual ruling class, possessed by the fear of change. We all remember how Tocqueville long since described the levelling tendency of a democratic age and the tyranny of the majority: "In America the majority draws a formidable circle around thought. Within the determined limits a writer is free; but woe to him if he should pass beyond them." Tocqueville's tone of discouragement was echoed by M. Scherer, who did not hesitate to assert that democracy is for ever doomed and devoted to mediocrity: "The general level rises with democracy; the average of comfort, of knowledge, perhaps even of morality, is higher; on the other hand, and by a parallel movement, all that is superior is lowered, and the average of which I speak is the result of the lowering of the minority as well as of the elevation of the masses." M. Renan employed his exquisite literary skill to press home the indictment. In the French Revolution, he tells us, lay a germ of evil which was to introduce the reign of mediocrity and feebleness, the extinction of every great initiative, a seeming prosperity, but a prosperity the conditions of which are self-destructive. And M. Paul Bourget, representing a younger generation of men of letters, in a volume of "Studies" published not long since, speaks of modern society as little favourable to the development of very intense or very vigorous personalities—"pareille sur ce point à toutes les soci-

démocratiques." These witnesses are summoned from the most democratic nation of Europe. To their testimony we may add the word of an eminent thinker of our own country, Sir Henry Maine. A very wide suffrage, he took pains to assure us, cannot fail to produce a mischievous form of intellectual conservatism. It would certainly have prohibited the spinning-jenny, the power-loom, and the threshing-machine; it would have prevented the adoption of the Gregorian calendar; it would have proscribed the Roman Catholics; it would have proscribed the Dissenters; it would have restored the Stuarts.

All this sounds of dreadful omen for the future; but is all this true? Are new inventions prohibited in the United States? Has Mr Edison's house been destroyed by the mob? Is diversity of religious opinions a thing unknown in democratic America or democratic France or democratic England? Have the writings of Mr Frederic Harrison been burnt by the common hangman? Did the author of the "Vie de Jésus" fail to find an audience?

If democracy means anything it means a career open to all talents; it means, therefore, a great addition to the stock of vigorous characters and the play of individual minds. The peasant of the feudal period, with rare exceptions, remained of necessity a peasant to the end of his days; his little environment of a few square miles furnished all the ideas that exercised his slow-stirring brain. Had Lincoln been a rail-splitter in mediæval England he would probably have split rails faithfully and well from boyhood to old age. Had

Richard Arkwright practised the barber's art six hundred years ago he would have been enrolled in the guild of Preston barbers, and there would certainly have been no spinning-frame for Sir Henry Maine's stupid democracy to destroy; had his genius shown itself in the invention of an improved shaving-machine, its use would not improbably have been forbidden by the jealousy of the guild. The fact is that if the predominant power of a few great minds is diminished in a democracy, it is because, together with such minds, a thousand others are at work contributing to the total result. Instead of a few great captains cased in armour or clothed in minever wielding the affairs of State and Church, we have many vigorous captains of industry, captains of science, captains of education, captains of charity and social reform. It is surely for the advantage of the most eminent minds that they should be surrounded by men of energy and intellect who belong neither to the class of hero-worshippers nor to the class of *valets-de-chambre.*

The truth seems to be that with an increased population and the multiplicity of interests and influences at play on men, we may expect a greater diversity of mental types in the future than could be found at any period in the past. The supposed uniformity of society in a democratic age is apparent, not real; artificial distinctions are replaced by natural differences; and within the one great community exists a vast number of smaller communities, each having its special intellectual and moral characteristics. In the few essentials of social order the majority rightly has its way, but within

certain broad bounds, which are fixed, there remains ample scope for the action of a multitude of various minorities. Every thinker may find a hearing from a company of men sufficiently large to give him sympathy and encouragement. The artist who pursues ideal beauty and the artist who studies the naked brutalities of life has each a following of his own. The sculptor who carves a cherry-stone draws to himself the admirers of such delicate workmanship; he who achieves a colossus is applauded by those who prefer audacity of design. When the court gave its tone to literature there might have been a danger of uniformity in letters; when literature was written for "the town" its type might be in some measure determined; but the literature of a great people, made up of ploughmen and sailors, shopkeepers and artists, mechanics and *dilettanti*, priests and lawyers, will be as various as are the groups of men who seek in books for knowledge, recreation, or delight.

Let us not imagine that any form of government or any arrangements of society will produce men of genius. When they happen to be born men of genius play their part in the world, but of their coming we can still say no more than that the wind bloweth where it listeth. We have fallen into an idle way of speaking of a poet or an artist as if he were a product of his age; philosophers have provided us with a formula—the race, the *milieu*, and the moment—by which to explain his nature and origin. And so we cheat ourselves with theories and with words. We may, however, reasonably hope that from a population of thirty millions, more

brains of superior size and quality will come into the world than from a population of ten millions, or twenty. And undoubtedly the chance that such brains will be developed and matured is better among a people educated and intellectually alive than among a people ignorant and lethargic. Here surely are some unquestionable facts to set against the desponding phrases of men of letters who talk of democracy as devoted to mediocrity, and foredoomed to intellectual sterility.

But if there be just grounds for hope, there are also certain dangers which must needs cause apprehension. At a time when vast multitudes of imperfectly educated readers make their demands for instruction and amusement, there is danger that the merely utilitarian or the merely commercial view of literature may prevail. Talents and energy are indeed well employed in making knowledge easily accessible to a great population. When an eminent scholar produces his handbook or primer, which circulates by tens of thousands, we can have no feeling but one of gratitude and gladness. It is well that, by skilful engineering, an abundant supply of good water should be brought to our crowded cities from lake or river, and that every house should have its tap. The projector of a popular series of useful books deserves his reward as a successful engineer in the province of science or literature; he must surely be a busy, intelligent, and active man. But what were all his engineering works without the river or the lake? There, in solitary spaces of the hills, far from the stir and smoke, amid the dews and mists, under the lonely blue by day and the stars and winds by night, the streams have

collected which descend as a blessing to the city and the plain.

> "Child of the clouds, remote from every taint
> Of sordid industry thy lot is cast;
> Thine are the honours of the lofty waste."

These useless places on the heights where no plough is driven and no harvest waves, enrich the life of man no less than do the richest fields of corn or vine.

Without assuming the airs of the "superior person," we cannot but note in our newspapers and the humbler periodicals of the day some effects not altogether admirable of the democratising of literature. We enter a railway carriage; everyone is reading, and the chances are that everyone is filling the vacuity of his mind with something little, if at all, better than sheer emptiness of thought. Only a prig would expect to find the occupant of a railway carriage lost in the study of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," or Spinoza's "Ethics." But the railway novel of twenty or thirty years ago, which had some literary merit, some coherence of narrative, some grace of feeling, has of late been superseded to a great extent, and in its place we commonly find the pennyworth of a scandalous chronicle, or some hebdomadal collection of jests, flavoured according to the taste of the buyer, with much heavy vulgarity or with a spice of appetising indecency. In order that no demand should be made on sustained attention, the old leading article or essay is in great measure displaced, and a series of dislocated and disjointed paragraphs or sentences fill its room. The mind of the reader is paralysed rather than exercised. Our guides to health

have advised persons who take an interest in their digestive processes to bestow two-and-thirty bites on each morsel of food. The caterers nowadays provide us with a mincemeat which requires no chewing, and the teeth of a man may in due time become as obsolete as those which can still be perceived in the fœtal whale. Will the great epic of the democratic period, its "Diviner Comedy" and its "New Paradise Regained," be composed in the form of poetical tit-bits? Composed—or should we not rather say decomposed; and is not this new vermiculated style that of a literature of decomposition?

Let us rather hope that the multitude of readers, and especially of young readers, will by-and-by find their way to better things. The vast circulation of such a series as Cassell's "National Library," in which the best of reading can be got for threepence, or of Routledge's "Universal Library," or Scott's "Camelot Series," proves that already there exists a popular appetite for what is admirable in literature. Indeed it may be questioned whether the owners of luxurious libraries often turn their attention to some of the works now bought, as we must suppose, by the young mechanic or apprentice of the shop, who amongst the master-pieces of imaginative literature will find in one or other of the series just named Bacon's "Wisdom of the Ancients" and Dante's "Banquet," More's "Utopia," and Campanella's "City of the Sun," Brown's "Religio Medici," and the stoical teaching of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus.

One of the chief intellectual infirmities of democracy,

and one which has often attracted notice, is the passion for abstractions. We know what a part metaphysical abstractions played in the great French Revolution. There were greeds and interests and hatreds, indeed, for which abstract ideas and eloquent phrases sometimes provided a decent veil; but there was also, and especially in the bright opening days of the Revolution, a genuine delight in what we may term, as we please, either "glittering generalities," or in Emerson's indignant correction of that expression, "shining ubiquities." Emerson's countrymen, the people of America, "font beaucoup plus souvent usage que les Anglais," observes Tocqueville, "des idées générales et s'y complaisent bien davantage." Democracy, says M. Scherer, is profoundly idealistic. It disdains to study the actual nature of things; it has the quality of exciting immoderate fervours of hope. It lives upon a few simple ideas; but in truth, "simple ideas are sterile ideas." Not always sterile, I would reply; for good or for evil the simple ideas of the French Revolution have helped to transform the face of modern Europe. Yet, undoubtedly a chief duty of the thinker and the man of letters at the present time, and in the coming years, must be to save the democracy, if possible, from what is unfruitful in its own way of thinking and feeling. As topics arise which demand the attention of the people, it will be necessary to challenge the current notions, the current phrases, and the popular sentiments; it will be necessary to ply the public, willing or unwilling, with exact knowledge and well-considered thoughts. The state of half-culture which seizes with enthusiasm upon

a general principle, regardless of its limitations or relations to other principles, and which is therefore full of impetuosity and self-confidence, at once purblind and bold, is a state as dangerous as we can well conceive. We must endeavour to meet this half-culture with a culture less incomplete, trained to exact methods of thought and observant of the details of fact.

This passion for intellectual abstractions when transferred to the literature of imagination becomes a passion for what is grandiose and vague in sentiment and in imagery; in religion it becomes what Tocqueville noticed as characteristic of democratic societies, a tendency to pantheistic forms of faith. The great laureate of European democracy, Victor Hugo, exhibits at once the democratic love of abstract ideas, the democratic delight in what is grandiose (as well as what is grand) in sentiment, and the democratic tendency towards a poetical pantheism. An acute French critic, whose early death we must deplore, M. Émile Hennequin, thus exhibits in tabular form some of those themes for which Victor Hugo had a special predilection.

"*Sujets abstraits.*

(*a*) Vers à propos de rien, sujets nuls ;
(*b*) Sujets indifférents, vers à propos de tout, versatilité ;
(*c*) Développement de lieux communs ;
(*d*) Humanitarisme, socialisme, optimisme, idéalisme, et panthéisme vagues ;
(*e*) Aspects grandioses, mystérieux ou bizarres, de la légende, de l'histoire ou de la vie."

Between the "verses *apropos* of nothing" and the "verses *apropos* of everything" lies indeed a stupendous creation of true poetry, all brought into being by one

marvellous hand. But we shall study Victor Hugo's writings imperfectly and ill if they do not tell us much about the dangers as well as much about the glories of the literature of a democratic age. There are not a few pages in which he does little else than wear magnificently the robes of a courtier of King Demos; but literature has simpler, more substantial, perhaps less acceptable, work to do than that of satiating the ears of the new grand monarch with the rhetoric that has gathered about the great words "Progress," "Humanity," "Liberty," "Justice."

It is especially the friend and not the enemy of democracy who should desire to maintain the superiority of our higher literature to the vulgar temptations of the day. If King Demos reign, by all means let him have counsellors courageous, stern, and true, rather than hysterical or servile flatterers. He, like other kings, is sometimes stupid, is sometimes gross and materialistic in his tastes, is sometimes unjust and greedy, is often a good-natured blunderer or a rash sentimentalist. The so-called leaders of the people have seldom the courage to lead in any true sense of the word. They commonly maintain their position by observing whither the moving multitude tends, and by running to the front with a banner and a cry. "They may be as able and eloquent as ever," observes Sir Henry Maine, "but they are manifestly listening nervously at one end of a speaking-tube which receives at its other end the suggestions of a lower intelligence." It is well if they do not become the parasites and sycophants of his new Majesty, who, as much as any former potentate, enjoys the doffing of caps, the

prostration of his attendants, and the music of courtly adulation. The man of letters who would be true to the dignity of his office, the man of letters who would really serve King Demos, aiming less than the statesman at immediate results, and more at a re-formation of opinion and a new grouping of emotions, is under less temptation to be a flatterer. He will not assure the sovereign that his breath is sweeter than incense, that all great ideas and all generous sentiments have their source in him. He will not play the part of pander to the grosser appetites of the sovereign. He will not supply incentives to his evil passions of envy, suspicion, malice, cupidity, the lust of power. He will endeavour to illuminate the monarch's better feelings, to direct his ill-informed benevolence to useful ends, to train him to a grave regard for what is true and substantial, to bring home to him the conviction that self-restraint and even self-denial may be at times the glory of a king.

As the historic method is applied in new directions, and the social point of view prevails more than it has hitherto done over the individual, we may expect an increasing study of the facts of social evolution, and in all matters which relate to political change, a frequent appeal to history. As we loose from our moorings and drive before the wind there is indeed a certain unwillingness to look backwards, already finding expression in a current phrase which describes all things of earlier date than the last general election or assembling of Parliament as "matters of ancient history." But when this ancient history is supposed to affect the interests of either political party, the leaders quickly furbish up

their knowledge or, it may be, their ignorance, and discover such parallels and precedents and arguments as they require. It is true for students of history, patient, disinterested, and exact, to hold in check, chiefly in ways that are indirect, the superficial views, the partisan representations, the crude generalisations of the amateur sociologist and political manipulator of half knowledge. "The scientific spirit," it has been well said, "is not a triumphant and boastful one, fired with a sort of intellectual Chauvinism, seeking polemical distinction and a path to promotion in the field of party war." The scientific spirit does not work back through the facts of history in order to find the appearance of confirmation for a conjecture of the day or hour; it works forward, with a profound sense of the continuity of human life, until it touches the events of our own time in their causes. A little history is a dangerous thing—and history as grasped at by the politician is almost always a little. From a careful and conscientious study of the past more perhaps than from anything else, a temper of mind is formed which is fitted to hold in check the rash ardours of the democratic spirit, a temper of mind at once courageous and cautious, strong in serious hopes and free from illusions, faithful to the best traditions of our forefathers and not bound in subjection to them, but rather pressing forward to those high ends towards which they and we together work.

Those somewhat vague yet potent words, Humanity, Progress, Fraternity, which have fired the democratic imagination in the present century, are the property of no single nation, and the common ardours of the age

have introduced a cosmopolitan element into literature. The more rapid and freer interchange of ideas, the swifter and more powerful flow of waves of sentiment between nations, have tended in the same direction, so that amid all their diversities a certain community has been established between the several literatures of Europe. As in the mediæval period a dominant theology bound together the intellects of the various countries of the West, so now the dominant conceptions of science inhabit English, Italian, French, and German brains, and a real society of thinkers, extending beyond the limits of any one nation, has come into existence. Yet, as it were to counterpoise these influences tending to a cosmopolitan mode of thought and feeling, the principle of nationality seems at the same time to have acquired increased force. A united Germany and a united Italy have given notable demonstrations of its power, and the very dismemberment of France has but intensified the national self-consciousness. In literature the profound differences which have their origin or expression in diverse modes of speech must remain, however close be the alliance of nations. The German who constructs his sentence in one way can never be master of the same intellectual motions as the Frenchman who constructs his sentence in another. The use during long centuries of this instrument, or of that, has called forth and has determined a characteristic play of thought. Obviously where there is diversity of tongues the principle of nationality cannot fail to assert itself in literature. But we may well feel surprise when within the bounds of a single people, and within the area possessed by one common language, the

literary claims of contending nationalities are raised. Shall we in these islands of ours, who "speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake," nurse the dream of four separate streams of literature, or shall we have our pride and our joy in one noble river broadened and deepened by various affluent waters?

The question, as it presents itself to one whose home is in Ireland, is not an altogether academic one. The present Home Rule movement, which exists only by virtue of the economic crisis affecting an agricultural population, cannot be called a national movement, in the sense in which the movement of 1848, or the Fenian movement, was national. Its strength at the present moment in Ireland lies in the fact that it is essentially a struggle which concerns material interests. Idealists of the type of Thomas Davis, who sighed for the time when "the brighter days shall surely come, . . . and the sweet old language be heard once more in college, mart and senate," have been thrust contemptuously aside. The echoes of the old language, whether sweet or harsh, dwindle in forlorn wilds and on rugged headlands of the west. Yet some of the old hopes and dreams are not extinct, and we hear from time to time plaintive demands for an Irish literature with a special character of its own. We read of the enthusiasm with which Welsh bards are listened to at the national Eisteddfods; and perhaps it is a genuine enthusiasm, for doubtless the Cymric speech vibrates along nerves which are not stirred by our English tongue. And we know how vigorous is the spirit of Scottish patriotism, though it may not have formulated an express demand

in literature. It cannot be altogether an idle question to ask whether it is possible or desirable that separate channels should be cut for the flow of these several streams of sentiment in literature.

Unquestionably our strength springs from the soil in which we grow. We are not epiphytes, living upon the air. A literature which consciously aims at cosmopolitanism is almost always a literature in a period of decline. Yet it is well to remember that the spirit of a man may inhabit an ampler space than that in which his body lives and moves. "Spartam nactus es: hanc orna." Yes, but which Sparta is our possession—the land that has fed our bodies, or the land that has nourished and enriched our souls? Carlyle, the son of a Scotch peasant, and proud of his honourable parentage, had in him always much that was derived from his Scottish birth and breeding, his Scottish moors and hills, his Scottish religion. But how much less fruitful would have been the result for literature if he had drawn a circle around his mind corresponding to his physical environment, and had admitted within that circle no other thoughts and aspirations than those proper to a Scottish literary coterie, or the Scottish kirk from which he had gained so much in moral training and for the ministry of which he was at one time designed? In his solitude of Craigenputtoch — "a solitude altogether Druidical . . . nothing to disturb you with speech, except Arcturus and Orion, and the spirit of nature," he was really an inhabitant of Weimar, and the companion of Goethe and Schiller. Would he have served Scotland better or worse if he had occupied his imagina-

tion solely or chiefly with memories of Bruce and Wallace, if he had devoted himself to Scottish antiquities, or Scottish history, or Scottish religion, regarded from a purely national—that is, a provincial—point of view? Was it not better for us all, and better for his own countrymen, that he followed the leadings of his genius when it invited him into the great world?

The national spirit was strong in Carlyle because it worked unconsciously. He was a Scotchman in the best of all ways, that is, as it were, inevitably. The deepest instincts of the man were those of his people, and even when his thoughts ranged wide they had intimate relations with the faith of his fathers. Whenever the genius of a nation is strong it works thus in deep and obscure ways. The attempt to whip up deliberately and by artificial means the national spirit in literature is evidence of the decay of that spirit. A noble ancestry is a source of honourable pride, but it is a pride which maintains itself with a quiet dignity; bounce and brag are the tokens of a plebeian. And as with individuals so with a nation. If we really belong to an excellent race, we shall prove it by our deeds rather than perpetually boast of it with our tongues.

If there be, indeed, a distinctive genius characterising each of the peoples of Scotland, Wales and Ireland, it is highly desirable that this should find expression, and that the unity of our literature should be a unity possessing as much variety as possible. The different strands if twisted together should make up a cord which is both strong and delightfully coloured. In Ireland at present,

apart from the Universities — we must sorrowfully acknowledge the fact—little interest is taken in literature; but we can conceive an Irish literary movement which should command our deepest interest and sympathy; a movement in which such differences of national character as may perhaps exist should manifest themselves not of deliberate purpose, but naturally and spontaneously. But if the Irish literary movement were to consist in flapping a green banner in the eyes of the beholders, and upthrusting a pasteboard "sunburst" high in air, I, for one, should prefer to stand quietly apart from such a movement. In a popular life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, published in Dublin, I read the following poetical exordium: "Not Greece of old in her palmiest days, the Greece of Homer and Demosthenes, of Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, of Pericles, Leonidas, and Alcibiades, of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, of Solon and Lycurgus, of Apelles and Praxiteles, not even this Greece, prolific as she was in sages and heroes, can boast such a lengthy bead-roll as Ireland can of names worthy of the immortality of history." How partial, then, have been the awards of history! How true the saying that the world knows nothing of its greatest men! And how modest the writer of this life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, to set forth the bead-roll of Greece in such ample detail and to throw the veil of a general statement over the glories of his native land! If in the Irish literary movement we are to step to such a tune as this, I think on the whole I should rather fall out of the ranks, or even step to music as rhetorical as that of "Rule Britannia."

Not that I have any of Captain Macmorris's sensitiveness. "What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation?" We are well content to be known as the fellow-countrymen of those Irishmen and West Britons, Goldsmith and Burke. "It may not," says one of George Eliot's characters, "be good luck to be born a woman, but one gets used to it from a baby." And in like manner it may not be altogether good luck, from a literary point of view, to be born an Irishman, but one gets used to it. It seems alike absurd to be proud or to be ashamed of the fact. But I confess that I am not ambitious of intensifying my intellectual or spiritual brogue. If national character be really strong and vivid it will show itself, although we do not strive to be national with malice prepense; it will show itself, whether we occupy ourselves with an edition of Sophocles or of Cicero, or with a song of the deeds of Cuchullain or the love and sorrow of Deirdre. No folly can be greater than that of fancying that we shall strengthen our literary position by living exclusively in our own ideas, and showing ourselves inhospitable to the best ideas of other lands. Nor is that the wisest hospitality which constrains the guest to assume the garb and adopt the manners of his entertainers. The shock of strangeness is inspiriting. Every great literary movement of modern Europe has been born from the wedlock of two peoples. So the great Elizabethan literature sprang from the love-making of England with Italy; the poetry of the early part of the nineteenth century from the ardour aroused in England by the opening promise of the French Revolu-

tion. Surely an Irish man of letters may be engaged in work in the truest sense patriotic if he endeavours to bring into his country the best ideas from France, from Germany, from the old world of classical learning, from the living world of nature, or from some fresh exploration of the mind of man, even though the word "Ireland" be not for ever shrilling on his lips. We should be far better patriots if, instead of singing pæans about Irish genius, we were to set ourselves to correct some of the defects of Irish intellect. Let an Irish poet teach his countrymen to write a song free from rhetoric, free from false imagery, free from green tinsel, and with thoroughly sound workmanship in the matter of verse, and he will have done a good and a needful thing. Let an Irish prose writer show that he can be patient, exact, just, enlightened, and he will have done better service for Ireland, whether he treats of Irish themes or not, than if he wore shamrocks in all his buttonholes and had his mouth for ever filled with the glories of Brian the Brave. Let an Irish antiquary study the relics of his native land with all the resources of modern science, viewing these interesting remains from the central and not merely from a provincial standpoint, and he will lead us towards the truth instead of plunging us in folly and illusion. We cannot create a school of Irish men of genius—poets are born, not made—but what we can do is this: we can try to secure for Ireland the advantage of possessing a school of honest and skilled craftsmen in literature. Out of this school of craftsmen now and again a man of genius may arise, strong and sane because he has sprung from a race of intelligent

and patient workmen, and because he feels their influence surrounding him.

Such a body of trained scholars should be the intellectual aristocracy of a democratic age, an upper ten thousand of workers. It will include in large proportion those whose studies are scientific, and who influence literature only indirectly. Their influence, although indirect, is far from unimportant. There are not wanting persons who assure us that the pursuit of scientific studies must in the end prove injurious, if not fatal, to the higher forms of literature. M. Paul Bourget, himself a poet, in his dialogue, "Science et Poésie," argues, through the lips of one of the speakers who seems to express, in part at least, his own opinions, that Poetry can no longer be an instrument or envoy of truth, and that it must more and more confine itself to the domain of sensibility, while its rival, Science, takes possession more and more of the domain of intelligence. M. Scherer is assured that if poetry lives, it will only be as the private cult of rare individuals; the people has ceased, he says, to believe in poetry. "It will soon be with poetry as with religious painting or classical tragedy; a Flandrin, a Rachel only make us feel the more strongly that such forms of art exist by an artificial convention, that the pleasure which they bring us is an *affaire d'archaïsme.*" A writer in our own country, of whom we may say that she has been herself, as Mill said of Charles Kingsley, one of the good influences of the age, Miss F. P. Cobbe, accepted a brief in the case of *Literature, Religion, and Morals, versus Science,* and she conducted her pleadings with

remarkable vivacity: "When science," she bids us believe, "—like poverty—comes in at the door, art—like love—flies out of the window." Her pleadings against the scientific spirit of the age reminded me that I had myself, a good many years ago, written something from a different point of view, maintaining that the great ideas of modern science were not without a noble inspiration for poetry; and it led me to consider whether, having then joined in the choral ode which celebrates science, I ought not now to sing a palinode. Miss Cobbe prophesies like a lively Cassandra. And then comes Mr Matthew Arnold, in his posthumous volume of "Essays," with a promise on behalf of poetry which is more deadly than a threat. The future of poetry, he says, is immense; in poetry our race will find, as time goes on, an ever surer and surer stay. And why? Because criticism and science having deprived us of all old faiths and traditional dogmas, poetry, which attaches itself to the idea will take the place of religion and philosophy, or what now pass for such, and will console and sustain those who, but for it, would be forlorn. A pale hospital nurse attending the bed of scepticism—such, it would seem, is the Muse henceforth to be. She will speak soothing sentences and administer the tonic draught. And the palsied man will cling to her all the more because he is well assured that henceforward no divine stranger will ever come and say, in words of sacred cheer, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

We shall do well, in glancing at this subject, to bear in mind the well-known distinction made by De Quincey

between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. The function of the first is to teach; the function of the second is to move: the first is a rudder, the second an oar or a sail. If we were to embark on a voyage, we should find that both rudder and sail have their uses. Between the two divisions of literature spoken of by De Quincey lies a kind of writing which occupies a considerable space in our own day and has an important work to do—the literature of criticism. It is concerned neither wholly with knowledge nor wholly with emotions; it has both to feel and to know: it tries at once to enlighten the intellect and to quicken and refine the sensibility.

There is another distinction to be observed if we would arrive at any sound conclusion with respect to the influence of science on literature. We must distinguish between scientific results and scientific methods. The conclusions of science may be fruitful for literature now, or may become so when they have passed into the general consciousness, and yet the mental processes which lead to such conclusions may tend to disqualify the mind for the enjoyment of poetry and art. If this be the case, we must regard a man of science who transforms himself into "a machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of fact" (the words are Darwin's), as one who submits to a personal loss in order to procure some valuable prize for his country or his race. The doctrines which we associate with the name of Mr Darwin may prove indispensable to those who desire to have an intelligent and coherent view of the world we live in; they may form an essential

part of the *Weltanschauung* of the future, a *Weltanschauung* which may be as needful for the poet as the man of science. This seems not unlikely to come to pass. And yet we have been told by Mr Darwin himself in a remarkable passage, which Miss Cobbe, kindliest of devil's advocates, does not fail to quote, that after the age of thirty certain of his faculties began to suffer an atrophy caused by disuse; that his great delight in poetry and painting and music constantly waned. "Now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music." Mr Darwin's experience is probably by no means singular. There are times when humanity needs an organ or a function more than a complete man. When the Angelical Doctor at dinner with the King of France dropped into a cogitation, and struck the table with his fist as the light of an argument fatal to the Manichees flashed across his brain, he showed himself deficient in good manners; but such a power of self-abstraction was a condition without which the "Summa" could not have been written. When St Bernard, hearing his fellow-travellers speak of Lake Leman, on whose banks he had journeyed the whole day, asked, "But where is the lake?" he showed himself highly insensible to natural beauty; but had the saint not been from boyhood *mire cogitativus*, Abelard might have come and conquered at the Council of Sens. There have been times when, in order to keep alive the moral and spiritual tradition in a world of luxury and lust, it was necessary for men to fly to the desert and forget the joys of domestic life

and all the pleasures of colour and of song. We honour the saints who put out the right eye in order that they might save what was more precious for the world's uses than even an eye. Let us also honour the ascetic of science, whose inductions have helped us to know the laws of the world, if not aright, yet at least less erroneously.

The results of scientific study are in no respect antagonistic to literature, though they may profoundly modify that view of the world which has hitherto found in literature an imaginative expression. The conceptions of a great cosmos, of the reign of law in nature, of the persistence of force, of astronomic, geologic, biologic evolution, have in them nothing which should paralyse the emotions or the imagination. To attempt indeed a poetical "De Rerum Natura" at the present moment were premature; but when these and other scientific conceptions have become familiar, they will form an accepted, intellectual background from which the thoughts and feelings and images of poetry will stand out quite as effectively as they stood out from the antiquated cosmology of the Middle Ages. Although, however, scientific conclusions may in the end subserve literature, it is certain that the methods and processes of science, and those employed in what De Quincey terms the literature of power, are essentially different. Such literature is nothing if it is not personal; it expresses the thoughts, passions, and imaginings of an individual. Science aims at excluding whatever is peculiar to the individual: he must not read himself into the phenomena; his vision must be free from the mists of

sentiment; his imagination is of use only in shaping an hypothesis to be verified by subsequent inquiry or in varying the experiments by which he may attain to new objective facts. The literature of power, if it is to deserve the name, must adhere to its own methods, unseduced by the glamour which at present surrounds the words *science* and *scientific*. When M. Zola appears as the champion of what he styles the Experimental Romance, and when he professes to practise in literature the methods of the eminent physiologist, Claude Bernard, he is in truth a charlatan juggling with words. It would please him to crown himself at once with the glory of science and the glory of letters. The personality of the writer of experimental romance, he tells us, is to be found in the fact that he starts, like the scientific investigator, with an hypothesis, or a general idea, which is presently to be verified or rejected; he puts his characters into motion in a certain environment; their behaviour in this way or that constitutes an experiment and establishes or overthrows the *à priori* hypothesis. "This it is," he says, "which constitutes the experimental romance; to be master of the mechanism of human phenomena, to exhibit the springs of intellectual and sensual manifestations as they are explained to us by physiology, under the influences of heredity and environing circumstances; then to exhibit the man living in the social *milieu* which he has himself created, which he modifies from day to day, and in the midst of which he experiences in his turn a continual transformation." What is true in this is not new. Richardson and Fielding practised the method,

as far as it is a legitimate method, just as much as does the author of "L'Assommoir." What is new is the pretence of scientific experiment where none exists.

Experimental romance is then a misnomer; but a title which has been applied to M. Zola and his group, "the school of observation," goes nearer the mark. And undoubtedly the scientific tendencies of the age have led us to value, and even to overvalue, the results of the mere observation of external phenomena. Yet a reaction from the vague idealism of writers whose inspiration was drawn from the democratic abstractions—Progress, Humanity, Liberty, Fraternity, and the like—was inevitable, and has not been wholly unserviceable. Let the school of observation but do its work more thoroughly, and we shall again be in presence of the nobler facts of human life as well as the baser, and perceive the glory of our manhood together with the shame. What the fruits of this higher realism in literature may be, we can divine from the perusal of certain pages in such works as "Anna Karénina" and "War and Peace."

The literature of power may indeed be stimulated by the scientific spirit of the age to make more exact and thorough observations of external nature and the varieties of human life, and so to complete its preliminary studies; but it must adhere to its own methods. If a writer possess a powerful individuality, and can affix to every piece he produces his ineffaceable sign manual, he may bring this into relief by a certain air of scientific disinterestedness and impassivity. So it was with the chief of recent French poets, Leconte de Lisle. We

are all the more sensible of the peculiar character of his genius because he seems to submit himself with such a patient study to his object, while in fact the object is being moulded in his shaping hands. He did indeed learn something from science, but he assumed no false airs, and he loyally adhered to the processes proper to art.

But although the literature of power cannot adopt the methods of science, it is to a great extent otherwise with the literature of knowledge. Thus in our own day we have seen the rise of a school of historians who are too scientific, in the true sense of the word, to pretend that they are masters of a science of history. They have lost something, perhaps, in no longer conceiving a history as a work of art, as a passionate drama, or as a gallery of portraits. They have not produced, and cannot by their methods produce, a Thucydides or a Tacitus. But the gains have outbalanced the loss. They are patient and indefatigable in research. They labour in original sources as the geologist among his strata or the comparative anatomist among his vertebrates and invertebrates. They endeavour to lay aside prejudice and passion, in order that they may see things as they are. They recognise the continuity of human history. They treat no portion of the past with scorn. They do not dress up the men of past ages in the costumes or the ideas of to-day. They study the action of great but obscure social forces and discover in them the causes of those conspicuous events which alone attract the attention of superficial observers. In a word, living at a time when the scientific spirit is dominant, they appropriate to their own uses some of the methods of

science and cultivate certain habits of mind which may be described as scientific. And great has been the gain for their special study, great the gain for us all.

In the literature of criticism the influence of science has brought loss and gain. Sainte-Beuve mourned over the disappearance of the circle of "studious amateurs" in literature, vibrating to the finest and most fugitive impressions. But he did not deny that the time has come when we must gird up our loins courageously for a series of steadfast and laborious marches. No one demonstrated more admirably than Sainte-Beuve himself that it is possible to reconcile *la critique de gout* and *la critique naturelle*; no one gave happier examples of that kind of criticism which, while remaining a delicate art yet knows how to take advantage of all the inductions of science and all the acquisitions of history.[1] He found his happiness in exquisite studies of literary natural history and literary physiology, and in reproducing from ample stores of knowledge and with the finest tact an image of this or that environment which has aided the development of genius. Yet he cannot forbear from uttering a light sigh as he thinks of days when it was possible to taste and dwell upon the flavour of the fruit without discussing all the conditions of soil and climate which reared the plant and matured the sap. In a characteristic passage he makes his "last complaint," half serious, half playful, against the inevitable which he is fully prepared to accept :—

"Where is that vanished time in which, even though one were an author and professional man of letters, it was not essential to

[1] "Nouveaux Lundis," ix. pp. 84, 85.

engage in so many trains of reasoning and observe such learned ceremonies ; when the impression on a reader's mind came easily, and took complete possession of him without an effort, as at the theatre the play engages and interests the amateur pleasantly seated in his stall ; when we could read Ancients and Moderns lying on our bed like Horace in the dog-days, or stretched on a sofa like Gray, murmuring to ourselves that such pleasure was better than the joys of Paradise or Olympus ; the time when we walked in the shade, reading, like that excellent Dutchman, who could not conceive, he said, greater happiness here below at the age of fifty than to saunter through a lovely country, book in hand, sometimes closing it, without passion, without desire, yielding oneself wholly to meditation ; the time when, like Meissonier's *Reader*, in our solitary chamber, on a Sunday afternoon, by the open window in its frame of honeysuckle, we read some book which seemed for the season our only love. Happy age, where is it flown ? Nothing truly is less like it than to be forever on the thorns as we are nowadays when we read—than to be on our guard at every step, to question ourselves without end ; to ask whether this is the right text, whether there is not some alteration here, whether the author whom we should enjoy did not take this in a different way, whether he copied from actual things or invented, whether he is original and in what way, whether he has been faithful to his genius and to his race, . . . with a thousand other questions which spoil pleasure, breed doubt, make you rub your forehead, compel you to run to your library, to climb to the highest shelves, to tumble over all your books, to consult, to inspect, to become in a word an artisan or a labouring man instead of a delicate voluptuary or a fastidious amateur, who inhales the spirit of things, and takes only what may suit him and gratify his taste. Epicurism of culture, forever lost I fear ; henceforth forbidden assuredly to every critic ; last religion of those for whom no other survived ; last honour and last virtue of a Hamilton and a Petronius, how truly I conceive you, how much I regret you, even while I combat you, and while I forswear you !"[1]

We cannot do things by halves. Literary research, like historical research, must be exact and thorough or it is of little worth. It has opened new regions and buried ages for our study ; yes, and for our enjoyment.

[1] "Nouveaux Lundis," ix. pp. 86, 87.

It has illuminated the past. It has widened our sympathies. It has substituted for that dogmatic criticism which pronounced imperious judgments a new natural history of poets and prose-writers. Our library has become a kind of museum, in which specimens of the various species are arranged and classified. What we had read any way for our pleasure we must now study in chronological sequence, so that we may observe and follow a development. We reconstruct our author's environment, we investigate his origins. All this is well; yet subject to one condition—that we do not forget the end of study in the means, that we somehow and at some time get beyond the apparatus. It is well to know that the vine belongs to the natural order *vitaceæ*; that it prefers an open soil with good drainage; that it has pentamerous flowers; that the fruit is two-celled and four-seeded; and that the juice contains bitartrate of potash and tartrate of lime. But all this we might know although we had never tasted the grape or drunk a cup of wine. The student of chemistry may find as interesting a subject of analysis in a bottle of wine still harsh in youth and lacking its finer appeal to sense as in a bottle of the rarest vintage; but wine has other uses than that of affording a field for analysis. It rejoices the heart of man, and this quality of the juice of the grape deserves at least a certain degree of attention.

There is undoubtedly a danger that in accumulation, arrangement, observation, analysis, induction, we may lose some of the higher spirit of literature. With the great French critic from whom I have quoted such a

danger could not exist. No wine-taster had a finer palate than that incomparable old taster of the vintages of literature, Sainte-Beuve. His intellect was not dogmatic; he did not read to confirm a theory; he did not force things, as his fellow-countryman, M. Taine, does, to become mere illustrations of a doctrine; he would hardly, like M. Hennequin, push scientific criticism to the point at which it conjecturally explores the "third frontal convolution" in the "cerebral organism" of a great poet; he carried his weight of erudition lightly and gracefully. There is life and not mere arrangement in all that he has written. Acquisition of intellectual property is admirable, but only on condition that we are the masters and not the slaves of our possessions. "Reading," Edmund Burke wrote in a letter of advice to his son, "and much reading, is good. But the power of diversifying the matter infinitely in your own mind, and of applying it on every occasion that arises, is far better; so don't suppress the *vivida vis*." That we may lose ourselves in materials is the danger of our time. No word of counsel is more to the purpose at the present day than Burke's word. Let knowledge and erudition do their perfect work, only let us also see that they do not suppress but rather subserve the spirit of life within us.

MR MEREDITH IN HIS POEMS.

ONE of Mr Meredith's disciples has expressed a hope that at least his master's verse may be saved from the intrusion of the literary excursionist and holiday tripper. Vain hope! To name any Parnassian *aiguille* as inaccessible is to invite some hardy mountaineer to essay its conquest. By-and-by a pair of climbers follow in the solitary explorer's track; next, an adventurous lady, roped and accompanied by guides; then a lady more adventurous, who discovers a second way of ascent, and whose achievement is duly blazoned abroad. Presently, the needle-point is declared to be no barren peak, but a pleasant table-land; a company, with limited liability and unlimited power of talk, exploits the discovery; hotels crown the summit: from base to brow runs the railway scientifically engineered; personally-conducted parties troop and bustle; and picnics remain in evidence by scattered fragments of the beer-bottle, greasy papers, broken corks, and morsels of bitten sandwiches, that moulder in the sun. After all, why not? Let not our literary daintiness be over-nice. The great writers are hospitable, and afford ample space for comers of all kinds. A poet, if there be a little granite in him, will survive his worst and best admirers. His sunshine and air are better antiseptics than our daintiness.

One who has no part in that "cult within a cult," of

which the fervent disciple speaks, may yet be of the opinion that it is worth while to make acquaintance with the poetry of Mr George Meredith, and all the more so because that poetry really sets up no petty æsthetic temple of its own, but belongs, in its degree, to the National Church of English Letters. Mr Meredith composes hymns in honour of Mother Earth, whose rain and dew drop upon the evil and the good; such hymns, if they are worthy of their theme, can be meant for no clan or coterie or conventicle. And, in fact, their maker has said as much in his poem of *The Thrush in February.*

> "So mine are these new fruitings rich
> The simple to the common brings;
> I keep the youth of souls who pitch
> Their joy in this old heart of things."

Mr Meredith's joy is indeed in the old heart of things—the wheat-field and the upland lawn and the fir-wood, the sun and the wind and the rain, the ways of bird and beast, the gladness of earth in man's and maiden's blood, and this refining itself to the swift play of intelligence, and the rapture of the spirit. It is none the less true that, in celebrating the simple, he is often highly elaborate and ingenious, and that he presents the common in curiously uncommon ways. But when we have learnt how to straighten out his twisted phrases, to leap his aery chasms of remote associations, to catch a prospect through his eyelet holes of intelligence, to practise a certain legerdemain and keep five balls of meaning a dance together in the brain—when we have learnt these various things and several others, then the

total significance of Mr Meredith as a poet is found to be good; is found to be sound and sweet and sane, seed for a hopeful sowing and clean wheat for our quern.

Of course, it may be said that the demands which Mr Meredith makes of his readers are exorbitant, and that a difficult style is necessarily a bad style. A student of the history of literature, however, knows that the charge of obscurity, which is one of the charges most confidently brought by contemporaries, can be finally adjudicated on only by time. It may be sustained, or it may be refuted. To many of his contemporaries Gray was a tangle of difficulties; for critics of authority in a later period Wordsworth and Shelley and Coleridge wrote unintelligible nonsense; and in our own day we have seen the poetry of Robert Browning slowly but surely expounding itself to a generation. Even caviare, it seems, may become a little fly-blown. Perhaps Mr Meredith's style is difficult; but difficulty is a relative term, and experience should have taught us that this is a point on which it is wise to reserve an absolute judgment. Sword-practice is difficult to those who have not exercised the muscles of the wrist; and some dancers who foot it merrily in the waltz stand grim against the wall looking condemnation at the lifted leg and pointed toe of the *pas de quatre*. If Mr Meredith can teach young folk to dance to his music, the most reluctant of us will be forced to admit by-and-by that he has achieved what is the essential thing. Meanwhile it is lawful for anyone who pleases to raise a sceptical eyebrow and put the question, "But will he?"

In guessing at the answer to that question we may find some help from considering another: What has Mr Meredith to say, be his manner of saying it good or ill? In a dozen volumes of prose the eager student of human nature has told us of his discoveries. Prose is proved by the achievement of his forty years of authorship to be the main stream; verse is no more than a slender affluent. But both are *Dichtung*, and both, it may be added, are *Wahrheit*. Or, to vary our metaphor, the *Dichtung* written in prose is the lake, broad-bosomed, with countless coves and creeks; the *Dichtung* written in verse is a lakelet higher among the hills, less easy of access, but open to the skies and to the passage of the stars, though at times involved in wreathing mists; and a stream runs down from lakelet to lake, connecting the two—for Mr Meredith's prose is at times such prose as a poet writes, and the thought and feeling expressed in his novels are fed from the contemplations of a poet. His subtlety and his analytic power have in the novels a wider range for play; his faith and hope are more directly expressed in his verse. In both prose and verse his felicities are found in infelicity—or what for the present seems such; his infelicities are found amid felicity; he is at once a most alluring and a most provoking writer.

In a generous letter of protest against one of Mr Meredith's reviewers of thirty years ago—a reviewer who had complained of *Modern Love* as dealing with "a deep and painful subject on which the writer has no conviction to express"—Mr Swinburne denied to poets the right to mount a pulpit: "there are pulpits enough

for all preachers in prose; the business of verse-writing is hardly to express convictions." Yet certain poets at all times have chosen to assume the attitude of teachers or preachers. Spenser defined his purpose in the *Faerie Queene* as that of "fashioning a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, would—

> "assert Eternal Providence
> And justify the ways of God to men."

We can hardly believe that when Milton wrote those words he was "full of his fun." Pope alleged as the peculiar merit of his "Essay on Man," that it steers between the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite, and forms a temporate yet not inconsistent system of ethics. Fortunately or unfortunately for his art, Shelley was a persistent preacher on texts chosen from "Political Justice." "I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing," said Wordsworth. Philosophy, declared Browning, is at the base of poetry. The doctrine of Stoicism modified by a doctrine of culture is nobly preached in Matthew Arnold's verse. The poet who proclaimed himself the idle singer of an empty day, one who had no power to sing of heaven or hell, now declaims with poetic rage against the hell of capitalism and competition, and prophesies of the terrestrial heaven of the Communist. Someone has even been found to set forth in a review—and the task was no unworthy one—the theology of Mr Swinburne. No reader of the poems of Mr Meredith, now when his orbit as poet may be more nearly determined than was possible in 1862, can doubt that he has convictions and that he desires to

express them. He, too, like all the larger spirits of this age of inward trouble and perplexity, whether with or against his will, must needs be a preacher.

In a recently-published Lives of the Saints—motley saints of the Positivist Calendar—it is mentioned among the grounds of Shelley's canonization that he quickened in a high degree our sense of reverence and awe for the great fetish, the Earth. To Mr Meredith's imagination and affections the great fetish is the mother at whose breasts we hang, from whose life we draw the milk that feeds us, and before all else he would inspire his disciple with filial loyalty and filial love. His feeling for nature is not—at least in its root, however it may be with the flower—the Wordsworthian sense

> "Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns."

He prefers the word earth to the more abstract word nature, and hugs reality. "I remember Mr Wordsworth saying," writes a friend of the poet, "that, at a particular stage of his mental progress, he used to be frequently so rapt into an unreal transcendental world of ideas that the external world seemed no longer to exist in relation to him, and he had to reconvince himself of its existence by clasping a tree, or something that happened to be near him." Mr Meredith never loses his hold upon things actual and positive; he clasps the tree, observes its intricacy of branches, studies the wrinkles of its rind, can almost hear the murmur of the sap, catches sight of the squirrel scurrying aloft, sees every tit and finch that peeps or perches; and

then through the real he discovers—as real also—the spiritual. He is the physician Melampus of his own admirable poem :—

"With love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck ;
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings
From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck ;
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball ;
Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook ;
The good physician Melampus loving them all,
Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

"For him the woods were a home and gave him the key
Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.
The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we
To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours :
And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined
Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows
In them, in us, from the source by man unattained,
Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose." [1]

Like the physician Melampus the poet would not soar to the spiritual meanings of earth by any transcendental flight, but would master the text, with all its minute difficulties, as an exact scholar, and so at last attain to the innermost purport of this book of life.

Such a study implies faith at the outset, and it implies courage. Some of the meanings of earth lie indeed upon the surface—her summer meanings, her messages of pleasure to the blood. If these are easy they are none the less precious :—

"Call to mind
The many meanings glistening up
When Nature to her nurslings kind
Hands them the fruitage and the cup!"

[1] *Save marks he well : i.e.*, unless he marks well.

There is nothing of the ascetic in Mr Meredith, unless we use "ascetic" in the nobler sense, meaning one who values strength and hardihood attained through discipline. He finds that blood nourishes brain, and wholesome blood means wholesome animal delights:—

> "Life thoroughly lived is a fact in the brain,
> While eyes are left for seeing."

Very charmingly, and with a touch of the great geniality of nature in her hour of animal awakening, Mr Meredith has told his tale of "The Appeasement of Demeter." The beloved Persephone has been snatched below; it is the season of dearth and almost despair:—

> "Lean grass-blades, losing green on their bent flags,
> Sang chilly to themselves; lone honey-bees
> Pursued the flowers that were not, with dry bags;
> Sole sound aloud the snap of sapless trees,
> More sharp than slingstones on hard breastplates hurled.
> Back to first chaos tumbled the stopped world,
> Careless to lure or please.
> A nature of gaunt ribs, an Earth of crags."

The description is hardly less admirable than Keats's night of frost. Man and woman, youth and age, are shrunken, cheerless, lost in the sloth of hopeless hours, wagging the tongue with weak and bird-like voice. Demeter stands yet wrathful in the vale, nor can her once glad naiad of the mountain-rivulet, Iambe, at first awaken forgiveness in her heart. But Iambe has some shadow of laughter in her still, and a woman's brightness of craft; above the moan of human prayer she raises the cattle-call, and slowly from among the droves a horse and mare—"the wrecks of horse and mare"—defile into the presence of the queen:—

"Howbeit the season of the dancing blood,
Forgot was horse of mare, yea, mare of horse:
Reversed, each head at either's flank, they stood.
Whereat the goddess, in a dim remorse,
Laid hand on them and smacked; and her touch pricked.
Neighing within, at either's flank they licked;
Played on a moment's force
At courtship, withering to the crazy nod."

And, presently, the Great Mother, touched by this faint symbol of all the vast and genial joy of earth, laughs aloud—laughter "like thunder of the song of heart"; the curse is rent; gladness, like a thousand runnels from the hills, descends upon the valley and the valley-folk, and beast and bird; the "kindly lusts" inspire them once again; the plough drives in the furrow, and the blade springs green above the brown:—

"O Laughter! beauty plumped, and love had birth.
Laughter! O thou reviver of sick Earth!
Good for the spirit, good
For body; thou to both art wine and bread!"

Our English people, Mr Meredith inclines to believe, have less need of their pious exercises, conjoined with "hoggery" than of a wise "schooling in the Pleasures." He distrusts profoundly that way of piety which begins by rejecting God's first gift—the earth itself, its schooling, its toils, its joys. Shall we fancy that we have wings to our shoulders and name this earth of ours Dust and Ashes? or shall we run the glad furrow and turn the soil? Shall we view Earth as a "damned witch," fair to the eye but full of foulness? And is this piety to him who gave us so excellent a habitation?—

"We, pious humpback mountebanks, meanwhile
Break off our antics to stand forth, white-eyed,

> And fondly hope for our Creator's smile,
> By telling him that his prime work is vile,
> Whom, through our noses, we've renounced, denied."

No; there is a better way of religious service than this —a way of faith and labour and joy :—

> "And are we the children of Heaven and Earth?
> We'll be true to the mother with whom we are,
> So to be worthy of Him who, afar,
> Beckons us on to a brighter birth." [1]

Fidelity to earth is indeed fidelity to that heaven in which earth lives and moves and has its being.

With *The Appeasement of Demeter* should be read *The Day of the Daughter of Hades*, and *Phœbus with Admetus*. Each poem, and to these may be added as a third, *The Lark Ascending*—is a song of the joy of earth. When Persephone returns from the under world, she bears with her, on a morning, the shadow-born daughter of Hades, to whom one glad holiday in the sunshine is granted; and slipping from the car, the maiden has for her companion throughout this day the young singer, Callistes. In the valley among the vines, among the wheat-fields, among the olive-groves, by the lake margin, by the stream-side, in the brakes, in the pine-woods, upon the mountain heights, go by this morning of delight, this noon with its deeper bliss, this evening with its thunder-showers and racing torrents, a day of mingled joy and alarm to the human heart of young Callistes, but of fearless joy to the maiden who can interpret in her song the good meanings of the earth :—

[1] This and the quotation immediately preceding are from the *Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn*.

"That song
Of the sowing and reaping, and cheer
Of the husbandman's heart, made strong
Through droughts and deluging rains,
With his faith in the Great Mother's love.
O the joy of the breath she sustains,
And the lyre of the light above,
And the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh young sense of Sweet."

Something of Demeter's laughter—that of a god at sight of the play of pleasure in a humbler sphere than the realm of gods—may be divined in the maiden's fond regard for Pan and her innocent curiosity about his ways :—

"The sacred loon,
The frolic, the Goatfoot God ;
For stories of indolent noon
In the pine-forest's odorous nod,
She questioned, not knowing : he can
Be waspish, irascible, rude,
He is oftener friendly to man,
And ever to beasts and their brood.
For the which did she love him well,
She said, and his pipes of the reed,
His twitched lips puffing to tell
In music his tears and his need,
Against the sharp catch of his hurt,
Not as shepherds of Pan did she speak,
Nor spake as the schools, to divert,
But fondly, perceiving him weak
Before gods, and to shepherds a fear,
A holiness, horn and heel."

Yes, with all his weakness, the frolic Goatfoot is sacred, and he should be dear to the lovers of Earth.

But a true lover of Earth must be a hardy lover, caring for more than her soothing touch and soft caress, able to read her heart even though she should frown or

seem cold and indifferent. Mr Meredith is bent above all to understand her meanings that are severe, yet kind in their severity; those ways of hers which train us for the battle-field rather than the bower. Is it later autumn when foliage flies, and the skies are of slate, or when the mist lies low, and

> "Narrows the world to my neighbour's gate;
> Paints me Life as a wheezy crone"?

Let us master the blood; let us not live by the senses; let us read deeper into the life of earth, and we shall see that all is well. Under the surface, in this season of chill, there is the fire of a great hearth. Mother Earth is not sluggish nor cold:—

> "Under the surface she burns,
> Quick at her wheel, while the fuel, decay,
> Brightens the fire of renewal: and we?
> Death is the word of a bovine day,
> Know you the breast of the springing To-be."

Or, again, is the bitterest of east winds hissing?—is the land whipped and shorn by the gale; the sky hurried on and obliterated by flying cloud-rack; and are the mouths of men locked grimly as they wrestle with the blast? For the senses it is hard; but once more let us read deeper, and what shall we discern? What but Life sitting at her grindstone—

> "That she may give us edging keen,
> Sting us for battle, till as play
> The common strokes of fortune shower.
> Such meaning in a dagger-day
> Our wits may clasp to wax in power."

It is through contention and struggle that blood is mastered, and brain wins its due supremacy. Earth

has always loved the strong; once she loved her old Titan brood, and now she cares for their modern successors who strive with mind more than with muscle; she would rouse her chosen ones out of the soft life of sensual ease, she would teach them mastery and self-command, so that brain may grow out of blood, and brain in its turn be developed into soul.

But does Earth indeed care at all for her offspring, Man? Are not the laws of nature regardless of humanity, and ruthless in their blind persistence? Mr Meredith has no desire to cheat himself with words; above all else he seeks reality. Is there, then, in truth this opposition between man and nature? Is there this breach of continuity in the universe, or rather is not man the crowning part of nature—nature evolving itself, or being evolved, into mind and soul? And are not the laws of human nature her laws? Man's loving-kindness, his mercifulness, his passion for righteousness, are they not the flower and fruit of her long obscure endeavour? Is not in truth their root in her? And what if the seeming cruelty of Earth to her child, Man, be no more than a wholesome severity, needed in order that he may advance through brain to soul, and from bestial up to spiritual? Her desire all along was no other than to speed the race; her fear, that man might falter and wax faint:—

> "She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears
> A Mother whom no cry can melt;
> But read her past desires and fears,
> The letters on her breast are spelt."

It is through strife and through suffering that such

advance as the world can boast—an advance like that of a drunkard who bears a pack and reels from side to side, yet still keeps on his way—has been made. Hence, though Mr Meredith perceives our national need of "schooling in the Pleasures," he is no sedate philosopher at ease in the garden of Epicurus. That garden was indeed—

> "A shining spot upon a shaggy map,
> Where mind and body, in fair junction free,
> Luted their joyful concord."

That garden was a happy nursery of gentlemen; but the higher wisdom is not attained by the "long drawing of an equal breath." There is wilderness to be reclaimed outside the ordered garden; and so for the needs of our world better than the philosophy of Epicurus is

> "The crucifix that came of Nazareth."

Let us not suppose, however, that even in what is highest in our religions or fairest in our ideals we can sever ourselves from the good Mother Earth. What we deem divine, and what indeed is divine, is but the natural evolved to its perfect flower in the spirit—

> "Man builds the soaring spires,
> That sing his soul in stone: of Earth he draws,
> Though blind to her, by spelling at her laws,
> His purest fires."

"Intellect and reverence," writes Mr Meredith in a recent novel, "must clash to the end of time if we persist in regarding the Spirit of Life as a remote externe, who plays the human figures to bring about this or that issue, instead of being beside us, within us, our breath, if we will; marking on us where at each step we sink

to the animal, mount to the divine, we and ours who follow, offspring of body or mind."

Thus then, according to Mr Meredith's teaching, external nature loses its cruel sphinx-like aspect as soon as we read its meaning with the soul; as soon as we perceive the unity of the cosmos, and know that it constantly climbs upward from sense to spirit, and that spirit signifies for us righteousness, love, sacrifice, joy—a joy transcending the poor pleasure which comes through the satisfaction of egoistic greeds. Blood and brain and spirit—these three are co-operant powers, the "deepest gnomes of Earth," and it will go ill with us if we part the friendly triad. We walk on the dark edge of earth under the midnight stars, and they seem remote and cold, shining implacably; little care they for human hungers, hungers of the heart, hungers of the intellect:

> "Forever virgin to our sense,
> Remote they wane to gaze intense:
> Prolong it, and in ruthlessness they smite
> The beating heart behind the ball of sight.
> Till we conceive their heavens hoar,
> Those lights they raise but sparkles frore,
> And Earth, our warm-blood Earth, a shuddering prey
> To that frigidity of brainless ray."

But is not love the gift of Earth? And is not Earth the member of this stupendous cosmos best known to us? And shall we believe that Earth is the sole throne of Deity? It is the craven part of us that quails before the splendour of the stars. If Earth be known aright as one among the starry fold, faith comes to us—faith grounded in reason—by virtue of which we recognise the presence of her life in them, her law in the law to

which they move; yes, and even her love in the heart of these, her sister-planets. And so when night wanes, and morning brings back the sight of our old beloved Earth, we see her, touched, through our sense of this sisterhood to strange and remote worlds, with a new glory:

"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."

The reader need not be counselled to let that last perfect line linger in his ear and live in his heart.

The mystery of Earth and of its life, is like that of the enchanted Woods of Westermain—a terror to those of little insight and little faith, but to one who brings brain and spirit, as harmless as are the gliding waves to a swimmer. Possess in yourself a love of the light, and you shall be enabled by it to read every secret of the darkness, and to know that each secret is good. Doubt or distrust, let greeds and egoistic pride darken the light within you, and you are caught in your own trap; all that was innocent and sweet, all that was grave and ennobling in these Woods of Westermain become dangerously hostile to you in a moment:—

"Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath:
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep:
* * * *
Each has business of his own
But should you distrust a tone
Then beware

Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
Shroud you in their glare.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare."

Mr Meredith has dared; and he tells us, as his solution of the mystery, and as the truth by which he lives, this—that the Great Mother, in her joy of life, has given us blood and breath not for sensual uses or luxurious ease, but for endless warfare; that her medicinal herb can heal all the wounds of our battle; and that reading to this effect the spiritual meaning of Earth, he can trust her, not in life alone, but even "down to death."

Yes, "down to death;" for what is a faith but a reed, if it cannot stand its crucial test and extreme trial? In the *Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn* occur some lines which express with incomparable beauty a trust in the good purport of death founded on a knowledge of the good purport of life:—

"And O, green bounteous earth!
Bacchante Mother! stern to those
Who live not in thy heart of mirth;
Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
Into the breast that gives the rose
Shall I with shuddering fall?"

But to contemplate our own death with equanimity is not after all difficult for any sane person. There is a trial more cruel to the flesh and spirit than this. No poem of Mr Meredith's strikes deeper from the coloured surface of things to the hard rock of life, out of which springs water for our needs, than that named *A Trial of Faith*. It is the morning of May day, and before the holiday children appear at the window the writer

goes forth and climbs the hill that he may wrestle alone with his fate; for the good companion of his life, she, the pulse of his heart, lies upon her death-bed. All the world is glad, expecting summer; the lark is aloft, and a south wind blows. Memories of her brightness, her sweetness, her Norman birthplace, and the visit to it paid by husband and wife together fill his mind. With heart and brain and soul divided from each other, one thing, and one only, seems to remain with him—the disciplined habit of the observing eye; all the sights of the May morning enter at that sense; yet "this Earth of the beautiful breasts" seems to wear the visage of a hag. Of a sudden an exquisite apparition comes into view; up the spine of the double combe, something shining like new-born light—or as a banner victorious over death and despair—the pure wild cherry in bloom:

> "I knew it: with her, my own,
> Had hailed it pure of the pure;
> Our beacon yearly."

There are moments of life quickened by pain or by joy, when we become chords sensitive to every musical touch of Nature. Suddenly, by this sight of the shining tree and the sound of the children's voices at their maying, maternal Earth gains entrance to the sufferer's spirit, and a harmony is re-established between heart and brain and soul, which enables him to think sanely and face his sorrow with manly courage. Not, indeed, that Nature sympathises with our grief, or gives tear for tear; we weep, bleed, writhe, and she is unmoved. Nor, when we question her of the life beyond earth does she

give one sign. Her wheels roll on; to implore them to pause is the cry of unfaith. To catch at comfort in legends is but an indulgence of our weakness.

> "Earth yields not for prayer at her knees;
> The woolly beast bleating will shear.
> These are our sensual dreams."

Nor will she answer those questions that neither sow nor reap. But one thing Earth gives us, and that the one thing needful—harsh wisdom, her medicinal herb. Not through pathetic fallacies about Nature, not through legends—once useful for man's growth, but now an evil opiate—shall we win such strength as is attainable, but rather through reality and the true reading of the law of life. And what is this law, but the law of growth from sense to spirit through change and through pain, until a warrior's heart and a reasonable soul are formed within us—

> "Mirror of Earth, and guide,
> To the Holies from sense withheld"?

If Reason be once active and armed in us, she will wrestle with that old worm, self; she will pierce the brute in us; her light will cleanse the foul recesses of his den; and through our service to her the well of the sorrows within us may also be cleansed:—

> "For a common delight will drain
> The rank individual fens
> Of a wound refusing to heal
> While the old worm slavers its root."

And so the sufferer, doomed to the loss of his dearest one, can meet his trial with a human heart:—

> "I bowed as a leaf in vain,
> As a tree when the leaf is shed

To winds in the season at wane :
And when from my soul I said,
'May the worm be trampled : smite
Sacred Reality !' power
Filled me to front it aright.
I had come to my faith's ordeal."

There are indeed questions which remain unanswered. It is not enough that we should learn the lesson of our Earth—how through strife and anguish the flesh grows up into the spirit ? And as for spirit, it does not rave about a goal; it needs not anthropomorphic idols; it desires neither celestial splendours nor the sleep of annihilation ; it can trust the purpose of Earth ; it uses Earth's gifts and aspires ; it dreams of something higher than itself, and such dreams —those of Reason "at the ultimate bound of her wit"—are serviceable as an atmosphere and widening horizon for the soul, dreams untouched by the lusts of ease and sensual comfort, dreams of the blossom of good, which are as a banner unrolled for battle, upheld by Reason as it presses onward to find the Reason higher than itself, which also we name not Reason, but Beneficence. Mr Meredith's conclusion of the whole matter, in "A Faith on Trial," is expressed more concisely in the closing stanza of his lyric, *The Question Whither :*

"Then let our trust be firm in good,
Though we be of the fasting ;
Our questions are a mortal brood,
Our work is everlasting.
We children of Beneficence
Are in its being sharers ;
And Whither vainer sounds than Whence,
For word with such wayfarers."

If it be alleged that such cheerful optimism as this is

a matter of temperament Mr Meredith answers "No; it is a truth of Reason, tested by the test of experience bitter to the flesh, and not found wanting."

To discover the teaching of Mr Meredith I have had resort chiefly to poems which deal with the interpretation of nature; but it is obvious that the true meanings of Earth, as Mr Meredith conceives them, can be read only through humanity viewed as the chief offspring of Earth. The secret of Earth is to be found neither in the solitude of the fields nor in turbid cities; it is known only to those who pass to and fro between nature and man:

> "They hearing History speak, of what men were,
> And have become, are wise. The gain is great
> In vision and solidity; it lives.
> Yet at a thought of life apart from her,[1]
> Solidity and vision lose their state,
> For Earth, that gives the milk, the spirit gives."

Solidity and vision—these are the needs of a worthy student of life; solidity, growing from a patient mastery of facts, so that the vision may be other than that of the phantast; vision, as of a true seer, so that the student may be more than a myopic specialist and mere accumulator of details. The sentimental or pseudo-romantic feeling for nature, which flies to its glooms and grandeurs, or to its pastoral innocences, as a refuge from human society is, with Mr Meredith, material for scorn. This is the "bile and buskin attitude" of Byron in his *Manfred* and *Childe Harold*; and in the duel between Byron—with his dreams of indigestion, his sham misanthropy, his hinted horrors—and "the world

[1] Earth.

of spinsterdom and clergy," there is excellent substance for a comedy. Standing beside the glacier-green Rosanna as it foams and tumbles through its ravine of the Stanzer Thal, Mr Meredith sees in its eddying rush, its passion, joy, and trouble, an image of London or—shall we say?—of life:—

> "Here's devil take the hindmost too;
> And an amorous wave has a beauty in view;
> And lips of others are kissing the rocks:
> Here's chasing of bubbles, and wooing of rocks."

To an Arcadian dreamer such fancies must seem a profanation of the sanctity of the spot; for is it not the naiad's haunt? "Most certainly it is," replies Mr Meredith, "but what is the present use of your naiad? If she be useless, she stands condemned by art as no creature of true beauty. Will she fly with the old gods, or join with the new? Come: let us put the naiad to the test."

> "What say you, if, in this retreat,
> While she poises tiptoe on yon granite slab, man,
> I introduce her, shy and sweet,
> To a short-neck'd, many-caped London cabman?"

Why not? A scientific professor would prove that she is a mere foam-bow; and a nymph on sufferance must not act my Lady Scornful. In other words, if sentiment cannot wed fact, sentiment must vanish as unfit for this century of ours which honours reality. The nymph lacks a soul, which possibly she may get by wedding the wheezy cabman. Bear in mind that it is a little hard on him too; before he could plunge in the stream he must needs peel off a dozen capes! Thus, with the hearty animal spirits that come of open-air adventure

among Tyrolean heights, Mr Meredith plays with his grotesque allegory. But the meaning is a serious and sober one; he would point out the way in which the delicate spirit of solitary places may live and last—by mingling its life with that of humanity. And has it not in truth done so in the impulse and cheer which the poet bears back from the glacier-torrent to his own English home?

> "How often will these long links of foam
> Cry to me in my English home,
> To nerve me, whenever I hear them bellow,
> Like the smack of the hand of a gallant fellow!"

Were ever the gains of holiday travel more gaily recounted?

> "I give them my meaning here, and they
> Will give me theirs when far away.
> And the snowy points, and the ash-pale peaks,
> Will bring a trembling to my cheeks,
> The leap of the white flecked, clear light, green
> Sudden the length of its course be seen,
> As, swift it launches an emerald shoulder,
> And, thundering ever of the mountain,
> Slaps in sport some giant boulder
> And tops it in a silver fountain."

Here truly is the Rosanna brought into London, alive and splashing for Piccadilly, if it please.

Those who would make acquaintance with Mr Meredith's men and women may begin with the novels; and successive editions prove that now they need no advice to act thus wisely. But the men and women of the Poems form an interesting and varied group. The English figures of humble life, figures humorously treated, which are, perhaps, the best known of the group—Juggling Jerry and the Old Chartist—

are by no means the most admirable. The humour of these inventions, or the mingled humour and pathos, is somewhat crude and somewhat self-conscious; the moral is needlessly patent through the poem. I should not greatly grieve if the Patriot Engineer—a modern and degenerate Philip Falconbridge—were interned in some obscure portion of the territory of Limoges, Duke of Austria, where the railway system may need extension. But there is not one maid or wedded woman of Mr Meredith's poems, from the lissome beauty of *Love in the Valley* to Archduchess Anne, grim in her struggle between pride and passion, whom we could willingly forget. Even the "Fair Ladies in Revolt,"—though ladies in revolt are not always fair in aspect or in argument—show an admirable art in piercing masculine sophistries and current platitudes. Almost they persuade me to be laureate-logician of their company, though at the risk of becoming the most

"Fool-flushed old noddy ever crowned with buds."

"I like Mr Meredith best," says a critic with whom even to err would be still to remain bright and suggestive, "I like Mr Meredith best in *The Nuptials of Attila*." And in making choice of this masterly piece of narrative the critic perhaps has not gone astray. The enormous life and movement of the army of the Huns is brought visibly and audibly before us; the turbulent sea of humanity surges in our sight. And our sense of its vastness and its wildness gives us a measure of the power of that short, glittering-eyed, thin-bearded, square-chested ruler, who sways to his will this mass of

fiery force and passion. And yet there is one stronger than he. Is it Death the conqueror? Or can it be the cold, white girl, his one-night bride, whose fist is no larger than a summer fig:—

> "Huddled in the corner dark,
> Humped and grinning like a cat,
> Teeth for lips!—'tis she! she stares,
> Glittering through her bristled hairs.
> Rend her! Pierce her to the hilt!"

For a moment longer we see her the central object of wild contention, but now in the calm fit of her insanity, combing her hair, "with quiet paws"; and then in the break up of the vast army Ildico disappears from view; of her we know no more than of a leaf rolled down the Danube.

The most important document in the study of the human heart which Mr Meredith has given us in verse is doubtless *Modern Love*. "Praise or blame," wrote Mr Swinburne, "should be thoughtful, serious, careful, when applied to a work of such subtle strength, such depth of delicate power, such passionate and various beauty" as this. Praise or blame seems each equally needless now; the poem has taken its place; there it is, and there it will remain. The critic's complaint that *Modern Love* deals with a deep and painful subject on which Mr Meredith has no conviction to express, was a natural outbreak of human infirmity; we all like to have the issues of a difficult case made clear; we all like to have a problem worked out to its solution. But in art, as in life, it is not always good policy to snatch at a near advantage:—

> "Oh! if we draw a circle premature,
> Heedless of far gain,
> Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
> Bad is our bargain!"

Sometimes it is more for our good that art should put a question courageously than that it should propose some petty answer to the question. In *Modern Love,* if Mr Meredith does not prescribe a remedy for the disease of marriage perverted from its true ends—unless that remedy be the general one of more brain, and so more spirit, more righteousness, more beneficence—he at least makes a careful diagnosis of the case. It is something to describe the phases of the malady, and to issue no advertisement of a quack nostrum. And in that silence which precedes one last low cry—"Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!" does not Mr Meredith make us feel, with a sense too deep for tears, how Pity pleads for Sin? and is not this something as helpful to us as if he had expressed "a conviction on a painful subject"?

One remarkable poem treats, not of a malady in the individual life, but of a crisis in the life of a nation, and here certainly Mr Meredith does not fail to express clear and sound convictions. The calamities of France in 1870 called forth two English chaunts of extraordinary poetic beauty and virtue, Whitman's cry of cheer amid the gloom, *O Star of France,* and Mr Meredith's noble ode, first published in *The Fortnightly Review.* Both poems are inspired by love and grief and hope; but Mr Meredith, having "convictions to express," does not refrain from words of warning and of counsel. France is honoured by him as the possessor of what he values

so highly—"brain;" and being "Mother of Reason" she is trebly cursed, because she not only feels and sees the cruel blow, but perceives that it is the just punishment of her misdeeds. "Inveterate of brain," let her put her insight to wise uses, and learn from whence true strength proceeds:—

> "For Strength she yearns,
> For Strength, her idol once, too long her toy.
> Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born:
> Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
> Train by endurance, by devotion shape
> Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
> It is the offspring of the modest years,
> The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws
> Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,
> The cause of man and manhood's ministers."

There is a country nearer to his beloved England than is her neighbour France, to which it were well if like counsel were tendered by Mr Meredith; and the lines which follow on the priestly blessing of banners flung abroad "in the game of beasts," are perhaps not grown altogether out of date.

Mr Meredith describes his first volume, the "Poems" of 1851, as "extinct." I have now said my say; but if space permitted I should willingly add a postscript on this rare volume. It has much in it that is graceful and even beautiful, and when Mr Meredith superintends a collected edition of his verse, he should follow Wordsworth's example, and admit, as one section, "Poems Written in Youth." Meanwhile curious readers, who have not had my own good fortune, may learn something about the poet's "Juvenilia," from Mr Le Gallienne's study of George Meredith.

To many persons, not long since, Mr Meredith's novels seemed to be the Woods of Westermain, dark, obscure, and unfrequented. Like Poliphilus, in the Renaissance allegory, they have now emerged out of the dark wood, and are about to refresh themselves from its waters. But in the magical woodcut of Fra Francesco Colonna's romance, at the moment when he stoops to drink, the attention of Poliphilus is arrested by a wondrously sweet song; with hand already scooped for the water, he pauses and looks up. I shall be pleased if this article touches for any reader of Mr Meredith's novels the nerve of hearing, and awakens his sense to the song of the bird.

THE POETRY OF ROBERT BRIDGES.

FATHER GERARD HOPKINS, an English priest of the Society of Jesus, died young, and one of his good deeds remains to the present time unrecorded. We were strangers to each other, and might have been friends. I took for granted that he belonged to the other camp in Irish politics, on the outskirts of which—and not on the outskirts only—a motley crew not pleasant to encounter had squatted. I learn from a notice of his life that among other distresses "the political dishonesty which he was forced to witness in Dublin, so tortured his sensitive spirit that he fell into a melancholy state"; and soon afterwards he died. Father Hopkins was a lover of literature, and himself a poet. Perhaps he did in many quarters missionary work on behalf of the poetry of his favourite, Robert Bridges. He certainly left, a good many years since, at my door two volumes by Mr Bridges, and with them a note begging that I would make no acknowledgment of the gift. I did not acknowledge it then; but, with sorrow for a fine spirit lost, I acknowledge it now.

Mr Bridges, more than some other men of letters, needed in those days a mediator between his work and the public. He has never learnt the art of self-advertisement. The interviewer has not appeared at Yattendon, or captured him in some shy nook on his

beloved Thames. Among poets he has been somewhat of a scholar-gipsy—

> "For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!—"

seen in the rare glimpses of limited black-letter issues from Mr Daniel's Oxford press—

> "In type of antique shape and wrapper gray."

But to-day Mr Bridges advertises his poems with their prices; and happily no critic has to discover him, for he has gradually revealed himself. There is comfort for the critic in this; and perhaps there is comfort also in the fact that he is not a poet with a mission; he has no new creed to proclaim to the age; he need fear no Robert Bridges Society. All he has to tell is that he loves beauty and loves love; and all he has done is to praise God in the best of ways by making some beautiful things.

The body of Mr Bridges' work is now considerable. A volume of lyrics, a volume of sonnets, a narrative poem, the libretto for an oratorio, an historical tragedy, a tragedy "in a mixed manner," a comedy "in the Latin manner," several other dramas, classical or romantic, and a searching study of the prosody of Milton—this is no inconsiderable achievement. And Mr Bridges has published nothing that is not carefully considered, and wrought to such excellence as can be conferred on it by studious and delicate workmanship. He is, doubtless, known best by his "Shorter Poems," to which in the latest edition has been added a fifth book until recently reserved for the possessors of Mr Daniel's limited issue. And it is not ill that he

should be first thought of as a writer of lyrics. So much excellent lyrical verse has been written by poets born within the last half century that it is difficult to conjecture an order of merit; but some persons will incline to believe that Mr Miles exercised a sound judgment when he named the eighth volume of his poetical encyclopædia (in which writers younger than Mr William Morris and younger than Mr Swinburne appear), "Robert Bridges and Contemporary Poets." The clan, though agile and shapely, are not of pre-eminent stature (I speak as one of the minor poets) but to overtop them should secure the respect of all. "The Emperor of Lilliput," said Gulliver, "is taller, by almost the breadth of my nail, than any of his court, which alone is enough to strike an awe into his beholders." Such an awe many of the writers in Mr Miles's eighth volume may well feel in presence of the author of *There is a Hill beside the silver Thames* and *The Winnowers.*

There is a lyric which is the direct outcry of passion transformed to art—such are some of the songs of Burns; a lyric which is the expression of profound and ardent contemplation—such are some of Wordsworth's poems; a lyric, which is architectonic in character, the product of an elaborate evolution—such are some of the odes of Gray. Mr Bridges' poems are seldom mere outcries of passion; they do not often explore the heights and depths of thought; they are in general of admirable evolution, but their design is rarely (save in the choral odes of his dramas) complex and of large dimensions. Elements of many and various kinds enter

into his volume of "Shorter Poems"—delicate observation, delight in external nature, delight in art, delight in love, gladness and grief, ethical seriousness, pensive meditation, graceful play of fancy. But all are subdued to balance, measure, harmony; and sometimes our infirmity craves for some dominant note, some fine extravagance, even some splendid sins. Mr Bridges' audacities are to be found in occasional phrases—often felicitous and of true descriptive or interpretative power, sometimes not felicitous—and in his metrical experiments. But in his metrical experiments there is nothing revolutionary; they are extensions of a true tradition in English verse; they amount to little more than nicely calculated variations of stress. No writer of verse understands his business better than Mr Bridges; and if finer and subtler harmonics are attained unconsciously or half-unconsciously by greater poets, our ear soon adapts itself to the delicate surprises and delicate satisfactions, which he has thought out and felt out as a skilled craftsman. He is no representative in English poetry of M. Réné Ghil's "école évolutive instrumentiste"; he has—it is likely—a prejudice against talking nonsense; but he has made curious inquisition into the sources of Milton's metrical effects, and in that great school he is an ingenious pupil.

Pleasure rounded with peace, a tender tranquillity with sudden impulses of joy give origin to some of the most beautiful of these lyrical poems. And the scenery of the upper and unsullied reaches of the Thames supplies a suitable environment for such moods. Mr

Bridges is a most exact observer of those natural phenomena which accord with his temper of mind; but his observation is not in the manner of a realism hard and unqualified; it is guided by a delicate instinct of selection; it is subject to a law of beauty; it is a quest, not for fact, but for delight. His eye can read the details, the minion type, in the book of nature; and it also can find rest or excitement in breadths of prospect —the still solitude of English downs, a woodland after the havoc of autumn gales, the scourge of the surf and sweep of the tides seen from the cliff. Spring and Summer are dear to him. No one who has read the "Shorter Poems" will forget the exquisite personification of Spring as the virgin-mother clad in green,

> "Walking the sprinkled meadows at sundown."

But he can also celebrate the joys of Winter in a fine sonnet (No. 10 of "The Growth of Love"), and one of his most admirable pieces of observation is the description of the London streets at morning after a night of snow. I will set side by side, as contrasted pieces of pictorial poetry, a stanza from *The Garden in September*, and a stanza from *The Downs*:—

> "Now thin mists temper the slow-ripening beams
> Of the September sun: his golden gleams
> On gaudy flowers shine, that prank the rows
> Of high-grown hollyhocks, and all tall shows
> That Autumn flaunteth in his bushy bowers:
> Where tomtits, hanging from the drooping heads
> Of giant sunflowers, peck the nutty seeds,
> And in the feathery aster bees on wing
> Seize and set free the honied flowers,
> Till thousand stars leap with their visiting:

> While ever across the path mazily flit,
> Unpiloted in the sun,
> The dreamy butterflies,
> With dazzling colours powdered and soft glooms,
> White, black and crimson stripes, and peacock eyes,
> Or on chance flowers sit,
> With idle effort plundering one by one
> The nectaries of deepest-throated blooms."

There is something of the rich lethargy of Autumn even in the versification of this elaborate stanza. In contrast let the opening of *The Downs* suffice :—

> "O bold majestic downs, smooth, fair and lonely ;
> O still solitude, only matched in the skies :
> Perilous in steep places,
> Soft in the level races,
> Where sweeping in phantom silence the cloudland flies ;
> With lovely undulation of fall and rise ;
> Entrenched with thickets thorned,
> By delicate miniature dainty flowers adorned."

Mr Bridges' poems have been censured for a lack of warm humanity, and, with the exception of certain poems of joy and love, his lyrics are not direct and simple utterances of passion. But many of his lyrics are charged with fine and tender human sentiment, and he can express moods of dejection and meditative sorrow as well as the happiness of lovers. There is poignant grief, purged of all that is violent, in the beautiful stanzas *On a Dead Child.* Even into his interpretation of nature an element of humanity enters. It was a bold enterprise, for any poet to attempt a new rendering of the nightingales' voices when Keats had been his predecessor; but there is magic in Mr Bridges' poem, *Nightingales,* and half the magic is won, not from the birds' songs, but from the heart of man. The poem

appears in the fifth book of "Shorter Poems," which is less known than its predecessors :—

"Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom
Ye learn your song :
Where are those starry woods ? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long.

"Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams :
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

"Alone aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret : and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs of May,
Dream while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn."

There is something of southern radiance and southern desire in the imagination and sentiment of this poem, and, in several instances, Mr Bridges has found his masters and models in Italian literature. Yet he is characteristically English in most of his shorter poems ; and the fineness of beauty and reserve of passion in English landscape accord with his peculiar character as a poet.

It is difficult to turn away from the lyrics, for though they would fill only a slender volume, Mr Bridges has been fastidious as regards his work, and has admitted no verse into his collection which has not some grace of its own. But other parts of his poetical achievement must be noticed.

Of his narrative, *Eros and Psyche,* Mr Bridges writes with modesty, it "neither pretends to originality nor loftiness. The beautiful story is well known, and the version of Apuleius has been simply followed." The subject did not escape the writers of the seventeenth century; it was treated in a graceful narrative poem by Shackerley Marmion, and in dramatic form by Thomas Heywood, in his *Love's Mistress.* Mr Bridges' poem certainly gains much upon Mrs Tighe's *Psyche,* by the fact that the writer does not flourish over the narrative with fancies and reflections of his own. Where Mr Bridges alters, it is in the direction of refinement—"a gentler treatment of the motive and the substitution of Hellenism for Latin vulgarity." The metre is a seven-line stanza of attractive form, in which the last line is bound by rhyme to the fourth line of the opening quatrain, and encloses the couplet formed by the fifth and sixth lines. Mr Bridges leaves the story half fairy-tale, half myth; a piece of fantasy, charming as such, but also bearing to the reader a spiritual meaning and moral. Anyone who chooses can set the poem by the side of Mr Pater's prose telling of the tale in "Marius the Epicurean," and it will not lose by the comparison; the verse, indeed, seems to flow more gently and gracefully, and with less self-conscious effort than the superintended, calculated, chastened, and enriched prose.

Probably no part of Mr Bridges' work is less generally known than his sonnets; but the fault does not lie with the public. If privacy be desired, it is not attained by a limited issue; the philistine of cul-

ture will pay the fee for an artificial curiosity; the true lover of poetry may be compelled prudently to count his pence. The securest privacy, if indeed the poet be undiscoverably "hidden in the light of thought," is publicity. One cannot for a moment suppose that Mr Bridges courts an illustrious obscurity, or would enhance an occult fame by having the sumptuous bushel at hand at the moment when the candle is lighted. Sometimes, it is true, the bushel is a more impressive advertisement than the farthing dip, but Mr Bridges' candle is of a kind to carry light to many in the house. *The Growth of Love* deserves the good fortune that befalls books when they fare forth to choose lovers out of the crowd—those who in a book hear the right voice and follow it. The sonnets many of the Italian, a few of the English, model—are nearly fourscore in number, some of them forming a sequence, some standing apart, or permitting themselves to be lightly detached. Love, as Mr Bridges treats it, is no isolated passion of our nature, but runs into all the higher joys and connects itself with all the deeper sorrows of the spirit. It is a tributary of beauty, of thought, of art, of devotion, or these are tributaries of it. His treatment of the theme is subtle, delicate, refined; but his subtlety seldom takes the form of metaphysical conceits. I shall not follow the writer through his fine trains of feeling, his radiances and sadnesses, but present to the reader two sonnets which, without loss, can be separated from the rest, and which will probably be new to many lovers of poetry. In Mr Daniel's beautiful edition the poems are without titles,

but I will name the first of these sonnets *Anglo-Indians in Florence,* and the second shall be *The Iron Ship.*

ANGLO-INDIANS IN FLORENCE.

"Say whose be these light-bearded sunburnt faces,
In negligent and travel-stained array,
That in the city of Dante come to-day
Haughtily visiting her holy places?
O these be noble men that hide their graces,
True England's blood, her ancient glory's stay,
By tales of fame diverted on their way
Home from the rule of Oriental races.

"Life-trifling lions these, of gentle eyes
And motion delicate, but swift to fire
For honour, passionate where duty lies,
Most loved and loving: and they quickly tire
Of Florence, that she one more day denies
The embrace of wife and son, of sister or sire."

THE IRON SHIP.

"The fabled sea-snake, old Leviathan,
Or else what grisly beast of scaly chine
That champed the oceanwrack, and swashed the brine
Before the new and milder days of man,
Had never rib nor bray nor swingeing fan
Like his iron swimmer of the Clyde or Tyne,
Late born of golden seed to breed a line
Of offspring swifter and more huge of plan.

"Straight is her going, for upon the sun
When once she hath looked, her path and place are plain:
With tireless speed she smiteth one by one
The shuddering seas and foams along the main:
And her eased breath when her wild race is run
Roars through her nostrils like a hurricane."

We pass from Mr Bridges' narrative and lyrical poetry to his dramatic writings. *The Tragedy of Nero* gives us a sense of the limit of his powers. To speak

of the play is perhaps premature, for a second part, which has not yet appeared, is promised.[1] The first part deals with that period of the evil Cæsar's reign when his wife, Octavia, was still living, though fallen out of favour; when Poppæa was rising to power, when Agrippina was desperately plotting to recover her authority, and young Britannicus, having become an offence to the tyrant, was ruthlessly spurned out of his way. The action closes, as Gray designed his tragedy to close, with the murder of Agrippina. It thus extends beyond the limit of time in Racine's great tragedy, and does not arrive at the years which furnish the subject of that remarkable play so daringly and finely wrought by an unknown English poet and scholar towards the close of James I.'s reign. Comparisons, full of danger, but inevitable, are suggested by a modern tragedy having Nero for its chief personage. Racine, admirable always in his female figures, and in *Britannicus* admirable in his presentation of the graceful man-tiger, not yet full-grown in cruelty, is indeed unapproachable; and the nameless Jacobean poet has left an eminent achievement in dramatic art. Mr Bridges has brought study to the aid of imagination, thought, and skill; yet with some readers the feeling must constantly be present that he is always falling below a lofty theme and missing the great possibilities of his tragedy. In his *Prometheus*, as he informs us, "all the characters are good." Mr Bridges is happiest in his treatment of such characters; he exhibits varieties of delicately coloured pleasure more successfully than

[1] See note at the end of this article.

deep passions. A group of criminals should not be drawn in pastel. There is excellent dramatic writing in *Nero;* as, for example, in the interview between Agrippina and her son in the fourth scene of the second Act. But to fall short of complete success in a work of such high intention is to fail completely; and by those who know what great tragedy is it cannot be maintained that Mr Bridges has succeeded.

If Mr Bridges has done anything which may be stigmatised as clever, it is his attempt to reproduce Menander for the English stage, through the medium of *The Feast of Bacchus,* a play founded on the "Heautontimorumenos" of Terence. Sainte-Beuve's articles on Terence in the "Nouveaux Lundis" open with a sigh: "Comme les goûts changent! comme le flot se déplace! comme il y a des branches tout entières de littérature qui défleurissent et se dessèchent!" Mr Bridges has made a gallant attempt to revive the Menandrian comedy; the intrigue is admirably evolved; a bright temper of youth lives throughout the play. But if *The Feast of Bacchus* be put upon a modern stage, it must, like some of the Elizabethan dramas, be "enacted at both the Universities," there to help some young imaginations to cross the gulf between the old world and the new. There is no position in art more difficult to maintain than that of a mediator between an ancient and a modern culture; it is easier to cross Niagara upon a tight-rope. Mr Bridges balances himself with rare skill; but his proceeding is after all a *tour de force.* We are tempted to exclaim, "Terence we know, and Pinero we know; but who art thou?" I am not sure

that the line of six stresses chosen by Mr Bridges as his metre, though it be "written according to rules of English rhythm," enhances the reader's enjoyment. The dramatic capacities of blank verse are infinitely wider and finer. George Colman was not a master of dramatic blank verse, though he could write it with credit; Mr Bridges has the utmost skill in the use of his instrument, but as regards the mere pleasure derived from form, I doubt whether an English reader will prefer his lines of six stresses to the somewhat wooden verse of Colman. A few lines chosen at random may serve as a test:—

"An old Corinthian woman
Now sojourns here, a stranger in these parts,
And very poor. It happened, of her daughter
My son became distractedly enamour'd;
E'en to the brink of marriage; and all this
Unknown to me: which I no sooner learnt
Than I began to deal severely with him,
Not as a young and love-sick mind requir'd,
But in the rough and usual way of fathers."

This is not like the verse of *The Tempest* or *The Winter's Tale*, the secrets of which are known to Mr Bridges; but it is respectable eighteenth-century writing. And now for the lines of six stresses:—

"There came to live in the city
A poor old widow woman from Corinth. She had a daughter,
With whom my son, who is just of age, fell madly in love.
Was even at the point to marry; but all without my knowledge.
However it came to my ears; and then I began to treat him
Unkindly, and not in the way to deal with a love-sick lad;
But after the usual dictatorial manner of fathers."

The fact that blank verse is farther removed from prose than the six-stressed line enables it—though

Colman may not have learnt the art—to attain a multitude of beautiful freedoms without licence, which if sought by the other form become licences, afflicting to an ear that cherishes the delicate law of rhythm. And hence its superiority for dramatic purposes.

Achilles in Scyros dramatises and refines upon the Achillean tradition handed down by Apollodorus. The hero of Troy, a youth of sixteen, by the device of his mother, Thetis, is hidden upon the island of Scyros as a maiden, among the maiden companions of Princess Deidamia, daughter of the old King Lycomedes. An oracle has declared that the expedition to recover Helen must fail if he be not a leader of the war, and Ulysses, accompanied by Diomede, lands upon the island with the resolve not to depart until he has discovered the object of his search. The young champion has already given his heart to Deidamia, and she, though ignorant of his sex, has a joy in the tall, protective Pyrrha, which she had never felt before in the presence of any playfellow. The conflict of the drama is between love and honour, and between the craft of a sea-goddess and that of the most experienced and astutest of mortals :—

> "As smooth of face as tongue, gentle in voice
> But sturdy of body, and 'neath his helm his locks
> O'er a wide brow and restless eye curl forth
> In ruddy brown."

But Ulysses will not appear among the Scyrian maids in his proper form; he steals upon them at their play in ragged garb and hoary beard as a pedlar, provided with such gawds and trinkets as tickle girlish

fancies, and with one article of barter—a sword—which may serve as the test of manhood :—

> "There is a hunter with his game, a lion,
> Inlaid upon it : and on the other side
> Two men that fight to death."

The disguised Pyrrha turns away from the ruby brooch which Deidamia has chosen for her favourite, and handles the sword with longing—at which moment and with the cry of "Achilles," the pedlar, pulling off his beard and head-dress, leaps up, and betrays Ulysses, and on the instant there stands before him no maiden but the young hero arrayed in the shining armour—the gift of Thetis—which he had worn beneath his feminine robe. At the close, Achilles places his fate in the hands of the princess—if she set their mutual pleasure above his honour, he will call that duty :—

> "But, as I know her, if she bid me go
> Where fate and danger call ; then I will go,
> And so do better : and very sure it is,
> Pleasure is not for him who pleasure serves.
> *Deid.* Achilles, son of Thetis ! As I love thee,
> I say, go forth to Troy."

But Achilles does not join the fleet at Aulis until he has won his bride.

Through the whole play there is charm. Action, character, and dialogue are all contrived with skill and grace ; and if something of modern sentiment is added to the classical subject, it does not produce any sense of incongruity in a drama which is confessedly "in a mixed manner," which brings the antique over to the romantic. The wedlock of Helena and Faust has taken place long since in Christian art, and the voice

of their child Euphorion may be heard in such lines as these :—

Ach. "See, while the maids warm in their busy play,
We may enjoy in quiet the sweet air,
And thro' the quivering golden green look up
To the deep sky, and have high thoughts as idle
And bright, as are the small white clouds becalmed
In disappointed voyage to the moon :
There is no better pastime.
Deid. I will sit with thee
In idleness, while idleness can please.
Ach. It is not idleness to steep the soul
In nature's beauty : rather every day
We are idle letting beauteous things go by
Unheld, or scarce perceived. We cannot dream
Too deeply, nor o'erprize the mood of love,
When it comes on us strongly, and the hour
Is ripe for thought."

And again, where Thetis declares herself to Deidamia there is a translation of classicism into romance :—

"I Thetis am, daughter of that old god
Whose wisdom buried in the deep hath made
The unfathomed water solemn, and I rule
The ocean-nymphs, whose pastime is to play
In the blue glooms, and darting here and there
Chequer the dark and widespread melancholy
With everlasting laughter and bright smiles."

But with what charm these lines interpret the mirth and the solemnity of ocean.

The Return of Ulysses converts into drama the closing scenes in Homer's *Odyssey*. The possibility of throwing the epic action into dramatic form had been suggested by Aristotle ; but the reader can hardly help coming to Mr Bridges' play with a foreboding of failure. He closes it in a pleasant surprise crying, "How well it goes !" And his final thought is too likely to be

the ungrateful one, "But why, after all, should this have been written?" The drama is wrought with great skill; the action is conducted ingeniously; there is bright dialogue, with genuine dramatic play of mind in it; the characters are happily conceived. Yet everywhere the drama seems to offer us something inferior to what we already possess. Ingratitude to Mr Bridges for having done well seems to be inevitable. There are things in the play, however, for which any but a churlish reader must thank him. The bard Phemius has sung an ode to sad music in the presence of Ulysses and the wooers, when Penelope suddenly enters with her attendant maids:—

Ulysses (aside). "I see the beacon of my life undimmed.
Penelope. Hush ye these mournful strains!—'tis music's skill
To comfort and wean sorrow's heart away
With beautiful distractions from its woe
Not to be plunged therein, and chafe remembrance
With added echoes. Oh, I have wept enough.
Would you my life should faster waste in grief,
That ye must widen more its aching channels
With melancholy dirges? These are fit
For souls at ease; ay, such as ye, my lords,
Who feel no thorns prick you, may love to drink
The soft compunctious mimicries of woe.
But me with all your pleasures still ye vex,
In mine own house, forgetful of my wounds."

And in the following lines Penelope describes to her disguised husband the difficult life of hope that anguishes from hour to hour:—

"What is man's hope, good friend?
Is't not a beggar in the land of doubt,
Seeking as thou shelter and fire and food
From day to day? and, while she finds a little,
She travels on, comforting life's affections
With scraps and crumbs fall'n from the dish of joy.

> 'Tis thus hope lives, patient and pleasureless :
> But time will come when hope must die ; she feels
> The gathering cold and creeping touch of death,
> And hath no thought but how to pass in peace."

The excellence of the entire work is without strain ; and yet all the time the poet is striving in the impossible task of doing again, and in a different way, what has been done once for all, and absolutely. Why should he set himself to string Ulysses' bow ?

The scene of *Palicio* is in Sicily, at Palermo and on the hills above Monreale. The play is partly derived from what Mr Bridges concisely describes as "a bad French story," Stendhal's "Vanina Vanini," in the *Chroniques Italiennes*; but Stendhal's carbonaro of the nineteenth century is transported to somewhere about the year 1500, the character of Vanina is ennobled in that of Margaret, and the denouement is changed to one of happy love. The people of Palermo, moved by rumours of the death of the Spanish king, are in revolt against the unpopular viceroy, Hugo ; and Palicio—a brigand though of noble blood—has espoused the popular cause. He is taken prisoner, but escapes, and seeks shelter, wounded and disguised as a woman, in the house of his distant kinsman Manuel, the Chief Justiciary. Before she has seen him, Margaret, the beautiful sister of the Justiciary, has allowed her imagination to play around the story of the brigand's heroism :—

> "Forgive me, friends ; I see
> This man's your master, and I like him for it.
> Bravery I love, and there's no cause so poor
> It cannot justify."

She has observed by moonlight her brother bearing across the court a fainting woman whom he has secreted in a chamber of the house; she resolves to unravel the mystery, obtains admission to the chamber, and, in the wounded woman, discovers the brigand, Palicio. The aid of a surgeon is required, and Margaret leads her lover — devoted though unrewarded — the physician Rosso, who submits to be blind-folded, to effect the brigand's cure. When Palicio had recovered, and joins his comrades in the hills, Margaret follows him. But in order to save him from the dangers of a rash enterprise against the Viceroy, she (like her prototype in the "bad French story") betrays the names of his fellows, who in good time are placed under arrest. Palicio, with a gallantry, which is at once Margaret's admiration and despair, resolves to share their fate, and yields himself to the authorities. Margaret visits him in prison, confesses her plot against his rashness, and, when his indignation breaks forth against her, she falls seemingly lifeless at his feet. Palicio is stricken with remorse, rouses her from her swoon, and, upon her entreaty again flies from prison. At the close, the popular uprising is quelled by the announcement that Manuel has been appointed Viceroy in Hugo's place; the brigands are pardoned, and the hand of Margaret is placed in that of her lover, Giovanni Palicio.

The play, which its author entitles "a romantic drama in the Elizabethan manner," would indeed take good rank if found among the works of the later Elizabethans. The tangle of incident, of which I have followed only the main thread, is ingeniously ravelled

and unravelled. The dialogue is true dramatic dialogue. And the characters, if not strongly, are gracefully drawn. How true to the Elizabethan—or rather the Jacobean—manner, Mr Bridges has contrived to be, a fragment of dialogue and a soliloquy will show. Margaret is conversing with her lover on the hills above Monreale :—

Mar. "See here the flowers
I have plucked. Know'st thou, Giovanni, why they grow?
Pal. How meanest thou?
Mar. Why in one place one flower
Will grow and not another.
Pal. Canst thou tell?
Mar. The spirits of good men, allowed to wander
After their death about the mortal sites
Where once they dwelt, there where they love to rest
Shed virtue on the soil, as doth a ray
Of sunlight: but the immortal qualities
By which their races differ, as they once
Differed in blood alive, with various power
Favour the various vegetable germs
With kindred specialty. This herb, I think,
Grows where the Greek hath been. Its beauty shows
A subtle and full knowledge, and betrays
A genius of contrivance. Seest thou how
The fading emerald and azure blent
On the white petals are immeshed about
With delicate sprigs of green? 'Tis therefore called
Love-in-a-mist.
Pal. Who is this thistle here?
Mar. O, he, with plumèd crest, springing all armed
In steely lustre, and erect as Mars,
That is the Roman.
Pal. Find the Saracen.
Mar. This hot gladiolus, with waving swords
And crying colour.
Pal. And this marigold?
Mar. That is the Norman: nay, his furious blood
Blazes the secret. 'Tis said, where'er he roamed

This flower is common ; but 'tis in those climes
Where he wrought best it wears the strongest hue,
And so with us 'tis bravest.
Pal. And that's thy countryman !"

Palicio's outbreak of admiration for his brave Margaret in the last word gives a true dramatic ending to a passage of flower-poetry—perhaps as graceful as any written in drama since the incomparable one in which Perdita parted her blossoms between Camillo and Polixenes. Mr Bridges excels in the expression of exquisite pleasure. It is not very often that he utters as full a note of joy as that of Margaret's soliloquy when she sets forth to meet her lover on the hills :—

"O joy, my joy !
This beauteous world is mine :
All Sicily is mine :
This morning mine. I saw the sun, my slave,
Poising on high his shorn and naked orb
For my delight. He there had stayed for me,
Had he not read it in my heart's delight
I bade him on. The birds at dawn sang to me,
Crying 'Is life not sweet ? O is't not sweet?'
I looked upon the sea : there was not one,
Of all his multitudinous waves, not one,
That with its watery drift at raking speed
Told not my special joy. O happy lovers
In all the world, praise God with me. his angels
Envy us, seeing we are his favourites.
What else could grant such joy ? Now on my journey
Must I set forth to be a brigand's wife . . .
That's but the outward of it, and looks strange :
For, oh, the heart of it is a fire of passion
To lick up trifling life."

In the preface to his *Sicilian Summer*, Henry Taylor expressed a wish that it were possible, not indeed to repeat the comedy of the Elizabethan age, but to renew

the spirit that gave it birth. Fictions as they were written in the mid years of this century seemed to him powerful only to give pain; the writer seemed "to despair of getting an answer from the popular imagination in any other way than by breaking it on the wheel." On the contrary, romantic comedy, while light and sweet for the most part, can be, as the author of *A Sicilian Summer* alleges, in turn serious, pathetic, and still more eminently wise. Some part of Taylor's wish has been fulfilled in our own day by Mr Bridges, and among the elements of his dramas those pleasantries of wisdom, which Henry Taylor especially commends, are not absent.

The Humours of the Court lies somewhere between an original play and an adaptation of Calderon's *El secreto á voces,* a drama which long since furnished Gozzi with the material for his *Publico Secreto;* something also of which Mr Bridges makes due acknowledgment, is derived from Lope's *El perro del hortelano.* The reader, whose Spanish is small, can follow Mr Bridges to his sources through M'Carthy's translation of Calderon, and Eugène Baret's translation of Lope; but no such labour is needed for the enjoyment of what is in truth a delightful English comedy. There are two pairs of lovers, with a comic parallel, in proper Spanish fashion, in the love of servant-man and lady's-maid; and a plot of Calderon's construction is not likely to be lacking in bright ingenuity. Diana, Countess of Belflor, keeps her court with a code of fantastic, school-girl rules, involving fine and forfeit from the offenders. She secretly indulges the humour of her heart in a fancied passion—which is,

in reality, no more than love-in-idleness — for her secretary, Frederick; but Frederick's affections are set in all earnestness upon the Countess's adopted sister, Laura. Meanwhile, Frederick's old college companion, Richard, Duke of Milan, a rejected lover of Diana, visits her court in disguise, and lays his amorous plots with Frederick's assistance. We know how love-in-idleness is sometimes only a rehearsal for true hopes and fears and rapture; we remember how Shakespeare's Olivia can find in Sebastian another Cesario, and how readily Orsino can transfer his heart from Olivia to Viola. The god Amor in romantic comedy is not always the awful deity, but has in him somewhat of "der Schalk." When Diana at length bends before Ricardo's ardour, we are content to believe that she was not indifferent to him on that day when he first beheld her among the Graces and Madonnas in his Holiness's galleries at Rome, and that his presumption in first declaring his passion had not given the Countess too fatal an offence. The play is in truth a play, not striking deep to the dark places of the human heart, but living in the air and sunlight and among the songs of birds. It is fit reading for some glad holiday of summer.

The Christian Captives rehandles the subject of Calderon's *The Steadfast Prince*, and is partly founded upon that admirable play. The theme, involving the enthusiasm of honour, the zeals and even extravagances of pure passion, is better suited to the genius of the Spanish than to that of the English poet. The luminous ardours, the shining fantasies of Calderon are not aimed at or are not attained; and yet the

action of the dramatic personages embodies extremes of resolve and of desire which even pass beyond the bounds assigned to the characters of *El Principe Constante.* Almeh, daughter of the King of Fez, is beloved by the great general, now no longer young, Sala ben Sala, while her father designs her for the bride of Tarudante, Prince of Morocco. But she has hardly exchanged glances with Ferdinand, the captive Prince of Portugal, before she loves him, and with a love that is returned, or rather is anticipated. The same test of Ferdinand's constancy is proposed as in Calderon's play—will he deliver up the little town of Ceuta to the Moors, and the Prince's answer is in substance the same—the city is not his to give, a Christian city belongs to God. Imprisonment and starvation fail to overcome his resolution, and, while he suffers, Almeh—now a baptised Christian—voluntarily takes like trials and sufferings upon herself. Even the promise of freedom, with the Princess for his wife, cannot seduce Ferdinand from his loyalty to Portugal and Christ, and in an outbreak of rage the King of Fez stabs his captive. Almeh, seeking for the Prince in the moonlit garden, discovers the body in the arbour where it has been laid by the Christian captives, who form the chorus of the play, and she dies "upon a kiss." The victorious Portuguese, led by Ferdinand's brother, Prince Henry the Navigator, lay the bodies of the lovers in one grave in the Christian soil of Ceuta.

Chivalry, loyalty, courtesy, find beautiful expression in Mr Bridges' play; in the rendering of tragic passion he is less successful. The poet declines to provide purple

patches for the quotation of his critics; the dialogue is wrought into the action of the play. But Almeh's dream of the last Judgment is too impressive a piece of imagination to pass by, and if it be founded on any Spanish original—which probably is not the case—I do not know or I fail to recall it:—

"For in my dream I saw the spirits of men
Stand to be judged: along the extended line
Of their vast crowd in heaven, that like the sea
Swayed in uncertain sheen upon the bounds
Of its immensity, nor yet for that
Trespassed too far upon the airy shores,
I gazed. The unclouded plain, whereon we stood,
Had no distinction from the air above,
Yet lacked not foothold to that host of spirits,
In all things like to men, save for the brightness
Of incorruptible life, which they gave forth.
* * * * *
* * Then, as I gazed, and saw
The host before me was of men, and I
In a like crowd of women stood apart,
The judgment, which had tarried in my thought,
Began: from out the opposèd line of men
Hundreds came singly to the open field
To take their sentence. There, as each stepped forth,
An angel met him, and from out our band
Beckoned a woman spirit, in whose joy
Or gloom his fate was written. Nought was spoken,
And they who from our squadron went to judge
Seemed, as the beckoning angel, passionless.
Woman and man, 'twas plain to all that saw
Which way the judgment went: if they were blessed
A smile of glory from the air around them
Gathered upon their robes, and music sounded
To guide them forward: but to some it happed
That darkness settled on them. As a man
Who hears ill tidings wraps his cloak about him,
For grief, and shrouds his face, not to be seen;
So these by their own robes were swallowed up,

> That thinned to blackness and invisible darkness,
> And were no more. Thus, while I wondered much
> How two fates could be justly mixed in one,
> Behold a man for whom the beckoning angel
> Could find no answering woman, and I watched
> What sentence his should be; when I myself
> Was 'ware that I was called. A radiant spirit
> Waited for me. I saw Prince Ferdinand."

It is a vision which Rossetti might have put into colour, if Rossetti could have pictured a woman's face as that of God's calm, unerring doomster.

No one of Mr Bridges' plays is of higher intention than his *Prometheus the Fire-giver*, and in no play has he succeeded better in executing his design. In form it is classical, with a chorus of youths and maidens of the house of Inachus. But in reading it we think little of the classical or romantic tradition, the modern or antique; the drama is neither one of manners nor of intrigue; its spiritual motives are for ever old and for ever new—desire and hope, love and courage, and aspiration for the better life of man. King Inachus and his household are devout worshippers of Zeus as the supreme god; but in their hearts lives the desire for that which the harshness of Zeus has withdrawn from earth—fire, the needful condition of human progress, the source from which must spring the comfort, the joy, and the glory of man's existence. It is dreamed of, but is still unknown; the servant lays fir-cones and sticks and sun-dried logs ready for the sacrifice, but the flame to kindle them is lacking. On Zeus's festival the unknown Prometheus arrives at Argos, bearing in a reed the hidden spark. The king,

with patient and pious spirit, has come to accept the cruel decree of heaven, and yet the longing in his heart for fire—fire, the beneficent—is not dead. The first task of Prometheus is to rouse the king from his religious apathy or submission, to infuse faith and hope into his spirit, and convince him that the truest piety lies in loyalty to his purest desire. Even after Inachus has been won over, there are the womanly timidities of Queen Argeia to conquer, and Prometheus will cheat them with no illusion of unmingled personal joy in obtaining this gift of fire for the race—he sets forth the coming sorrow of the house in the metamorphosis of Io, and her wanderings through wild and distant lands. But faith is at last triumphant, and amid the enthusiastic songs of youths and maidens the flame leaps aloft from the pyre with bickering tongues. The choral odes are rhymed, and they close with one in praise of Prometheus, who, leaving his name inscribed on the altar, has disappeared on conferring his great gift. The blank verse is restrained, yet with an inward ardour, verse of steadfast wing, poised, but with an energy of advance.

Prometheus' vision of "fair Greece inhabited" is set forth in large, musical periods, such as could be written only by one who possessed a rare mastery of unrhymed heroic verse :—

> "Nature's varied pleasance
> Without man's life is but a desert wild
> Which most where most she mocks him needs his aid.
> She knows her silence sweeter when it girds
> His murmurous cities, her wide wasteful curves
> Larger beside his economic line ;

Or what can add a mystery to the dark,
As doth his measured music when it moves
With rhythmic sweetness through the void of night?
Nay, all her loveliest places are but grounds
Of vantage, where with geometric hand,
True square and careful compass he may come
To plan and plant and spread abroad his towers,
His gardens, temples, palaces and tombs.
And yet not all thou seest, with trancèd eye
Looking upon the beauty that shall be,
The temple-crownèd heights, the wallèd towns,
Farms and cool summer seats, nor the broad ways,
That bridge the rivers and subdue the mountains,
Nor all that travels on them, pomp or war,
Or needful merchandise, nor all the sails
Piloting over the wind-dapplèd blue
Of the summer-soothed Ægean, to thy mind
Can picture what shall be: these are the face
And form of beauty, but her heart and life
Shall they be who shall see it, born to shield,
A happier birthright with intrepid arms,
To tread down tyranny and fashion forth
A virgin wisdom to subdue the world,
To build for passion an eternal song,
To shape her dreams in marble, and so sweet
Their speech, that envious Time hearkening shall stay
In fear to snatch, and hide her rugged hand."

The entire drama has a grave, almost a religious, beauty. All the characters are good; there is no tragic passion, in the ordinary sense of the word; but Mr Bridges convinces our imagination that the meeting of Prometheus and Inachus is one of the great and eventful moments in the history of the life of man.

To attempt anything of the nature of a final estimate of Mr Bridges' work would be premature. My task has been a humbler one. I desire to make a gift of beauty more widely known to lovers of literature.

NOTE.

SINCE the above was written, "The Second Part of Nero" has been published. It deals with the conspiracy of Piso, and closes with the preparations of Seneca for death. The tragedy is written with more imaginative energy, and with a finer and stronger rendering of character, than the "First Part"; indeed, nowhere has Mr Bridges so nearly attained high tragic power as in the closing act of this play; the facts of history are followed, and are wrought together with admirable skill for dramatic purposes. For the sake of their beauty I will convey into my pages part of a speech addressed by Petronius to Piso, at a supper to which the conspirators have gathered in the house of Petronius:—

> "You little think
> What charm the witching night hath for her lovers
> How her solemnity doth deepen thought,
> And bring again the lost hellenic Muse
> To sing from heaven or on moonlit swards
> Of fancy shadows in transfigured scene
> The history of man.—Thus, like a god,
> I dwell; and take the early morning cries
> For calls to sleep; and from divinity
> Fall to forgetfulness, while bustling day
> Ravages life; and know no more of it,—
> Your riot and din, the plots and crimes of Rome,—
> Than doth a diver in Arabian seas,
> Plunging for pearls beneath the lonely blue
> But o'er my slumbering head soft airs of dreamland
> Rock their wild honey-blooms, till the shy stars
> Once more are venturing forth, and I awake.
> Is not that something?"

I could wish that the speech had ended with "the lonely blue."

THE POETRY OF JOHN DONNE.[1]

THE study of a great writer acquires its highest interest only when we view his work as a whole; when we perceive the relation of the parts to one another, and to their centre; when nothing remains isolated or fragmentary; when we trace out unity in variety; when we feel the pulse and the rhythm of life. I had hoped to speak of Donne the famous preacher as well as of Donne the poet, and to show how the same intellect and the same heart lived under the doublet of the poet, courtier, scholar, and the gown of the grave, yet passionate divine. But the task has proved too much for the limited time at my disposal. I must reserve for some other occasion what I have to say of the eloquent Dean of St Paul's. In presenting to Sir Robert Carr, afterwards Earl of Somerset, the unworthy favourite of James I., one of his early works, the author begs him to remember that "Jack Donne," not "Dr Donne," was the writer. It is of Jack Donne that I propose to speak this evening. After he had taken holy orders Donne seldom threw his passions into verse; even his "Divine Poems" are, with few exceptions, of early date; the poet in Donne did not cease to exist, but his ardour, his imagination, his delight in what is strange and wonder-

[1] Read before the Elizabethan Literary Society, May 7, 1890. The subject had been announced as "John Donne: his Verse and Prose."

ful, his tenderness, his tears, his smiles, his erudition, his intellectual ingenuities, were all placed at the service of one whose desire was that he might die in the pulpit, or if not die, that he might take his death in the pulpit, a desire which was in fact fulfilled.

The latest historian of Elizabethan literature, Mr Saintsbury, has said that Donne the poet should be regarded by every catholic student of English literature with a respect only "this side idolatry." There is indeed a large expense of spirit in the poems of Donne, an expense of spirit not always judicious or profitable, and the reader who comes with reasonable expectations will get a sufficient reward. When prospecting for gold the miner considers himself fortunate if he can reckon on finding some twenty-five pennyweights of the precious metal in a ton of quartz and wash-dirt. The prospecter in the lesser poetry of any former age must be content to crush a good deal of quartz and wash a good deal of sand in the expectation of an ounce of pure gold. But by vigour and perseverance in the pursuit large fortunes may be amassed.

Donne as a poet is certainly difficult of access. How shall we approach him, how effect an entrance? With different authors we need different methods of approach, different kinds of cunning to become free of their domain. Some must be taken by storm, some must be entreated, caressed, wheedled into acquiescence. There are poets who in a single lyric give us, as it were, a key which admits us to the mastery of all their wealth. Towards others we must make an indirect advance, we must reach them through the age which they represent,

or the school in which they have been teachers or pupils. It is as the founder of a school of English poetry that Donne is ordinarily set before us. We are told that in the decline of the greater poetry of the Elizabethan period a "metaphysical school" arose, and that Donne was the founder or the first eminent member of this school. I do not believe in the existence of this so-called "metaphysical school." Much of the most characteristic poetry of Donne belongs to the flood-tide hour of Elizabethan literature; to the time when Spenser was at work on the later books of the *Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare was producing his early histories and comedies. The delight in subtleties of thought, in over-ingenious fantasies, in far-fetched imagery, in curiosity, and not always felicitous curiosity, of expression was common to almost all the writers of the period. The dramatists were to some extent preserved from the abuse of fantastic ingenuity by the fact that they wrote for a popular audience, and must have failed unless they were at once intelligible. But authors of prose as well as authors in verse were fascinated by subtleties of the fancy; the theologian and the philosopher, as well as the poet, swung in the centre of a spider's web of fantasies,

> "All the waving mesh
> Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged."

There was no special coterie or school of "metaphysical poets," but this writer or that yielded with more *abandon* than the rest to a tendency of the time.

It is not then by studying Donne as the leader of a school that we shall come to understand him. We get

access to his writings, I believe, most readily through his life, and through an interest in his character as an individual. And fortunately he is the subject of a contemporary biography, which is one of the most delightful biographies in the language. We possess a large number of his letters, and for Donne friendship was almost a second religion, and to write a letter was often to give himself up to an ecstasy. The story of his life is an Elizabethan romance, made the more impressive by the fact that the romance is a piece of reality. The son of a London merchant, he had in his veins the blood of the poet John Heywood and that of the sister of Sir Thomas More. His two maternal uncles, members of the Society of Jesus, suffered persecution in their native land, and died in exile on the Continent. The little boy, left fatherless at the age of three, must have been a zealous student, for he was admitted at Hart Hall, Oxford, when in his twelfth year. While still hardly more than a child he travelled abroad for some three years, gaining a knowledge of French, Spanish and Italian. On his return he became a student of Lincoln's Inn, but he was more interested in poetry and theology than in the law. When he was twenty he was already known as a writer of high-conceited love lyrics, and led the way in another department of poetry as the first English satirist. He was the friend of wits and ladies and men of letters; he probably had known some of the bitter-sweets of forbidden pleasure. He had doubtless received a deep shock when his younger brother was thrown into prison for the crime of harbouring a seminary priest, and it may have been

this, as Dr Jessop suggests, which set him upon his study of the rival claims of the Protestant faith and of that Church in which he had been devoutly reared. In June, 1596, he was on shipboard as a volunteer in the expedition against Spain under the Earl of Essex. The soldier and sailor was by-and-by transformed into the Lord Keeper's secretary, and became acquainted with the intrigues and follies and fashions of the Court. And then came about the great happiness and the great misfortune of Donne's life—his passion for the niece of Lord Keeper Egerton's second wife—she sixteen years old, he nearly twenty-seven—their secret marriage, followed by the dismissal of the bridegroom from his patron's service, his disgrace and imprisonment, his subsequent poverty, with a constantly increasing family, the trials and fidelity of love, and the years of weary waiting for Court employment, during which time he dulled the sense of misery with what he terms "the worst voluptuousness, an hydroptique immoderate desire of human learning and languages." In the same letter—a melancholy one—in which he uses these words Donne speaks of his passion for meditation as being almost criminal in one who has duties to those dependent on him; even in that deep desire for a future world, which remained with him through good and evil fortune, he finds something of sin. He would not meet death in a lethargy, but confront it with the courage of a man of action; but how and where to act?—that was the question: "I would not that death should take me asleep. I would not have him merely seize me, and only declare me to be dead, but

win me and overcome me. When I must shipwrack, I would do it in a sea, where mine impotency might have some excuse; not in a sullen weedy lake, where I could not have so much as exercise for my swimming." We talk of melancholy as a disease of the nineteenth century; but Burton anatomised it more than two hundred years ago. Donne, in one of his sermons, speaks of the peculiar liability of men in his own time to "an extraordinary sadness, a predominant melancholy, a faintness of heart, a cheerlessness, a joylessness of spirit," and he exhorts his hearers to the duty of dilating the heart with holy gladness—the duty of a "true joy in this world that shall flow into the joy of heaven as a river flows into the sea." Doubtless he had himself known that sadness which comes from thought and desire that cannot be turned to active uses; doubtless he had often longed "to make to himself some mark, and go towards it alegrement," as he advises the friend to whom his mournful letter is addressed.

"I be in such a planetary and erratique fortune," he writes, "that I can do nothing constantly." Papist and Protestant; doubter and believer; a seeker for faith and one who amused himself with sceptical paradoxes; a solitary thinker on obscurest problems and "a great visitor of ladies," as Sir Richard Baker describes him, "a great frequenter of plays"; a passionate student longing for action; a reader of the law; a toiler among folios of theology; a poet and a soldier; one who communed with lust and with death; a courtier and a satirist of the court; a wanderer over Europe and one who lay

inactive in a sullen weedy lake without space for stroke of arms or legs—such was Donne up to his fortieth year. We have not now to consider him as he was in his later life, when all his powers were concentrated in the intense effort to plead with the souls of men—"a preacher in earnest," as Izaak Walton has pictured him, "weeping sometimes *for* his auditory, sometimes *with* them; always preaching to himself, like an angel *from* a cloud, but *in* none; carrying some, as St Paul was, to heaven in holy raptures, and enticing others by a sacred art and courtship to amend their lives. . . . and all this with a most particular grace and an inexpressible addition of comeliness." We have not now to think of Dr Donne, the preacher; but when we look at the portrait of Donne in his youth with right hand upon the sword, the jewelled cross pendant at his ear, and those other adornments which, as Walton says, might then suit with the present fashions of youth and the giddy gaieties of that age, and when we read his motto—

> "How much shall I be changed,
> Before I am changed!"

we are constrained to recall that other portrait executed by his own desire, in which he was represented with closed eyes, cadaverous face, and the winding sheet knotted at the head and feet. It was a morbid thought of Donne to be so pictured; but he had always lived in the presence of death; and undoubtedly, apart from the one great sorrow that his faithful wife was taken from him, the closing years of his life were the happiest years. He was no longer a

disappointed waverer; he had a supreme purpose; his powers were organised in a great cause; he had abundant evidence that he did not fight now as one that beateth the air. Donne, amid the pleasures of his youth, amid the studies of his early middle life, was not a happy man. Donne, as he feebly ascended the pulpit steps on that first Friday in Lent, with hollow cheeks and pallid lips, and gave forth with a tremulous voice the text of his own funeral sermon, "To God the Lord belong the issues from death," was filled with a joy that passeth understanding.

About the time when Donne wrote the melancholy letter to Sir Henry Goodere from which I have quoted, he wrote also the poem entitled *The Litanie*, and sent the manuscript to the same friend. Through this poem we can obtain, perhaps, a clearer insight into Donne's character than through any other that he has written. In a series of stanzas, full of spiritual ardour, he invokes the persons of the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, the Angels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and Doctors. He laments that he has fallen into ruin, that his heart by its dejection has turned to clay, that he who had been wasted by "youth's fires of pride and lust" is now weather-beaten by new storms; he prays that his perpetual inquisition of truth may not darken the spiritual wisdom within him:—

"Let not my mind be blinder by more light;"

He implores the "eagle-sighted Prophets" to petition on his behalf that he may not by their example excuse his excess

"In seeking secrets or poetiqueness;"

He hopes to win, through the blood of the martyrs, "a discreet patience," which may endure death, or life, and, if life, then without too passionate a longing for the grave:—

"For oh, to some
Not to be martyrs is a martyrdom!"

And then in his litany he passes on to a series of petitions, which seem to be veritable sighs of desire from his inmost heart. The general purport of these may be expressed by saying that they are prayers for temperance of mind, for a *via media* between the extremes and excesses natural to a temperament at once ardently sensual and ardently spiritual. Donne feels that in either extreme of passion he must lose himself. He fears that the world may be too much to him, and fears equally that it may be too little; he would not think that all happiness is centred in earth's brightest places, nor yet that this earth is only framed for our prison; he prays that we may be preserved from the danger "of thinking us all soul," and in consequence neglecting our natural duties; from the danger of indiscreet humility; from thirst of fame, and no less from an unjust scorn of fame; from contempt of poverty, and from contempt of riches. The bodily senses, he maintains, though often fighting for sin, are, in truth, not opposed to righteousness, but rather the "soldiers of God"; learning, which sometimes tempts us from our allegiance, is, in truth, "God's ambassador"; beauty, though it may be poisoned, is, in truth, a flower of Paradise made for precious uses. The whole poem

is directed against the temptations to which a man liable to the opposite violences of the flesh warring against the spirit, and the spirit warring against the flesh, is exposed. He fears a barren asceticism, or the sweet blindness of mystical devotion almost as much as he fears the world and the flesh. With both extremes he has been acquainted, and now would win, if possible, an "evenness" instead of his "intermitting aguish piety." He would especially seek deliverance from temptations of the intellect; from dwelling with an endless idle curiosity on nature, and so ceasing to bear his part in the life of the world, from a dilettante interest in religion, which uses it only as a mode of deploying a shallow intellectuality. The poem is the litany of the scholar, the courtier, the poet; it admits us to the secrets of its writer's troubled spirit.

Something of the same feeling appears in poems which are rather ethical than religious. Donne commends what he does not himself possess—a philosophical equanimity. In one of his letters in verse addressed to Sir Henry Wotton, he speaks of the various ways in which men lose themselves in cities, in courts, and in the solitude of the country, how the ideals of early life are corrupted and destroyed, so that if one of these men were to meet his true self there would scarcely be a recognition between the pair :—

> "They would like strangers greet themselves, being then
> Utopian youth grown old Italian."[1]

And then Donne proceeds to exhort his friend

[1] Italy being taken as the land of nameless vices, and so opposed to Utopia.

to seek for the tranquillity of a self-sufficing soul:—

> "Be then thine own home, and in thyself dwell;
> Inn anywhere; continuance maketh hell.
> And seeing the snail, which everywhere doth roam,
> Carrying his own house still, is still at home,
> Follow—for he is easy-paced—this snail:
> Be thine own palace, or the world's thy jail."

But it is not a barren quietism that Donne commends. Man's nature is at first a wilderness, which must by degrees be reclaimed, and then actively tilled, that it may bear the noblest fruits. We are familiar with Tennyson's exhortation in *In Memoriam*:—

> "Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die."

The same image is to be found in Donne's letter to Sir Edward Herbert, afterwards Lord Herbert of Cherbury:—

> "How happy's he which hath due place assigned
> To his beasts, and disafforested his mind."

Donne would have these beasts tamed and put to the uses for which they are best fitted. How happy, the poet goes on, is he who has

> "Empal'd himself to keep them out, not in;
> Can sow, and dares trust corn where they have bin,
> Can use his horse, goat, wolf, and every beast."

When the wilderness is reclaimed, then begins the vigorous tillage of the soil; as Donne elsewhere puts it:—

> "We are but farmers of ourselves, yet may,
> If we can stock ourselves and thrive, uplay
> Much, much good treasure for the great rent day."[1]

[1] To Mr Rowland Woodward, ed. 1669, p. 153.

The vital centre of some of Matthew Arnold's poems, in which he tells of the pains of outward distraction and inward division, may be found in his exhortation to us to "rally the good in the depths of ourselves," or in such a line as that which concludes the remarkable sonnet suggested by words of Marcus Aurelius :—

> "The aids to noble life are all within."

Donne preaches no such Stoical gospel constantly; but he, too, can at times take a Stoical text for his discourse :—

> "Seek we then ourselves in ourselves; for as
> Men force the sun with much more force to pass
> By gathering his beams with a chrystal glass,
>
> So we, if we into ourselves will turn,
> Blowing our spark of virtue, may out-burn
> The straw which doth about our hearts sojourn."

There is some danger in the pride of Stoicism; in the notion that one has attained; in the tendency to look down as from a pinnacle, rather than up towards the endless height yet to be climbed. In our own day no poet has expressed so nobly as Robert Browning the unsatisfied aspiration of the soul after perpetual progress. What though the body stand still or decline, the soul only rises from the body's decay, and spreads wings for a farther flight. We remember the exultant spiritual advance of Rabbi ben Ezra amid the growing infirmities and sadnesses of old age. Browning hardly expressed this prerogative of the soul with more imaginative energy than Donne in his letter to Sir Henry Goodere :—

"A palace, when 'tis that which it should be,
Leaves growing, and stands such, or else decays;
But he which dwells there is not so; for he
Strives to urge upward, and his fortune raise:

So had your body her morning, hath her noon,
And shall not better; her next change is night.
But her fair larger Guest, to whom sun and moon
Are sparks and short-liv'd, claims another right."

Donne apologises in this poem for his moralisings, which might as well be found, he says, at the end of fables or in the mottoes inscribed on fruit-trenchers. Even if this were true, we might read what he has written in this kind with interest. Much of a man's character and inmost experience is revealed by the selection which he makes from among the commonplaces of morality. When a truism strikes us as eminently true, it must have been vivified for us by some passage of the inner life, some moral victory or moral failure.

Several of Donne's most interesting poems are connected with incidents of his personal history, and gain an added interest from the fact that they are autobiographical. Few lovers of poetry are unacquainted with the Elegy addressed perhaps to his young wife when he thought of quitting his native land, and the ardent girl—a Shakespearian Viola in real life—proposed to accompany him in the disguise of a page. There is a vigour of movement, a strong coherence, a freedom from conceits in these lines which is not always, or perhaps very often, to be found in a like degree in Donne, and which we may ascribe to the fervour and directness of his feeling:—

"By our first strange and fatal interview,
By all desires which thereof did ensue,
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
Which my words' masculine-persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts which spies and rivals threatened me,
I calmly beg; but by thy parents' wrath,
By all pains which want and divorcement hath
I conjure thee; and all those oaths, which I
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy,
Here I unswear and overswear them thus—
Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous;
Temper, O fair love, Love's impetuous rage,
Be my true mistress still, not my feign'd page."

Touches of dramatic power are rare in Donne, whose genius was lyrical and meditative, not that of a dramatist; but in this Elegy there is one touch which might seem of triumphant power even if it had occurred in a tragedy by Webster. Having pictured the dangers to which his lady would be exposed in foreign lands, where, in spite of her garb of a boy, all would spy in her

"A blushing womanly discovering grace,"

Donne goes on to exhort her, for his sake, to be of good cheer, and to dream no ill dreams during his absence:—

"Nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight startings, crying out, 'Oh! Oh!
Nurse, oh! my love is slain! I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him, I,
Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.'"

All the greatness and terror of external nature are here made subservient to the passion of a girl's heart in that midnight cry—"I saw him go o'er the white Alps alone."

There are other poems of parting which probably refer

to later seasons of their writer's life. The births of Donne's children followed each other at no long intervals; and it was when his wife looked forward to hours of trial and danger that he was urged by Sir Robert Drury to be his companion on a visit to the court of the French king, Henry IV. When Isaac Walton, speaking of the unwillingness of Mrs Donne to let her husband part from her on this occasion, quotes the words, "her divining soul boded her some ill in his absence," he was, in fact, citing them from the exquisite lyric of parting which begins with the lines:—

> "Sweetest love, I do not go
> For weariness of thee,
> Nor in hope the world can show
> A fitter love for me."

Two days after Donne's arrival in Paris, he saw, at midday, a vision of his wife pass before him twice, with her hair hanging about her shoulders, and a dead child in her arms. Her ill-divining fears were in fact realised; the infant of which she was delivered died at birth. Walton refers to the same occasion of parting Donne's *Valediction, forbidding to mourn,* in which occurs the quaint image of the two feet of the compass, one fixed, the other moving, and each inseparably united to the other. The poet prays for a mild departure, without violences of grief, like that of a good man when leaving his friends on earth in a tranquil death:—

> "So let us melt, and make no noise,
> No tear-floods nor sigh-tempests move;
> 'Twere profanation of our joys
> To tell the laity our love."

It will be for some close investigator of the facts of

Donne's life—for Dr Jessop, let us hope—to attempt to ascertain the precise occasions of several of his poems. I like to think that it is of his young bride and the new glad morning of life which he found in her love that he speaks in his *Good-morrow* :—

"I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did till we loved : were we not wean'd till then,
But suck'd on childish pleasures seelily ?
Or slumber'd we in the Seven Sleepers' den ?
'Twas so ; but as all pleasures fancies be,
If ever any beauty I did see
Which I desired and got, 'twas but a dream of thee."

And I suppose there can be little doubt that it is the first annual return of the day of his meeting with her which is celebrated in another poem, written before marriage, and entitled *The Anniversary.* The two lovers are a king and a queen, and what king and queen so safe as they, whom no reason can assail ?

"True and false fears let us refrain.
Let us love nobly, and live, and add again
Years and years unto years, till we attain
To write three-score : this is the second of our reign."

A Lecture upon the Shadow, one of the most admirable of Donne's shorter poems, has in it a touch of fear lest love may, indeed, pass its meridian and decline towards the west. The poet undertakes to read his mistress a lecture in love's natural philosophy ; as they walked side by side in the morning hours, the eastern sun threw their shadows behind them on the ground ; so it was in the early days of secret love, when they practised disguises and concealment upon others ; but now it is love's full noon, and they tread all shadows under foot :—

"That love hath not attain'd the highest degree
Which is still diligent lest others see."

But what if the sun of love decline westerly? Then the shadows will work upon themselves and darken their path; each of them will practise disguisings upon the other:—

"The morning shadows wear away,
But these grow longer all the day,
But oh, love's day is short, if love decay."

Unfaith in aught, sings Vivien, is want of faith in all, and Donne's *Lecture upon the Shadow* closes with the same truth—or shall we say sophism?—of an ardent heart:—

"Love is a growing, or full constant light:
And his short minute after noon is night."

The love of Donne and his wife may, perhaps, have known some of the cloudy vicissitudes incident to all things on earth, but it never waned. After her death, which took place before the days of his worldly prosperity as Dean of St Paul's, "his first motion from his desolated house was," says Walton, "to preach where his beloved wife lay buried, in St Clement's Church, near Temple Bar, London; and his text was a part of the Prophet Jeremiah's Lamentation: '*Lo I am the man that have seen affliction.*'"

In several of his early poems Donne, with his delight in paradox and dialectical ingenuity, maintains that love must needs range and change with boundless inconstancy:—

"Change is the nursery
Of music, joy, life, and eternity."

It is, he declares, the very law of man's nature; and

as for woman, a fair woman and a true may be found when we can catch a falling star, or translate the mermaid's song, or tell who cleft the devil's foot. We cannot doubt that Donne himself had followed false fires of passion before he found his true home of love. But it were rash to take all his poems of intrigue as passages of autobiography. He sometimes wrote best, or thought he wrote best, when his themes were wholly of the imagination. Still it is evident that Donne, the student, the recluse, the speculator on recondite problems, was also a man who adventured in pursuit of violent delights which had violent ends. I cannot think that the Elegy entitled *The Perfume,* has reference to an incident in his secret wooing of Ann More, his wife to be; if there be any autobiographical truth in the poem, it must be connected with some earlier passion. Once and only once, the Elegy tells us, was the lover betrayed in his private interviews with his mistress; her little brothers had often skipped like fairy sprites into the chamber, but had seen nothing; the giant porter at the gate, a Rhodian colossus—

> "The grim eight-foot-high iron-bound serving-man,"

for all his hire could never bear witness of any touch or kiss. Who then was the traitor? Not silks that rustled nor shoes that creaked. It was the courtier's perfume, scenting the air, as he crept to the chamber of his beloved, which betrayed his presence; whereupon the narrator breaks forth into reproaches against the effeminacy of perfumes, of which the one happy use

were to embalm the corpse of the father who had interrupted their delights:—

> "All my perfumes I give most willingly
> To embalm thy father's corpse. What, will he die?"

We can well believe that in this poem Donne has set his fancy to work and created what he thought a piquant incident out of the stuff of dreams.

The Picture seems clearly to have been written on the occasion of his voyage as a volunteer with the Earl of Essex, or to have been suggested to his imagination by some such soldierly adventure. As he starts on his seafaring he bids farewell to his beloved, and places his picture in her hands. Thoughts of death fly like shadows across his mind; even if he should ever return, he will come back changed, with rough and weather-beaten face, his hand, perhaps, grown coarse from labour at the oar, and tanned by the sun, his skin speckled with blue marks of the powder-grains:—

> "If rival fools tax thee to have loved a man
> So foul and coarse as, oh, I may seem then,
> This [his picture] shall say what I was."

His lady will have the greater joy in knowing that she still owns her full beauty to bestow on one so worn, and will feel that the loss of what was fair and delicate in him is more than compensated by the manlier complexion of his love. There is no doubt that two descriptive poems, *The Storm* and *The Calm*, record some of Donne's experience on the Spanish expedition. In the former of these poems the terrors and miseries of a tempest at sea are set

forth as they might be by one who had himself endured them. The writer does not paint from fancy but had surely seen with his bodily eyes the pale landsmen creeping up on deck to ask for news, and finding no comfort in the sailors' rough replies :—

> "And as sin-burden'd souls from graves will creep
> At the last day, some forth their cabins peep,
> And trembling ask, What news? and do hear so
> As jealous husbands what they would not know."

The Calm was a favourite with Ben Jonson, who could repeat by heart some of Donne's poems. It describes such a weary, torrid stillness of the elements as that suffered by the ancient mariner of Coleridge's poem; the men lying helpless on the hatches, the tackling hung with idle garments, the air all fire, the sea "a brimstone bath," the deck as hot to the feet as if an oven :—

> "And in one place lay
> Feathers and dust to-day and yesterday."

The descriptions in these companion poems are unique in Elizabethan literature by virtue of Donne's choice of unusual subjects and his realistic manner of treatment.

Donne's *Satires* are also among the poems which were not spun out of his brain, but were written, to use Wordsworth's expression, with his eye upon the object. In one he tells how he was tempted away from the companionship of his beloved books, into the London streets, by a coxcomb, who, says Donne, though superstitiously devoted to all the rites and ceremonies of good manners, might be called for the precision of

his fine breeding a very Puritan. There is something of majesty in the lines contrasting the poet's own condition with the elegance of this spruce master of ceremonies :—

> "And in this coarse attire which now I wear
> With God and with the Muses I confer."

In another satire the object of Donne's ridicule is a small poet of the day who has turned lawyer, and who interlards his ordinary conversation with legal term and phrase, nay, who wooes in language of the pleas and bench :—

> "Words, words, which would tear
> The tender labyrinth of a maid's soft ear
> More, more than ten Sclavonians' scoldings, more
> Than when winds in our ruin'd Abbeys roar."

In yet another there is a lively picture of the needy court suitor assuming courtier's airs, and in the end thankful to be dismissed with the gift of a crown-piece, a figure half-piteous, half-grotesque :—

> "A thing more strange than on Nile's slime the sun
> E'er bred."

But of the *Satires* the most remarkable is one which hardly deserves that name ; it is rather a hortatory poem addressed to those who fail as Christians to stand with their loins girt and their lamps burning. How is it, asks Donne, that the Stoic philosopher of Greece or Rome should be more zealous in the pursuit of the true ends of life than the Christian of to-day ?

> "Is not our mistress, fair Religion,
> As worthy of all our soul's devotion
> As Virtue was to the first blinded age ?"

How is it that a man will dare the frozen North

and burning South, and undertake forbidden wars and give rash challenges for idle words, and yet will not be bold against his true foes and the foes of God, "who made thee to stand sentinel in this world's garrison?" Donne glances at the various creeds and churches—Rome where the rags of religion are loved:—

> "As we here obey
> The state-cloth where the Prince sate yesterday;"

Geneva where religion is "plain, simple, sullen, young, contemptuous, yet unhandsome;" and having spoken of the man who cares nothing for any form of faith, and the amateur in creeds who cares a little for all, he justifies the earnest seeker for truth, even though he still remain a doubter. We are reminded of an often-quoted stanza of *In Memoriam* by the words of Donne:—

> "Doubt wisely; in strange ways
> To stand inquiring right is not to stray;
> To sleep, or run wrong, is."

But Donne would have the doubter attain, if possible, before old age comes, which he names the twilight of death, for that is the season to which rest in the possession of truth is due, and soon follows the night when no man can work. In this passage we have unquestionably a personal confession, a vindication of Donne's own attitude of inquiry and doubt, addressed by himself to himself.

Another parallel with a passage of *In Memoriam* may be noted in passing—

> "I thought if I could draw my pains
> Through rhyme's vexation, I should them allay.
> Grief brought to number cannot be so fierce,
> For he tames it that fetters it in verse."

So Donne. And Tennyson similarly in the well-known stanza—

> "But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
> A use in measured language lies ;
> The sad mechanic exercise
> Like dull narcotics lulling pain."

The section of Donne's poems entitled "Songs and Sonnets" is almost wholly devoted to love, and the metaphysics and casuistry of love. On occasions he can write, at least for a line or two, with a directness like that of Burns :—

> "Yet I had rather owner be
> Of thee one hour than all else ever—"

What words can be simpler than these which sound almost as if they had come out of a song to Mary Morison or Jean Armour? More often he is ingeniously subtle. Mr Ruskin, if I remember right, has somewhere praised and overpraised the delicacy of a quatrain in Mr Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House*, which is indeed a pretty Chinese puzzle in verse: the lady who has taken her lover's kiss maintains that her modesty is still inviolate :—

> "He thought me asleep ; at least, I knew
> He thought I thought he thought I slept."

A parallel may be found in Donne's poem *Love's Exchange* :—

> "Let me not know that others know
> That she knows my pains, lest that so
> A tender shame make me mine own woe."

For the most part Donne in his love poems is high-fantastical, but this does not imply any coldness or insincerity. "True love," he says, "finds wit," but he whose wit moves him to love confesses that he does

not know genuine passion. In a poem in which he makes various imaginary legacies, he leaves all that he has written in rhyme to Nature, in doing which, as he tells us, he does not *give* but *restore*; and it is undoubtedly a fact that there have been periods of literature when it was natural to seek out ingenuities of fancy and curiosities of expression. When Donne writes in his licentious vein he is not light and gay but studiously sensual; he makes voluptuousness a doctrine and argues out his thesis with scholastic diligence. To the other extreme belongs such a poem as that admirable lyric beginning with the lines:—

> "I have done one braver thing
> Than all the Worthies did;
> And yet a braver thence doth spring,
> Which is—to keep that hid."

This rare achievement is to love a woman without a single thought of the difference of "he and she"; but profane men would deride such love as this, and hence the braver thing is called for—to keep this spiritual friendship a secret from the unbelieving world. In this book of his, Donne declares—

> "Love's divines—since all divinity
> Is love or wonder—may find all they seek,
> Whether abstracted spiritual love they like,
> Their souls exhaled with what they do not see,
> Or, loth so to amuse
> Faith's infirmities, they choose
> Something which they may see and use;"

for though Mind be the heaven of love, Beauty is a type which represents that heaven to our mortal senses. Or, to cite another of Donne's similitudes, if love be an

angel, yet an angel takes to himself a face and wings of air, else he were invisible; and in like manner love materialises itself through beauty while yet it remains a spirit. In *The Extasie* the same doctrine of amorous metaphysics is upheld; two lovers seated upon a flowery bank hold commune in the spirit, and time seems almost suspended:—

> "And whilst our souls negotiate there
> We like sepulchral statues lay;
> All day the same our postures were,
> And we said nothing all the day."

But why should not hand meet hand and lip touch lip? There is an ascent and a descent in this complex nature of ours; the blood rarifies itself into the animal spirits,

> "Because such fingers need to knit
> The subtle knot which makes us man;"

and in like manner the soul must descend into the affections and the lower faculties,

> "Else a great Prince [the soul] in prison lies."

The metre of *The Extasie* is the same as that of the *Angel in the House*, and the manner in which meaning and metre move together closely resembles that of Mr Patmore's *Preludes*.

The piece best known of all that Donne has written is that in which he imagines the exposure of his own skeleton, when his grave shall be reopened to receive a second guest, and the discovery of the secret love-token, "a bracelet of bright hair about the bone." It is sometimes forgotten that in this romantic piece of fantasy Donne heightens the effect by representing the lovers as

during all their lives no other than ideal friends to whom such a pledge as this golden tress was the highest symbol granted of their perfect union :—

> " Difference of sex we never knew,
> No more than guardian angels do."

The Funeral is a companion piece :

> " Whoever comes to shroud me do not harm,
> Nor question much,
> That subtle wreath of hair about mine arm ;
> The mystery, the sign you must not touch,
> For 'tis my outward soul."

But here it is evident that there was a time when the speaker " knew difference of sex," had offered a man's love to the woman of his choice, had been rejected, and had received this gift as a token of friendship from which all thought of wedded union must be banished. Cartwright names one of his lyrics, *No Platonique Love*, and tells with what result he had once tried " to practise this thin love " :—

> " I climb'd from sex to soul, from soul to thought ;
> But, thinking there to move,
> Headlong I roll'd from thought to soul, and then
> From soul I lighted at the sex again."

It may be conjectured that Donne sometimes toppled from his heights (if indeed it is a fall) ; but there is one poem in which with evident sincerity and with rare grace, he sings the praises of autumnal beauty like that so gracefully pictured in Mr Alfred Austin's *Love's Widowhood* and Donne finds in this loveliness, which is almost spiritual, a charm found nowhere else :—

> " No Spring nor Summer's beauty hath such grace
> As I have found in one Autumnal face."

Here is Love's abiding-place :—

> "Here dwells he, though he sojourn everywhere
> In Progress,[1] yet his standing house is here.
> Here where still evening is, nor noon nor night,
> Where no voluptuousness, yet all delight."

The range is indeed wide between the feeling expressed in this poem and in others of the same group of Elegies.

In several of the passages from which I have quoted examples occur of the juxtaposition, so frequent in Donne, of thoughts of love and thoughts of the grave :

> "A fancy shared party per pale between
> Death's heads and skeletons and Aretine."

When he gazes at womanly beauty he reflects that one day it will be as useless as "a sun-dial in a grave"; when at parting from his mistress he scratches his name with his diamond upon her window-pane, he leaves the ragged signature with her, he says, as a death's head to preach the mortality of lovers; when he would learn the ancient lore of passion in happier days before the Lord of Love grew tyrannous, he desires to hear the tradition from a phantom :—

> "I long to talk with some old lover's ghost
> Who died before the god of love was born;"

His own brief love-lyrics are likened by him to "well-wrought urns," which will preserve the ashes confided to them as becomingly as "half-acre tombs." Even from an epithalamion he cannot banish a thought of death; when the bride rises on the wedding morning from her

[1] *i.e.* The progress of a Prince.

downy bed, the impression left by her body reminds him of the grave :—

> "Your body's print
> Like to a grave the yielding down doth dint."

In whatever sunny garden, and at whatever banquet Donne sits, he discerns in air the dark scythesman of that great picture attributed to Orcagna. An entire section of his poetry is assigned to death. In one of the funeral elegies he compares death to the sea that environs all, and though God has set marks and bounds to it, yet we can for ever hear it roar and gnaw upon our shores. In another the similitude is hardly less majestic : Death is a "mighty bird of prey," but "reclaimed by God," and taught to lay all that he kills at his Master's feet.

Donne's most ambitious efforts as a poet are not the most successful. One of these is the sequence of elegiac poems suggested by the death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury, his friend Sir Robert Drury's daughter, who died in her fifteenth year. Donne had had no personal knowledge of her ; he was, as it were, the poetical tomb-maker, and he determined to erect a pompous monument in verse. On each anniversary of the day of death he purposed to present his friend with a memorial poem ; but not more than two of these were written, nor can we regret that this vast funereal structure was carried no higher than the second stage. Donne expatiates on a general theme rather than laments an individual ; true sorrow is discreet, and sets a bound to extravagance ; but here the poet, taking for his subject the loss of ideal womanhood, does not write

under the controlling power of deep personal grief, and pushes to an extreme his fantastic exaggerations. In the poem of the first anniversary Donne enlarges on the frailty and decay of the whole world; in the second elegy he traces the progress of the soul. Thus they form a contrasted pair. The lines in the second poem, which picture the face of the dead maiden as it was in life, sensitive to every motion of her spirit, are well known :—

> "Her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought
> That one might almost say her body thought."

But in the earlier elegy there are lines perhaps more admirable which have been forgotten. Donne is maintaining that while the doers and workers of the world may be named the active organs of society, the very life of its life and soul of its soul resides in rare spirits, like that of the dead girl, which awaken in us what he elsewhere calls "the whole of divinity"—wonder and love :—

> "The world contains
> Princes for arms, and Counsellors for brains,
> Lawyers for tongues, Divines for hearts and more,
> The rich for stomachs, and for backs the poor;
> The officers for hands, merchants for feet,
> By which remote and distant countries meet:
> But those fine spirits which do tune and set
> This organ are those pieces which beget
> Wonder and love."

It will be remembered that the word "piece" is used by Elizabethan writers in the sense of perfect specimen or masterpiece, as where Prospero describes her mother to Miranda as "a piece of virtue."

Donne's other ambitious effort in verse is also a fragment. It is that singular poem, written in an elaborate stanza of his own, and embodying the doctrine of metempsychosis, which bears the same title as the later written elegy on the death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury —*The Progress of the Soul.* "Now when I begin this book," Donne writes—and at this time he was in his twenty-eighth year—"I have no purpose to come into any man's debt; how my stock will hold out I know not." We may lament that he did not carry out his complete design, for though the poem could never have been popular, it would have afforded, like the Scotchman's haggis, "a hantle of miscellawneous feeding" for those with an appetite for the strange dishes set before them by Donne. Professor Minto, in an excellent study of Donne, contributed to *The Nineteenth Century*, has said of this poem that, if finished, it might have been a monument worthy of its author's genius. The soul whose progress the poet traces was once the apple of temptation in the garden of Eden:

> "Prince of the orchard, fair as dawning morn."

Thence it passed into the dark and mysterious life of the mandrake, and ascending through antediluvian fish and bird and beast, became in the course of time the ape which toyed wantonly with Adam's fifth daughter, Siphatecia. In the last transformation recorded by the poet the soul is incarnated in Themech, the sister and the wife of Cain; but its brave adventures have only just begun. There was scope in Donne's design for a history of the world;

the deathless soul would have been a kind of Wandering Jew, with this advantage over Ahasuerus, that it would have been no mere spectator of the changes of society, but itself a part and portion of the ever-shifting, ever-progressing world of men.

AMOURS DE VOYAGE.

TIME, that aged gossip, has made me the confidant of a love affair, which has amused me as a little fragment of the great human tragi-comedy, and I hasten to betray the confidence of Time. The hero of the story is not unknown to fame; he was a poet and, unfortunately, a politician; secretary to the great Danton, and the companion of Danton and Camille Desmoulins in the tumbril which wound its way through a surging crowd on that radiant evening of April 5th, 1794, to the guillotine on the Place de la Révolution. On the way to the scaffold, the poet lamented that his latest comedy in verse, *L'Orange de Malte*, could never be completed; and Danton interrupted him with a hideous play on words such as an Elizabethan dramatist might have invented to enhance the horror of the scene: "Vos vers! Bah! dans une semaine vous ferez assez de vers"; then with a noble seriousness and elevation, the chief added, "We have finished our task; let us take our rest."

It will not, I think, disturb the rest of Fabre d'Eglantine, Danton's secretary and companion in arms, now that he has slept sound for a century, if I take up this little pocket-book which lies before me in its binding of faded green, and open it for the beguilement of a quarter of an hour. I have inquired

at the British Museum Library and at the Bibliothèque Nationale as to whether anything is known of its contents, and I have been assured that they are unknown; yet an uneasy curiosity remains lest some portion of this little manuscript volume may have seen the light in a certain "*Correspondence Amoureuse*, précédée d'un précis historique de son existence morale, physique, et dramatique, et d'un fragment de sa vie écrite par lui-même," which Fabre d'Eglantine's executors caused to be printed in three volumes after his death; "a production little worthy of him," says Fabre's sometime pupil in elocution, M. Audiffret, "if indeed it be his"; a production, I may add, which I have sought for and been unable to find. Meanwhile, I must accept as sufficient the word of a friend, M. Léony Guilgault, who has on my behalf made some research in the French National Library: "Printed books and manuscripts have been examined and no trace has been found of the 'Journal de mon Voyage'; it has never been published."

And, indeed, in this omission the publishers have shown their discretion. If a young gentleman in his nineteenth year, and at a time when "La Nouvelle Heloïse" had opened wide the sluice-gates of sentiment, should confide to paper all the pulsations of his heart, the world is not called on to quit its business and attend. In Rousseau's novel, and in "The Sorrows of Werther" we have representative and typical creations of the age. To render possible the creation of such works as these, a thousand minor dramas of sentiment must have been enacted; sighs innumerable must have

been breathed, tears innumerable shed. But the stock of human patience is not unlimited; knowing the typical products of the time, we may take its inferior romances and dramas as read: and I am not sure that Fabre d'Eglantine's tale of young love would have moved me to become its brief chronicler, were there not in it a touch of comedy, and that not altogether of the *genre larmoyant.*

Let us open the little pocket-book, half-blank, but with its two hundred and odd pages of manuscript in the neatest of handwriting, and read the title:[1] "Journal de mon voyage de Troyes chèz moi—écrit à la chère Amie de mon Cœur, à la maitresse chérie de mon ame; à celle en qui réside tout mon bonheur, ma vie, et ma félicité." Whereupon follows a motto in verse:—

> "Le soleil ici bas ne voit que vanité,
> D'ignorance et d'erreur toute la terre abonde,
> Mais aimer tendrement une jeune beauté,
> C'est la plus douce erreur des vanités du monde."

The writer who had made such deep discovery of the vanity of human existence was still in his teens; he had entered upon his nineteenth year three months since—on December 28, 1773. It was now the spring of 1774, a few weeks before the miserable death of Louis XV., once the *bien Aime* of his people. Fabre, for the honour of whose birth Limoux contends with Carcasonne, had been educated at the college of the *doctrinaires;* he was a youth of promise, with a gift for music and for song, a gift for painting, and

[1] I adopt here and elsewhere the spelling of Fabre's MS., and also its accentuation, or lack of accents.

he had learnt, at least in an amateur's fashion, the art of engraving; the exquisite writing of his "Journal" betokens a hand which might dexterously manipulate the burin. It is said that, after his early studies, he entered the congregation of the *doctrinaires* at Toulouse, and passed through the lower classes. We know for certain that his poem carried off the prize of the gold eglantine at the *Jeux Floraux* in that city, and that the author, highly gratified at the distinction, added to his own family name—Fabre—that of the flower which was the emblem of his victory. Altogether, we should say, a young man with a future, and one who might be carried far by that ardent southern temperament which shows itself in the rapid development of his various powers, and shows itself also at a later time in the ambitious fervour of his writings.

Little is known of Fabre's early life, and how and why he came to Troyes must be left to conjecture. But for some time past the presence of the "chère amie de son cœur," whose name would seem to be Madame Catan—perhaps a young widow, for no husband is ever mentioned—had surely made the old city on the Seine the most delightful place in the world. "Business," has been described by Donne as "the worst disease of love"; and it was business—his "affairs"—which obliged Fabre, in the spring of 1774, to quit Troyes and journey to his home at Carcasonne, in Languedoc. On the evening of March 30, he bade an agitated adieu to his beloved; sound repose under such circumstances was impossible, and after the uneasy slumbers of an hour and a half he woke in the grey of morning to

an exile's sorrow. Never was dressing a more tragic affair :—

"Je me suis habillé après avoir baisé avec toute la tendresse possible ta lettre et les cheveux qu'elle contenait ; chaque vêtement que je passais portait un coup de poignard à mon cœur ; il me semblait que je me reprochais de me trop hâter pour abandonner les lieux que tu habites ; chaque meuble me retraçait ton souvenir, et surtout ceux que je tiens de toi."

Accompanied by two friends, one of these the brother of his beloved, Fabre reached on foot the outskirts of the city ; then found himself alone, in a "dreadful solitude," and, having waved a farewell, leaped into the *voiture*, which was starting southwards. One female follower, however, was determined to prove her fidelity —a dog which belonged to a neighbour of Madame Catan ; fawning and fondling she had pursued the wanderer, and since it was so clearly her wish not to be separated from him, Fabre resolved to take her as the companion of his travel. Having reached Bar-sur-Seine, he gladly escaped for awhile from the irksome presence of his fellow-travellers, and strolled alone into the country, shedding many tears, and uttering from time to time the words "O ma chère amie !"—then returned to his inn, set down in his note-book eight pages of raptures and despairs, in elegant calligraphy, and, drying his eyes, was ready for the heartless business of supper. Rest on that night, after the long day's journey, was welcome, but he did not close his eyes until he had kissed a precious letter and a lock of hair, "avec une ardeur extraordinaire," and had placed them religiously upon his heart.

Refreshed by the deep sleep of youth and open-air fatigue, Fabre rose with the lark, and strode forward a league in advance of the vehicle, enjoying as he went along an enchanting sunrise, seen in solitude, and giving rise to thoughts and feelings of delicious melancholy. The start of the following morning from Chatillon-sur-Seine was yet earlier—at three A.M.—but, unfortunately, the weather had broken. The light had not yet dawned, while the carriage struggled and stumbled on through the chilling night-wind and the drenching rain. At nine the traveller reached Montbard. It was the birth-place and the retreat of Buffon. In the interval between his arrival and a quarter past ten, as Fabre records with particularity and evident self-satisfaction, he found time to compose an Ode in five stanzas: *À. M. de Buffon,* which, being duly copied, was despatched to the great naturalist without disclosure of his admirer's name. Literature, in France of the eighteenth century, did homage to science. Wisdom and virtue, our young poet declares, inspire his muse; the divine painter of nature has painted also for us God in the creatures that He formed; Buffon's presence—that of an eagle who confronts the sun—is the glory of this remote and solitary place:—

"Sans cet illustre Solitaire,
Parmis tes rochers escarpés,
Montbard! du reste de la terre,
Tes remparts seraient ignorés;
L'univers te voit couronnée
Des lauriers mêmes de Buffon;
Emule d'Athene et de Rome,
Tu possèdes dans un seul homme
Socrate, Pline, et Ciceron."

"The impromptu," adds Fabre, "is doubtless not worthy of its hero; but zeal is a good excuse."

Providence seems to take a kind care that young enthusiasm shall have its checks, and that a descent shall be duly made from the illuminated heights. Still struggling through the most dismal weather Fabre reached Semur—a town to be remembered for the wrongs and humiliations which it inflicted on his heart, and for the sordid self-interest of its inhabitants. It is clear that Fabre had resided here at some time not very remote, had run up scores for which his few belongings —and among them a portrait of Madam Catan —were kept in pledge, and had borrowed money from a certain beautiful and charming Mdlle. R——. Beautiful and charming, but alas! not superior to mercenary thoughts; capable even of preserving and producing a note of the debt in Fabre's own hand-writing, and of taking the uttermost farthing—"elle a pris la somme jusqu'au dernier liard." Still more cruel was the hostess of the inn where Fabre had stayed during his former residence in Semur. To lessen his little store of cash by two louis, and at the same time refuse to restore his "effects"—it was an act of sore injustice, and the victim had thoughts of appealing to the law. But there were other creditors who might even seize his portmanteau. It was more prudent to avoid pursuit, to shake off from his feet the dust—or, it may be the mud—of this accursed town, and to push forward on foot with the eighteen livres still in his pocket. Meanwhile would not his adored one, his beloved one, come to the rescue of her friend in distress? Could she con-

trive to despatch the small sum of three louis d'or to "Mr F. D'E. de St Nazaire, poste restante à Beaune en Bourgogne"? As the bells were ringing noonday on April 4th, Fabre left Semur, and while he covered the four leagues of ground between Semur and Vitteaux he had time to indulge in many reflections on the baseness of average human nature and the incomparable excellence of "the dear mistress of his soul."

At an early hour he was awakened by the lashing of the rain on window-pane and roof. Yet when seven o'clock came he was on the road, while torrents still descended. Wayfarers were few, but on a lonely hill he encountered one whom he would gladly have avoided —an ill-looking fellow with a great red beard which half concealed his hang-dog face; he was armed with an iron-tipped staff, was clad in rags, and came striding towards the solitary traveller. At a distance of ten paces Fabre called upon him to halt, and assuming an air of authority demanded where he was going and whether he was provided with a passport. The stranger replied that he was on the way to Fontainebleau and had a passport about him. "Go then on your way," cried Fabre, "but see that you avoid cities; if you do not obey you will be arrested." Grumbling out a petition for alms the fellow withdrew.

After three mortal leagues of mire and rain, Fabre, in dripping garments, reached a village, but there was little comfort for him in the sight of houses which he could not enter; all the inhabitants were at Mass, and the doors were locked. At length tumbling headlong into a miserable hovel he found a woman who assured

him that he ought to be in the chapel—the priest's benediction was of more importance than considerations of health. "I did not yield," says Fabre, "and remained where I was." Mass being ended, he obtained admission to a tavern, where a fire was soon kindled, and some poor victuals were procured. To draw up the bill required an hour's whispered conference between those in authority, and as the rain still continued Fabre occupied himself delightfully in once more reading over the letters of the "chère amie," —thirty-eight in all, which, though a large packet, he carried about his person lest so inestimable a treasure might be lost. "Cheres lettres! charmantes lettres! qui m'avez donné aujourd'hui tant de plaisir, est-il quelque puissance qui puisse vous arracher de mes mains"?

A little adventure gave a different turn to Fabre's thoughts. The villagers, some forty years since, had converted into arable land a portion of the neighbouring forest. The lady of the manor had been urged to assert her rights against the peasants, and efforts were made on their part to refer the matter to arbitration. Putting their heads together as they passed from chapel to tavern, the wise men of the village came to the conclusion that the young stranger who had arrived must needs be one of the commissioners or surveyors who were to decide the question of their rights in the tilled land and the woodland. When questioned as to whether he had not come among them as their representative, Fabre, amused at their simplicity, met the inquiry with a pleasant smile; it was no longer

doubted that he was a person of more importance than he professed to be; at the least he must be a learned counsellor of the law. Everyone made offer of his best —his bed, his board, his bread, his wine—until, for good humour's sake it became necessary to accept provisionally the *rôle* assigned to him, and listen with all gravity to their views and representations. Amid many good wishes he bade the assembled villagers farewell. It was on the anniversary of this day, exactly twenty years later, that Fabre d'Eglantine was again the centre of interest for a crowd, but one of a different temper, as he laid his head below the knife of the guillotine.

The journal for April 6 opens with the words: "Aussi mouillé qu'hier, aussi peu distrait de ta chère image." It needed some internal fire to enable him to meet courageously the chill invasion of the rain; he was as if drawn through a river, yet with the ardours of love unquenched. On reaching Beaune he was too exhausted to go in person to the post-office; his messenger returned with a disappointing answer—no letter had yet arrived. But the morning of April 8 was one of joy—"Elle est arrivée cette lettre tout attendue, elle est arrivée! . . . mes yeux et mon cœur en dévorait chaque ligne, je l'ai lue et relue, baisée et rebaisée, et dans l'instant même où j'écris elle est sur mon cœur dont elle fait la joye et la félicité." Yet it was weary waiting in Beaune until the later letter containing money for his journey should arrive; he was perishing of *ennui*. But pencil and pen came to Fabre's aid; he occupied himself with drawing from memory a portrait of his lady, which should serve as

a kind of frontispiece to the thirty-eight letters (now grown to the number of thirty-nine); as these lay ranged in their case in chronological order. The Catan smiled forth on her portrait-painter, in her negligent head attire and her dressing-gown of violet trimmed with white, and a violet ribband which became her *à merveille.* A world of eighteenth-century allegory formed a border for the oval of her face and bust. An artist and a lover must be pardoned for being particular in describing his invention: above, were the quiver and the torch of Love in a disk of roses; to the right, an urn from which climbed a myrtle and a blossoming rose-bush, "qui expriment les plaisirs et les peines dont notre union est suivie"; opposite this, two doves billing in a nest of roses; below, a burning torch, "the emblem of thy spirit," encircled by garlands of roses. There was still space for a hive from which the bees were issuing to gather sweets—"the bees are thy industry, thy wise economy; the honey, thy sweetness and the roses, the virtues with which thou nourishest the soul"; last appeared a little dog holding an arrow in his mouth—the emblem of her constancy and fidelity. The inscription is unfortunately carefully inked over in Fabre's journal so as to be illegible; but perhaps we have had enough. At the foot of the design ran the words "Peint et inventé par l'Amour." One is reminded of that characteristic product of eighteenth-century design in France, the "Iconologie" of Gravelot and Cochin, in which every vice and every virtue, every science and every art is represented by a graceful emblematical figure; in which "Affabilité" strews roses

and "Orgueil" totters on her rolling sphere; in which "Constance" embraces her column, and "Dévotion" kneels with the flambeau in one hand while the other hand is pressed upon her heart. Charming eighteenth century of Fragonard and Chardin and Greuze! "S'il ne cherche pas le beau," a hostile critic has confessed, "il trouve le joli." And Fabre was poet as well as painter. Hearing by chance some one who sang the air, *Quand un cœur sort de l'esclavage*, and recalling from what lips he had last heard the song, he sets himself to compose new words for the same air, of which my reader shall have a single stanza out of eight:—

"Moi, je chéris mon esclavage,
De *Catan* j'adore les fers,
Du bonheur ses yeux sont le gage,
Pour moi son cœur est l'univers."

"I sang the song," the author records, "twenty times during the day, not because I made it, but because"—of many reasons which were of weight with a lover of nineteen.

Some interest in other matters than those of his own heart remained with Fabre, and there are pages of his diary which give us a picture of misery in France under the old Régime:—

"After dinner I strolled abroad, in order to hold more intimate converse with you; my steps led me to a place where I was fully convinced that, hard as is my own lot, there are yet on earth beings more unfortunate than myself. There is, in this city of Beaune, an ancient *château*, of which only the four walls remain. In the depth of the walls are still certain little subterraneous hollows, which were formerly little doors or embrasures. In these dreadful places, which pen cannot describe, men, women, and children reside. It makes one shudder to look in. An opening two and a half feet

wide, and seven or eight feet deep, the floor of which is strewn with a little straw to serve as bedding, and where a fire is lit without a chimney, forms the most tolerable dwelling-place in this abode of misery. A man and woman occupy it. Hard by lives an old man in the embrasure for a cannon, which his industry has transformed into a bed with some stones and some faggots; such is his domicile; further on is another of like kind. But what shocks one's feelings most, what horrifies one's sense of humanity, and rends one's heart, is to see a miserable creature, who lost his arm while working in the forest, his wife, and three young children, lodged in a frightful subterranean hole to which the blackest dungeon were a palace. The water reaches one's ankle; the cold is deadly; no windows, no fireplace, no furniture, no bread, no clothes, no covering at night; the whole of this wretched family huddle on a pile of half-rotted straw, resting on stones which raise it to the surface of the water. It is nothing to describe such misery; one must see it. I cannot understand after this how any man can venture to complain of his lot."

Fabre d'Eglantine, a child of his age, was not devoid of some of the eighteenth century humanitarian zeal. His store of coins had run low indeed; but of what was left to him he shared with these piteous brothers in distress. "I should blush," he writes, "if before leaving I had not given them part of what I own." He, even if poor, had still "philosophy," had still love; they had nothing but misfortune. He visited them on several occasions, and saw that his arrival was welcomed as that of a friend. "Ah, my beloved!" he breaks forth, "how sweet it is to do good! we weep for joy, but the tears are genuine tears of pleasure."

Ten sous remained in Fabre's purse when at length an answer came to the letter in which he had petitioned for a loan or gift of money. For a moment he had a cruel pang of disappointment to endure; they informed him at the post-office that the courier had arrived, but

had brought no missive for him; he was leaving the office with heavy heart, when his name was called, and there—joy inexpressible!—was a letter addressed in the well-known handwriting. Yes, she had written, she had sent the three louis d'or; but how coldly she wrote! In three pages, written at a distance of thirty leagues, there were not three words of tenderness; not two lines addressed to the heart; nothing but reason and prudence, and morality and economy. "They say," writes Fabre, "that money is the key of the human heart; alas, yes! but—it is a key which fastens the lock."

He had now the means of proceeding on his journey to the south. But unluckily the Saone was in flood after the heavy rains, and the *bateau de diligence* could not start. One painful duty remained to be performed in Beaune—it was necessary to wound a sensitive heart. While at Troyes Fabre had corresponded with a young lady who was residing in a convent at Beaune with a view to completing her education. She had heard of his arrival, and sent a message by one of her friends—a *camarade pensionnaire*—to assure the irresistible youth that she had always loved him tenderly. Fabre could easily conceive how cruel it must be to love without return; he had not courage to crush her hopes at a blow; he dared not declare that his heart was another's; "All I could do," writes this chivalrous victim of female passion, "was to show my indifference; I wrote to her, but only that the coldness of my letters might make her feel the true state of my heart; she understood it too well! Only once did I see her, in order that I might quit Beaune without exciting further hope, resolving for

my part to leave to time and absence the task of extinguishing a love to which it was impossible for me to respond." The situation, if painful, was not without some compensatory luxuries of tender emotion for the hero of the drama.

On April 21, Fabre left Beaune on foot for Chalons. The feminine caprices of his dog, who now refused to follow as obstinately as she had on a former occasion refused to stay behind, delayed the start, and her master had to run the leagues between Beaune and Chalons in order to reach the *bateau de diligence* before it should set sail. Hot, breathless, and fatigued, he arrived just in time to get on board. Nor does the exercise seem to have brightened his temper, for he found his fellow-voyagers intolerably tiresome — priests, ladies, and *bourgeois* uttering stupidities, and officers retailing gasconading stories by the hour. He withdrew into himself, and employed his time to advantage in once again perusing his collection of letters, which now reached the number of forty. Next evening, when in the theatre at Lyons he searched his pockets for a letter which he had just received, and had "devoured rather than kissed"—the forty-first—to his horror it was not to be found. The sacred document had been left at his inn, and more than ordinary devotion became a duty that night, in order to efface the shame of such seeming neglect.

Before Fabre had left Beaune the three louis d'or forwarded by Madame Catan had almost vanished away. He found himself at Lyons reduced to the painful necessity of begging for more. He owes her everything

—happiness, even existence; why should he shrink from increasing the debt by the trifling addition of two more louis? To-morrow he will set out for le Pont St Esprit by way of Valence. It is incredible how money goes in travel, economise as much as one will. From le Pont St Esprit to his home there will be sixty leagues to traverse: two louis d'or is not an excessive sum for the cost of such a journey. And she—is she not his life, his felicity, his being, his all—his precious all, his first, his last, his only love?

Next morning Fabre was one of many passengers on board the *bateau de diligence*, and stood on deck admiring the banks of the Rhone which, to right and left, were rich in beauty. In Valence he had friends, of whom one, Mademoiselle de C——, had taken, as he believed, no common interest in him. Truly the sorrows which beset an irresistible young man almost counter-vail the pride and joy of conquest. To be obliged in every town one visits to convince some tender and virtuous *demoiselle* that it is impossible to respond to her love—that is, indeed, a severe trial for a heart full of sensibility. On visiting the lady, however, Faber found her much less tender than were her letters; "and so much the better, I shall have the less regret in giving evidence of my coldness." Her curiosity had been piqued by a sight which she had caught at the post of a letter—the forty-second—addressed in a feminine hand to M. Fabre d'Eglantine. She begged that it might be shown to her, and her request was met by a refusal. A little quarrel, Fabre hoped, would bring matters to a satisfactory issue.

"En badinant elle a mis sa main dans ma poche, et en a tiré ta lettre que j'ai reçue a Lion, et que je laissais dans ma poche pour la placer chaque nuit sur mon coeur ; je l'ai arrachée de ses mains, et malgré ses prières et ses menaces, je n'ai pas eu la complaisance de la lui laisser lire ; elle est piquée au vif ; et c'est tant mieux."

This was a piece of May-day merriment on the part of Mdlle. de C——, for May, with its bouquets and its mirth had come, and found Fabre still in Valence. His serious thoughts were given to an imaginative creation—romance or drama—founded on fact. No lady in Valence had been more beautiful or more admired than Madame de la Mouchetiere ; her age was twenty-four ; "she did not greatly care for her husband, but *en revanche* she had a lover whom she adored, M. le Comte de Rouault de Gamaches." While travelling to Paris with his wife and the Count, the jealous husband provoked the latter to a duel, and killed him on the spot. The unhappy lady received so cruel a shock that within a few days she too was dead. "My design," writes Fabre, "is to compose a work on this sad catastrophe, and I know not whether I shall accomplish it."

Once again on the *bateau de diligence,* amid a hundred strangers, but without his canine friend, who deserted him at the moment of embarkation, Fabre had to endure baffling winds and bitter rain, but at last le Pont St Esprit was reached. Part of the journey had been made on foot, for the weather would not allow the boat to proceed. And now that he had come so many leagues upon his way he found himself literally without a sou. To pay the porter who carried his valise to the inn he requested the hostess—as a man who possessed

no coin beneath a louis d'or—to oblige him with some small change, and was refused. A friendly stranger came to his aid, and, presently, by the sale of his sword, Fabre was enabled to repay the petty loan. At the post there was a letter from Madame Catan, but not written in reply to his second request for money. It spoke—cruel letter!—very little of her own love, still less of his, but much of a Monsieur D——, on whom the writer lavished her praises; "the praise is just," writes Fabre, "but I knew not that you were his panegyrist." On his return to the inn, the hostess, who mistrusted her lodger, asked him whether he would wish to get change for six livres; she could now accommodate him. The insult stung him and he lost no time in exchanging "cette villaine demeure" for a little shelter, the proprietor of which seemed to be more civil.

To beguile the tedious hours, Fabre explored on foot the country roads and paths. It was just the moment when his Holiness the Pope was rewarded for his suppression of the order of the Jesuits by the restoration of Avignon and the Venaissin. The inhabitants of the villages were rejoiced to pass from under the rule of a sovereign who exacted from them subsidies which they could with difficulty pay. They celebrated their liberation with dances and song. Cries of *Vive le Pape* filled the air. "By a sudden, and, as it were, supernatural impulse," writes Fabre, "as soon as I had left the crowd behind I cried with transport, Vive la chère amie de mon cœur!"

But, alas! the days went on and on, and still no letter came, no louis d'or. From post to post unhappy Fabre watched and hoped against hope; impatience

grew to anxiety, and anxiety to agony—"O mon Dieu; est-il possible? point de lettre." Has his friend forgotten him? Can a letter have gone astray? Did his own letter ever reach her? Would God that it were morning! would God that it were night! Thrice unhappy Fabre, without friend, without lover, without current coin of the realm! Fifteen days have passed since he wrote from Lyons, and still no answer. Once more he puts pen to paper, and writes as a desperate man: "Pity, my dear friend! my only friend! reply with all speed; if you are able to send the two louis d'or, do send them; I have not a sou. If you are unable, it does not matter; I have only fifty-five leagues to travel; but deliver me from my present disquietude; it is terrible . . . adieu! I adore you, I love you more than a thousand lives, more than the universe. And then follows a postscript of an unsentimental kind: "If you have not already sent the two louis, please let it be three instead of two." A little later this letter was followed by a second of like purport. But still no acknowledgment; no reply. May 13th was a black day, for hope had grown strong that it would bring the still expected letter, and it passed like the rest—a miserable disappointment. Once again hope sprang up on the morning of the 14th: Fabre had made an error in his reckoning; it was on this afternoon that the carrier would arrive. But once again hope died away in despair: "Point de lettre! O mon Dieu, que je suis à plaindre!" Yet the entry for the day closes without reproaches—with the accustomed tender adieu to his beloved.

The date "May 15" is inscribed at the head of the next page. But the page is blank, and the rest of the volume is of virgin paper. Here then the story breaks off, and we must not quarrel with it in a world which contains so many fragments, so many odds and ends. What was the issue of it all? You, reader, must help me with your conjectures. Did Madame Catan ever receive the later letters of Fabre d'Eglantine? Were they intercepted by guardian or brother? Had she grown weary of his amorous protestations, and doubtful of his prudence and discretion? There were bees, you remember, as well as roses amongst the emblems which represented the virtues of her soul. Can it be that Monsieur D——, whose panegyrist she was, had an attraction for the industrious bees? And what of the afflicted lover? Did he after all receive the two louis, with that bonus of a third which he had asked for in his postscript, sent as the recompense for his long waiting? Did he trudge the miles to Carcasonne? And how did he settle the little account of which his polite landlord, he tells us, had reminded him? Pray, reader, make answer to these questions according to your pleasure. I can tell you no more than that Fabre's pupil, M. Audiffret, supposes that his master had been determined to tread the boards as an actor (which he certainly did) by "une intrigue amoureuse." Was it the intrigue of which our journal tells us? And did some strolling company visit Avignon at this season of popular rejoicing, and as it crossed the bridge of le Pont St Esprit might Fabre, disconsolate and yet hopeful, be seen bringing up the rear? We cannot

tell. He was about thirty years old when he came to Paris. His plays are now forgotten, though one at least deserves to live. We remember Fabre by the Republican Calendar, with its Germinal, Floréal, Prairéal —a fanciful nomenclature furnished to Romme by Danton's poetical secretary. In Germinal of the Year Two he was executed, at the age of thirty-nine.

GOETHE.

I.—WILHELM MEISTER.

SIR JOHN SEELEY, who has written of Goethe with an intimate knowledge of his mind, even now rare among our countrymen, has described "Wilhelm Meister" as not the most attractive or the most perfect of its author's works, but as perhaps the most characteristic, and, as it were, the textbook of the Goethean philosophy. Yet he admits that most English readers lay it down bewildered, wondering what Goethe's admirers can see in it so extraordinary; "it still," he says, "remains the book which chiefly justifies the profound distrust and aversion with which Goethe has been and is regarded among those who are Christian either in the dogmatic or in the larger sense."[1]

We all remember Wordsworth's sentence of indignant condemnation. We all remember De Quincey's article in which he employed a heavy flippancy to make the book look more disgraceful and ridiculous as it "travels on its natural road to shame and oblivion." And Mr Lewes's excuse was one of those excuses which seem to accuse: "All that can be said," he wrote, "is that the artist has been content to paint scenes of life *without comment*"—precisely what Goethe has *not* done

[1] Sir John Seeley's "Goethe reviewed after Sixty Years" collects and expands the admirable articles of the *Contemporary Review*, 1884.

in "Wilhelm Meister" for it is full of commentary on the life which it represents. Even Carlyle, its translator, was slow to comprehend the unity or the drift of the tale. "I go on with Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister,'" he wrote in 1823, "a book which I love not, which I am sure will never sell, but which I am determined to print and finish. There are touches of the very highest, most ethereal genius in it; but diluted with floods of insipidity, which even *I* would not have written for the world."[1] It is not, however, for touches here and there that any true student of Goethe values the work. "There is poetry in the book," wrote Carlyle to another correspondent,[2] "and prose, prose for ever. When I read of players and libidinous actresses and their sorry pasteboard apparatus for beautifying and enlivening the 'Moral World,' I render it into grammatical English—with a feeling mild and charitable as that of a starving hyæna. . . . Goethe is the greatest genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has lived for three. I could sometimes fall down and worship him; at other times I could kick him out of the room."[3] It was not until 1828—five years later—that Carlyle could write with entire confidence of Goethe as seen in his "Wilhelm Meister." "Here the ardent high-aspiring youth has grown into the calmest man, yet with increase and not

[1] To Miss Welsh, "Early Letters," i. 219.

[2] Mr James Johnstone, "Early Letters," i. 223.

[3] See also Carlyle's "Early Letters," i. 269. "Meister himself is perhaps the greatest *ganache* that ever was created by quill and ink. I am going to write a fierce preface, disclaiming all concern with the literary or the moral merit of the work. . . . What a work! Bushels of dust and straw and feathers, with here and there a diamond of the purest water."

loss of ardour, and with aspirations higher as well as clearer. For he has conquered his unbelief; the Ideal has been built on the Actual; no longer floats vaguely in darkness and region of dreams, but rests in light, on the firm ground of human interest and business, as in its true sense, on its true basis."[1]

Sir John Seeley has said a better word on "Wilhelm Meister," it seems to me, than that of any other English writer, unless it be this word of Carlyle; and yet I do not think that Sir John Seeley has exactly hit the mark. The book, he maintains, is at once immoral and profoundly moral. It is immoral on one point—on the relations of men and women; "immoral in Goethe's peculiar, inimitable, good-natured manner." Goethe is an indifferentist as to one important section of morality, "partly because he is a man formed in the last years of the old *régime*, partly because he is borne too far on the tide of reaction against Catholic and monastic ideas." But all that Goethe has to say on the choice of vocations—and this is the real subject of the book—is profoundly moral and of immense importance. The greatest of all duties, he tells us, is that of choosing our occupation aright. The lesson of "Wilhelm Meister" is "that we should give unity to our lives by devoting them with hearty enthusiasm to some pursuit, and that the pursuit is assigned to us by Nature through the capacities she has given us. It is thus that Goethe substitutes for the idea of pleasure that of the satisfaction of special inborn aptitudes different in each individual." This word of Sir John Seeley, even if it

[1] *Miscellanies*, "Goethe," i. 170, ed. 1857.

only says a portion of the whole truth, is assuredly well said.

Carlyle found—we see it from his letters, and he tells us so himself—that with "Wilhelm Meister" as with every work of real and abiding excellence, the first glance is the least favourable.[1] Such is the experience of every reader who has come to value the book; before we can judge the parts aright we must conceive the whole. Even with respect to the relations of men and women, as we shall see, the teaching of the book is not precisely that of one to whom morality is indifferent, although Goethe's point of view is a worldly one; but we do not perceive how order in "Wilhelm Meister" pronounces a judgment on disorder until we survey the earlier portions of the work in the light thrown back upon them from its close.

The magic words of the eighteenth century revolt, the *Sturm und Drang* of Young Germany, in which Goethe in his earlier years had been a leader, were the words Freedom and Nature. Limitless freedom in life and in literature was to be attained, as it were, at a bound, by a return to nature. But nature is twofold: there is first the visible world surrounding us, the world of hill and stream and sky; and secondly, there is the native manhood in the heart of each of us. To return to nature meant to commune with the forces of the external world, and also to consult the oracle in our bosom. First, it meant the sentiment of nature. "Ah! how often," cries Werther, "when the crane was in flight above my head, have I longed on the shore of

[1] Preface to the first edition of Carlyle's translation.

the boundless sea to quaff from the foaming goblet of the Infinite the overflowing ecstasy of life." And strains of a like kind are heard in the opening scenes of "Faust." Secondly, it meant a return from conventions, ceremonies, false traditions, to the nature that is within us. Would we discover the true law of conduct? Let us seek it in our own breast. Would we find inspiration for song? Let us look in our hearts and write. Would we ascertain the true rules of art? Let us cast aside Aristotle and Horace and Boileau, and consult only our inward sense of beauty.[1]

The revolt of heart and will on behalf of freedom, real or imaginary, took two forms; the form of Titanic egoism, unbridled energy, a boundless deploying of the will; and the form of sentimental egoism, unrestrained sensibility, an abandonment of the heart to measureless desire. One we may, if we please, term the masculine, and the other the feminine form of the revolt. Goethe, before attaining the age at which Shakespeare probably was writing his first comedy, had interpreted the literary movement of his time in a twofold way: in "Goetz von Berlichingen" he had presented the ideal of freedom in its active form—an heroic will struggling with circumstance; in "Werther" he had presented the same ideal on its passive side of immoderate sensibility —a heart for ever trembling and yielding to every touch of circumstance.

[1] Mr Matthew Arnold, following M. Scherer, says that what young Germany really did was to fall from one sort of imitation, the imitation of the so-called classical French literature, into another, that of Rousseau. Rousseau, to be sure, set the stone a-rolling; but the creator of Werther rolled it in his own German way. The movement was instinctive, not imitative.

"Faust" in its origin belongs to the same period, and represents in its earlier written scenes the same tendencies. But "Faust" is the work of Goethe's entire life, having occupied its author at intervals from early manhood to extreme old age. It has a real unity, inasmuch as it is the product of one mind, the outcome of one life; we trace in it the orbit of a great planetary spirit. It extends beyond "Wilhelm Meister" at either end, telling us of the aspiring youth of Goethe, of those early days when the two great figures of the mediæval magician, Faust, and the Greek Titan, Prometheus, took form in his imagination; and telling us also of the elder years, when his hand had lost its fiery energy though not all its craftsman's cunning. And "Faust," though to a certain extent a companion work to "Wilhelm Meister," occupied in part with like problems and attaining like solutions, is written in a higher strain; what in the one work is thought out as prose is felt and uttered in the other as song. One of these books speaks of what can be effected by conscious self-direction and education; the other contemplates the whole of human existence and its result upon the individual man. One has been styled an Odyssey of culture; the other is the Odyssey of life. In "Wilhelm Meister" we read the prose of Goethe's midmost years; in "Faust" we read the poetry of his whole life; we discover him as a young man seeing visions, and as an old man dreaming dreams.

When, after the first wild days at Weimar, Goethe began to settle down to his work, it quickly became evident to him that the freedom, of which so much had been said or sung by Young Germany, was not to be

won by a blow or at a bound; and that if a return to nature was needed so also was a true art of life.

> "This is an art which does mend nature, but
> The art itself is nature."

His duties grew many and arduous; his position was one of no slight difficulty. Werther's sigh of limitless desire would not help him much in an attempt to revive the Ilmenau mines, nor would Goetz's iron hand serve to untie the vexatious knots of the Privy Council Chamber. Yet if Werther's ardour and Goetz's force could be turned to wise uses it were well, and a freedom might in the end be attained of a different and more excellent kind than had been dreamed of in the days of the *Sturm und Drang*—a freedom at one with the limitations of duty and patient, persistent toil. "Would you penetrate," writes Goethe, "into the Infinite, then press on every side into the Finite:"

> "Willst Du ins Unendliche schreiten,
> Geh nur im Endlichen nach allen Seiten."

The advance from "Werther" to "Wilhelm Meister" is from the pursuit of the ideal built on the void to the discovery of the ideal built on the actual. Goethe, as Carlyle has put it, no longer "floats vaguely in darkness and region of dreams, but rests in light, on the firm ground of human interest and business."

"Wilhelm Meister" sprouted, "cotyledon-wise," during the first Weimar years, and occupied Goethe from time to time almost up to the date of his Italian journey. In 1787 he wrote to the Duke from Italy, saying that the novel must end with the opening of his hero's fortieth year, and he wished to have it written by the

arrival of its author at the same time of life. But Goethe was little of the professional book-maker; other things interested him, and "Wilhelm Meister" was laid aside. The work was resumed at a moment when the political revolt of the eighteenth century had reached its culmination, when the words "freedom" and "nature" were again heard, but now with a new and dreadful significance; for Danton had just fallen in revolutionary Paris, and in the public procession in honour of the God of Nature, Robespierre, the admiring disciple of Rousseau, had appeared as high priest. Goethe had been repelled by the violences of the French revolution. He was of one mind with Coleridge when he wrote the lines:—

> "The sensual and the dark rebel in vain
> Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
> They burst their manacles and wear their name
> Of Freedom graven on a heavier chain!"

Political liberty, he held, in order to be other than a mere pretence, must be preceded by the deliverance of individual men from their own base passions and vain strivings.[1] Now, too, it was that Schiller, the poet of freedom, was occupied with his "Letters on Æsthetic Culture." "The eyes of the philosopher and the man of the world," he writes, "are turned, full of expectation, towards the political arena, where, as is believed, the great destiny of man is now developed. . . . If I suffer Beauty to precede Freedom I trust not only to accommodate it to my inclination, but to vindicate it by principles. I hope to convince you that this matter

[1] "Franzthum drangt in diesen verworrenen Tagen, wie ehmals Lutherthum es gethan, ruhige Bildung zuruck."
"Werke," ed. Hempel, ii. 171.

of æsthetic culture is far less foreign to the wants than to the taste of the age; nay, more, that in order to solve this political problem in experience one must pass through the æsthetic, since it is beauty that leads to freedom." Such was also Goethe's feeling. Freedom is not to be attained by violence or at a blow; it is to be attained through culture, through an education, an education which may seem severe and even repressive, yet which shall serve the cause of freedom in the end by delivering from the vagueness and error and confusion of life that true humanity which lies encumbered within each one of us.

Mr. G. H. Lewes and other critics have maintained that Goethe's original intention in "Wilhelm Meister" was to represent the nature, aims, and art of the comedian; that this was in fact the theme of the earlier books; and that when taking his novel again in hand after a lapse of years, the author altered the design, and made the remodelled story symbolical of the erroneous striving of youth towards culture. There can be no doubt that much in the story was suggested by the busy, shifting, irregular life which had for its centre the Duke's amateur theatre. But with whatever intention Goethe may have started—and it would seem from a letter to Merck (August 5, 1778), and from expressions in his later letters to Schiller, that he meant to treat fully of the stage — in due time a subject which interested him more profoundly than any question respecting the theatre became uppermost. It would not have been at all wonderful, he said to Schiller, if he had got bewildered over the book; but "I have, after all,

held to my original idea."[1] That idea assuredly is more nearly related to the actual life of man than to human life as mirrored by the artist on the boards. We may bear in mind Mr Lewes's view as possessing a portion of historical truth, but it does not help us much to understand the more important meanings of the book.

On the other hand we must be on our guard against reducing a book so full of reality and life to an idea or an abstraction or a theory. The stream flows for many wanderers, says Goethe of his poem *Die Geheimnisse:*

> "Gar Viele mussen Vieles hier gewinnin,
> Gar manche Bluthen bringt die Mutter Erde."

Looking back at "Wilhelm Meister" from his elder years he described it as "one of the most incalculable productions." "I myself," he continued, "can scarcely be said to have the key to it. People seek a central point, and that is hard and, after all, not good. I should think a rich manifold life, which deploys before our eyes, were in itself something, without an express tendency, which indeed is merely for the intellect." It is with a work of art, says an excellent French critic, M. Montégut, as with the productions of nature; life encroaching and overrunning soon covers up the principles on which the work reposes, the vegetation of thought reduces to nothing the seed from which it springs, form takes possession of the idea, conceals or veils it, and the artist himself, overmastered by this tyranny of life, loses sight of his point of departure or

[1] Goethe to Schiller, December 10th, 1794.

recognises it only in the results of his toil.[1] From the first Goethe aimed at something more than creating a kind of theatrical "Gil Blas." His letters to Frau von Stein show that the representation of the upper classes of society, with their virtues and their faults, was to form an essential part of the work. Can we name any thought as presiding over a work so full of various matter? In February, 1778, just after the first book of "Wilhelm Meister" had been brought to a close, Goethe made a characteristic and highly significant entry in his diary: "Bestimmteres Gefühl von Einschrankung und dadurch der wahren Ausbreitung"—*a more definite sense of limitation and thereby real expansion.* I will not say with Hettner, who calls attention to this entry, that here we have "the great and comprehensive ground-idea of the romance;" but it may truly be said that here we have the most important lesson of life learnt by Goethe during the ten years of service at Weimar, and from these words we can infer the spirit which was to preside over the representative work of that period.

Let me make an acknowledgment to Hermann Hettner which will serve to cover a large obligation. Several years ago I gave a course of public lectures on Goethe, working my way as best I could (and one always advances in any literature except one's own with uncertainty and difficulty) from "Werther" and "Goetz" to the "West-Eastern Divan" and the second part of "Faust." On reaching "Wilhelm Meister," viewing it as I did in

[1] *Types littéraires et Fantaisies esthétiques*, Wilhelm Meister, pp. 153. 154.

connection with what went before and what followed after, its meaning or meanings, formerly obscure, seemed to grow clearer and clearer as I read. Order began to emerge from what had been a chaotic crowd of impressions. The whole work seemed to become intelligible, and I felt, or believed that I felt, how the parts stood related to the whole and to each other. Those were for me fruitful and happy hours. And then I turned to that section of Hettner's admirable "History of Literature in the Eighteenth Century" which deals with what he terms "the Ideal of Humanity" in the classical age of German Literature, anticipating that I should have to abandon my own view of Goethe's novel in favour of one wider perhaps and deeper, such as I had often gained in other matters by trying to see things through Hettner's eyes. It was a source of satisfaction, not of chagrin, to find that all which I called my own had been long in possession of the German critic. One can hardly hope to say a new word in studying a foreign literature; it is perhaps enough if one says a true word. And now, when reading "Wilhelm Meister" once again, after an interval of several years, I find that everything takes form again in the same way. I seem to feel the same Goethean irony in all the narrative contained in the earlier portion of the novel, and the same Goethean seriousness underlying the irony. And for what I shall say of the book I will make no claim to originality, but offer it to the English reader as Hettner's criticism, and bearing the authority of his eminent name, while for my private satisfaction I may preserve the remembrance that at one time I had found my

way through the book, as I think aright, without much external aid.

It is a novel without a hero. When William first appears in this pseudo-epos,[1] we see him as a kind of tamer, less attractive Werther; less imaginative than Werther, less of a poet, but like Werther vague, unpractical, self-involved, indulging to excess a shallower sensibility and a poorer kind of passion. How he came by the name of *Meister* was unknown to Goethe, for his right name was Wilhelm *Schüler*.[2] William must start from low beginnings. He has small sense of his duties to others; he wastes himself in dreams of little profit; and it is out of such stuff as this that a worthy, useful, even admirable man is to be formed. It is enough at first if there lies within him the capacity of growth, the possibility of progress. But the way is long: delusions, snares, wanderings must be experienced; by error he must be delivered from error. In "Werther" Goethe had exhibited the ruin that comes upon an idealist who will not and cannot abandon his dreams and immoderate desire. In "Tasso" he had shown how a masculine prudence, an enlightened worldliness—presented in the person of Antonio—may come to the aid and deliverance of the idealist when he cannot deliver himself.[3] Here in "Wilhelm Meister" a foolish dreamer is to be formed into a true man; the vague and void of indefinite idealism is to be filled here-

[1] So Goethe terms his novel in a letter to Schiller.

[2] Goethe to Schiller, December 6th, 1794.

[3] "Tasso" was conceived at a later date than "Wilhelm Meister," but it was completed long before the completion of the novel.

after by a life of well-chosen, well-defined activity. He is to be educated not in the schools—it is now unhappily too late for that—but by the harder discipline of life; he is to be delivered from the splendid prison painted with idle visions into the liberty of modest well-doing.

A dreamer the boy was born. As a child he hung over his puppets, which were for his imagination Jonathan, and David, and Goliath: "I surrendered myself to fantasy, rehearsed and prepared for ever, built a thousand castles in the air, and saw not that I had shaken the foundations of the little edifice." Now in early manhood he creates glorious visions out of the petty stage of his native town, and the poor little plays represented upon it. His spirit is too large to interest itself in his father's merchandise; the narrow concerns of the homestead cannot satisfy his aspiring soul; his ideal beckons him away. Then in a sudden first love the youth seems to enter Paradise. While her first true passion brings to Mariana a sense of the waste and void within her soul, a sense of the abject desert which her life has been, and fills her with alarm lest she may prove "that miserable creature—a woman who, inspiring desire, does not also inspire reverence and love," William "paints a picture out of manifold ideas upon a canvas of cloud; the figures of it, to be sure, ran a good deal into one another, yet the whole had an effect the more charming on that account." He soars into the upper regions of illusion. He ardently continues his endless tale of the puppets, and does

not notice that Mariana has dropped asleep. Old Barbara, tippling wine and trading in her mistress's beauty, does not repel him. He had known order in his father's house; not an order allied with beauty, for old Meister had turned into money the art treasures of William's grandfather, but the order of a certain *bourgeois* magnificence—heavy plate, costly furniture, dull substantial dinners. The wild disorder of the actress's room—music, fragments of plays and pairs of shoes, washes and Italian flowers, hair-pins, rouge-pots, ribbons, books, straw-hats, all tossed about in admired confusion—gives him a pleasure which the heavy pomp of his own home had never communicated. He looks upon himself as a beggar fed upon the alms of his beloved.

And then all the dream-fabric suddenly tumbles in the false supposal of Mariana's infidelity. It is the old story of Troilus in his salad days finding heaven in the love of Cressida, and forthwith dropping from heaven into the uncomely limbo of lost illusions. Only that Cressida was indeed loveless and base; whereas here Mariana is true even to the death, and William's second error of renouncing his love and purposed marriage is more grievous than his first error of unwise passion.

William is no young hero like Troilus; but shall we despise him because he is vague, unpractical, lost in illusions? Shakespeare, while presenting the Trojan youth and his erroneous passion with finest irony, yet sees in him the promise of a great and noble warrior; and Goethe will not permit us to think

slightingly of his idealist, since excellent possibilities lie unfolded within him. Over against William is set his early companion, Werner, of the same age, but already a shrewd man of business who sticks to his desk, regards his occupation as merchant with entire satisfaction, finds a daily pleasure in adding to his possessions, and yet perhaps amid all his additions and balancings, forgets, as William puts it, the true sum-total of life. Goethe does not despise merchandise or commerce; he sincerely honours them. It is William, not Goethe who thinks scorn of the life of man in trade. When Werner and William are first presented to us, Werner has in several respects the advantage of his young companion; at least he has attained to more of manhood. And yet we already see that living as he does—regarding the means of life as its ends—he is not in the way of growth; and we shall see Werner and William once again side by side before the close.

Before the cruel wreck of his illusion as a lover, William obtains a momentary glimpse of what the player's life actually is; he makes acquaintance with the stroller Melina. With his pleasing figure, sonorous voice, and sensitive heart, Melina surely must find in the stage a noble field for his ambition, and know the pure and elevated joy of the artist. How greatly is William taken aback to discover that Melina, so weary is he of vulgar vagabondage, longs for a little quiet home to which he may take his young bride, and could be well content with some small post of clerk or collector, from which he might draw a modest salary.

As is natural, William regards Melina in no favourable light, and mentally contrasts the player unworthy of his high profession with himself and Mariana, the gifted ones, who are destined to revive the German theatre. "Amid such words and thoughts our friend undressed himself and went to bed, with feelings of the deepest satisfaction."

A little later, a stranger, seeking a certain inn, accosts him. This mysterious person seems wonderfully familiar with William's past history, and their conversation, as they walk together, soon tends towards the most serious questions. The stranger would fain impress upon his young companion the danger of living upon chances and accident, the duty of clear-sightedness and firmness of will. "I can look with satisfaction on that man alone who knows what is of use to himself and others, and who labours to set bounds to his caprice and self-will. Each man has his own fortune in his hands, as the artist has the raw material which he is to fashion to a certain shape. But it is with this art as with all others; the capacity alone is born with us; it must be learnt and practised with incessant care." The stranger goes his way; in the street there is heard the sound of clarionets, French horns, and bassoons; it is a travelling showman's troop. In a moment the words of the monitor are clean forgotten. Here is a chance not to be lost. William will hire the musicians to perform a serenade outside Mariana's door.

When happiness and hope, dreams and aspirations crash down together in the hapless boy's first loss of illusion, he has virtue enough to recover himself. His

whole being, indeed, seems to be laid waste; his bodily health gives way before the stress of his misery; but when strength returns, he destroys the relics of his past folly, he flings his poems into the fire, he abandons the theatre, and sets himself diligently to work at the merchant's business. From infinity he returns to the office-desk. Yet he has not learnt the true lesson of human duty, for this is but the zeal of despair. Deep in his heart new illusions begin to push and sprout—illusions which are, indeed, but half illusions, since they give promise of a real life, worthier and better suited to his nature, if only it could be attained, than this life of desperate self-repression and enforced toil in an alien field.

The second book of "Wilhelm Meister" has been named by Hettner the romance of poetical vagabondage. Sent forth by his father on the task of collecting certain debts, William falls in with the wandering fragments of a company of players. The commonplace morality of gathering his father's coin counts as nothing when set beside the opportunity of cultivating his talent among a troop of theatrical gipsies. There is at once something admirable and something ludicrous in William's lofty views, set forth with imperturbable earnestness, while he sits in company with that hearty youth, Laertes, and the incomparable Philina, who has no more moral sense than a lively sparrow. He would have the State employ the theatre in serious art for the elevation of the working classes; but Philina cannot imagine statesmen except in periwigs, and "a periwig, let who will be the wearer, always gives my fingers a spasmodic motion."

Again at this juncture, when William is drifting into a close alliance with the wandering players, a stranger appears whom, by his dress and dignified mien, one might have taken for a clergyman. He and William fall into conversation on the needs and education of the artist. "Will not genius save itself," asks William, "from the results of its own errors? Will it not heal the wounds which itself has inflicted?" "By no means," replies the stranger, "or at best to a very small extent. Let no one think that he can conquer the first impressions of his youth. If he has grown up in enviable freedom, surrounded with beautiful and noble objects, in constant intercourse with good men, . . . if he has never learnt anything which he requires to unlearn, if his first efforts have been so guided that, without breaking himself of his habits, he can more easily produce what is excellent in the future; then such a one will lead a purer, more perfect, and happy life, than another man who has wasted the force of his youth in opposition and error." The inference is obvious; it is the "Fly, youth, fly!" which afterwards sounds in William's ears. But for the present he chooses to confide rather in fate than in self-direction and self-control. "Fate," said the other, smiling, "is an excellent but an expensive private tutor."

Among the figures, so lively and so real, of William's companions, appear two about whom Goethe has thrown an air of romance, two who seem framed to suffer and to love—Mignon and the Harper. "Mignon," writes M. Scherer, "has been elevated into a poetic creation; but Mignon has neither charm nor mystery nor veritable

existence; nor any other poetry—let us dare to say it —than a few immortal stanzas put into her mouth." I shall not consider the justice of M. Scherer's criticism, On the whole it is more important to attend to the opinions of German critics on a German creation than to that of any foreign critic; and there is a consensus of German feeling and opinion in opposition to M. Scherer's. But here I want to indicate the moral intention of Goethe in the creation of these two romantic figures. A life of emotion which cannot be converted into action is, according to the teaching of Goethe, a life of disease. William is to be led in the end from vain dreaming to wholesome practical activity. Here are two sufferers, one still a child, one seemingly an old man though in years he is not really old, who are wasted by deep but vain longing, an endless *sehnsucht*, and who must needs descend to the tomb as the victims or martyrs of desire. All Mignon's existence is summed up in two absorbing sentiments—the longing for her native land, and a deep devotion to the benefactor who has rescued her from a life of harsh, loveless, and degrading servitude, a devotion which can never attain the satisfaction which it needs.[1] An inward fire consumes her being; when her young heart suddenly ceases to beat, she reaches the only rest attainable by one who has become enamoured of the impossible. The Harper lives a life still more remote from sanity, with his gaze fixed for ever upon the past; fixed for ever upon one season of intoxicating joy, cut short by the terror of an appalling discovery, and upon that early love which he re-

[1] See the words of her physician, in book viii. chap. iii.

members with a mingled delight, horror and remorse. It were possible for him to renew his existence and recover his moral health if he could leave this dead past behind, and occupy himself with some simple and useful activities in the present; and his restoration is almost effected. But the habit of his soul is too deep-rooted, and he too perishes the victim of a fatal spiritual malady.

The stir and animation of the scenes which present William's life of poetical vagabondage must not hide from us the irony which accompanies that presentation, or Goethe's seriousness which underlies his irony. Before exhibiting, in the close of his romance, the life of pure and noble order, Goethe will show us, on this side and on that, the life of impure and ignoble disorder. And he will set this forth in a twofold way—first, the vagabond disorder of these poor strollers, some of them friendly creatures enough, yet living what a sorry life! And, secondly, disorder in the upper classes of society, where we find more to repel and less to make us tolerant, more, certainly, that is dull and ridiculous, than in the shambling life of the poor losels of the stage. How admirable for stir and play, for shifting gleam and shadow, are some of these scenes! Yet, while Goethe seems to write with most *abandon*, some touch of irony here, and again some momentary start aside, betrays the fact that the writer holds his own personality, his own true self almost sternly aloof.[1]

[1] Note, for example, how the Harper's beautiful song of the minstrel, who refuses a chain of gold as the reward of his art, is immediately followed by a squabble about money, in which, of course, the manager, Melina, takes the lead.

If human life were a ballet set to frivolous music, then Philina might be leader of the dance; and yet let us credit Philina with her own small kind of quick-sightedness and clear-sightedness, with some capricious good-nature, and with the merit of at least being no hypocrite. And what an artist is the youth Laertes, whose first rude rebuff in love has taken all faith in the ideal out of his existence, has left him to live on the chance pleasures of the hour, and prepared him for settling down, when weary of adventure, into an old bachelorhood of respectable Philistinism! And how shall we speak of that luminary of the German stage, the Pedant, with his idiotic smiles, and crouching, ludicrous bows, and ridiculous grimaces and theatrical gestures? It is with such material as this that William's great reformation of the dramatic art is to be effected.

The third book introduces us to the society of persons of rank and distinction. Now, indeed, William may expect to see a life made up of freedom and beauty. Here, if anywhere, true art will be recognised and honoured. The strolling troop has received a call from the Count to present a play before his illustrious visitor the Prince; the Count is a learned lover of the drama; his friend, the Baron, is an ardent admirer of German literature, full of patriotic enthusiasm. William, the burgher's son, looks forward with delight to the opportunities for higher culture which open before him. "Thrice happy," he exclaims to himself, "are they to be esteemed whom their birth of itself exalts above the lower stages of mankind. . . . Far extending and

unerring must their vision be on that higher station; easy each step of their progress in life. . . . Who can better know the worth and worthlessness of earthly things than he who was in a position to enjoy them from youth upwards? and who can earlier guide his mind to the useful, the necessary, the true, than he who may convince himself of so many errors at an age when his strength is still fresh to begin a new career?" The Countess is beautiful and full of grace. And is not the Baron an amateur dramatic poet? And what a happy chance it is to meet a Prince who himself has presided over a theatre!

Alas for William's new erections in the land of dreams, which crumble one by one! The Baron has indeed written a drama, and the manuscript is copious, and the hero is a virtuous, magnanimous, and much-afflicted man. It is necessary to compliment the author, but the piece is insufferably dull; it is in five acts, and that sort of acts which never have an end. The Count is chiefly concerned about the success of the transparency representing the princely hat with the illuminated princely name. It is a dark night when the troop arrive at the castle; the rain has fallen heavily and long; they are drenched—men and women—to the bone, they are bundles of wet rags, human sops and sponges. But there will be the comfortable chambers, the warm fires, the good fare provided by the Count. All seems strangely dark, and cold, and silent. The wind sweeps through the lofty gate; the old towers rise grey and dreary in the night. No one is attended to except Mademoiselle Philina, in

whom the Stall-meister has a special interest. William sits upon some steps, among wet knapsacks, the poor child Mignon, tired and hungry, on his knees. He is filled with sullen indignation as he reflects upon the courtesy shown to his humbler guests by a count.

Things brighten up next day as far as material comfort is concerned, but the daylight only gives a clearer view into the disorderly vulgarity of the wealthy well-born. Their *dilettante* interest in art is but the thinnest varnish. Life in the castle is a perpetual riot and racket of untrained animal spirits. The poor players are the worthier folk among its occupants, and for sake of their own manners and morals attempt some system of police, which, however, is little heeded by the insolent young gentry assembled to meet the Prince. Yet illusions do not cease to flatter William's fancy. The fine ladies express a wish that he would read aloud for them some of his poetical compositions. He examines the chosen pieces beforehand with a critical eye, corrects them with minute attention, practises himself in private recitations, and in due time is presented to the charming Countess.[1] The cherished manuscript is in his pocket, and his fingers itch to draw it forth. But there is Philina kneeling at the Countess's chair, and practising a thousand fooleries, and there is a brother artist, the *friseur*, who has not quite done his task of erecting a tower of curls on the fair female head. Presently

[1] The original of the Countess seems to have been the Countess von Werther, a sister of the great statesman Stein. "This little person . . . ," Goethe writes to Frau von Stein, March 11th, 1781, "is like quicksilver, who in a moment scatters herself into a thousand parts and again runs together into a ball."

a man-milliner arrives and begins to open his bandboxes and parcels. William "often felt for his manuscript in his pocket, and hoped for his deliverance every instant." But no deliverance comes; the company increases, and, after an hour of fruitless waiting, William retires.

So proceed the discoveries of Wilhelm Meister, who is even still a Wilhelm Schüler. On the Prince's arrival, the Count, who prides himself on his patronage of the drama, summons the whole company to appear before him. Everything goes off to perfection; at the end of the play each member of the troop is presented in turn to the Prince, who has a happy and encouraging word for each. But before long he grows remiss in his attendance at the little theatre; a rival attraction, gaming, in the antechamber proves on the whole more attractive. Sometimes after dinner the players are summoned before him, an honour which they highly esteem; William alone notices with displeasure that on the same occasions the huntsmen bring in the hounds or lead the horses through the courtyard to be exhibited in like manner. "It is a pity," says his uncompromising monitor, Jarno, "that you should play with hollow nuts for a stake of hollow nuts." And yet the Prince is gracious and cultivated, and has an interest in art. "Does William read the great French dramatic writers?" he asks. William is ready with an eager "Yes;" but his Highness has already turned to some one else. William will not consent, however, to perish of suppressed æsthetic criticism; he faces round, intercepts the Prince, and delivers himself of an admirable discourse on Racine and Corneille. His Highness

impatiently nods approval and escapes. "William," observes Goethe, "now began to have an inkling that things went forward in the world differently from what he had supposed."

I cannot trace through all its gulfs and shallows, storms and enchanted islands, this Odyssey of Culture. By slow and sorrowful degrees William discovers that he is not made to be an artist, discovering at the same time that the theatre is not a fitting school for the formation of character. There, for example, is Serlo, a man of genius and a born actor; yet see how he cares less for his art than to live a life of selfish indulgence; see how he has lost all native worth and dignity in the never-ending, ever-varying postures of the mime. And there is Aurelia, who in actual life, as on the stage, can never be other than the passionate, half-real, half-factitious tragedy queen. How different it all is from what William had dreamed! And yet his time has not been quite misspent. The study of Shakespeare has made an epoch in his moral history, inciting him to quicken his footsteps forward into the actual world. He has grown in many ways since he left his father's home. Through error he has been delivered from error. He has never been wholly false to his higher self. He has always tried to be kindly and helpful to his fellows. He has not loved indulgence or ease or wealth or station, but things of the mind, and each day higher things than yesterday. He has, it is true, lived too much in his own thoughts and his own feelings, and of men he knows lamentably little; but if he knows little of men, he already knows something of man. The

moment has all but arrived when he may find his true direction.

But before William enters on his worthier life Goethe interposes that book which is in some respects the most remarkable of the novel—"The Confessions of a Beautiful Soul." It is connected by slender threads with the action of the story, but it is intimately related to Goethe's general theme. A higher life must now be sought by William: what ideal shall he set and keep before him? The pure and pale ideal of religious mysticism, which turns away from all the noblest powers and influences of earth to live in inward communion with the invisible Friend and Helper? or that of the man who uses the world for his spiritual furtherance, for the development of his entire nature, who uses the world as not abusing it? We know beforehand what answer to these questions Goethe will give. The experiences of the fair saint are presented with exquisite delicacy and fidelity; they are interpreted with a reverential tenderness. There are passages in the confessions of the heroine of this book which might almost be placed beside passages in the life of St Teresa of Jesus. In writing it Goethe remembered the beautiful spirit and the pure interior life of his early friend, Fräulein Klettenberg.[1] "I find that Christianity," wrote Schiller to Goethe, "contains the first elements of what is highest and noblest, and its various manifestations in life seem to me repulsive and distasteful only because they are

[1] See in connection with this book of "Wilhelm Meister," the "Reliquien der Fraulein Susanna Catherina von Klettenberg nebst Erlauterungen zu den Bekenntnissen einer schonen Seele von J M. Lappenberg." Hamburg, 1849.

erroneous representations of this highest." And he goes on to point out that the peculiar feature of Christianity, which distinguishes it from all other monotheistic forms of religion, lies in the substitution of a free will desiring what is best in place of an external moral law. "Hence, in its pure form, it is the representation of morality at one with beauty." "It is not my intention," replies Goethe, "to exhibit Christianity in its purest light till the eighth book of 'Wilhelm Meister'—in the following generation—where it fully agrees with what you write about it." Goethe's purpose was not carried out; the closing books of his novel did not receive their due development; but in the "Wanderjahre" we find a partial fulfilment of his promise to Schiller. There he shows us religion as forming an essential part of education—that education which prepares men for the active uses of life. Here, in the Confessions of a Beautiful Soul, the religious experiences are not entirely based upon reality; they are in part illusions, though, as Goethe says in a letter to Schiller, "the noblest illusions;" they imply in the spirit of the saintly lady "the most delicate confusion between the subjective and the objective."[1] But for Wilhelm Meister it is most to be desired that he should be delivered from all illusions, even from the noblest. Is it not possible for him to enter upon the higher life in some other way than that of pietism?

Over against the figure of the fair saint Goethe places the remarkable figure of her uncle, in whom Schiller perceived, as many others have independently

[1] To Schiller, Weimar, 18 March, 1795.

perceived, a likeness to Goethe himself. When his pious niece sets foot in the uncle's house, she feels for the first time how earnest and harmonious human life can be; a noble order reigns everywhere; grave beauty presides over the day's toil or pleasure; no profusion of pomp dissipates the spirit, but serious harmonies of form and colour and sound engender seriousness and recollection. It is her uncle's mind projected outwards and embodied in domestic and social life. "Man's highest merit," says the master of the house, "always is, as much as possible, to rule external circumstances, and as little as possible to let himself be ruled by them. Life lies before us as a huge quarry lies before the architect; he deserves not the name of architect, except when, out of this fortuitous mass, he can combine with the greatest economy and fitness, and durability, some form, the pattern of which originated in his spirit . . . You, my dear niece, have, it may be, chosen the better part; you have striven to bring your moral being, your earnest lovely nature into accordance with itself and with the Highest; but neither ought we to be blamed when we strive to get acquainted with the sentient and perceptive man in all his comprehensiveness, and to bring about an active harmony among his powers."

He honours his niece because her loins are girt and her lamp is lit: but are not his own loins girt and his own lamp lit after another fashion? Pointing to the pictures on the wall he said, "Bestow a little notice on the spirit manifested in these works. Good minds delight to trace the finger of God in nature;

why not also pay some small regard to the hand of his imitator?" She looks long and earnestly, and although her exclusive preoccupation with inward religious feelings and her neglect of the history of art, prevents her from perceiving all that her uncle perceives, she cannot fail to discover here something closely akin to moral culture. "You are altogether right," observes the uncle, "and we see from this that those do not act well who, in a solitary exclusive manner, follow moral cultivation by itself. On the contrary, it will be found that he whose spirit strives after inward and moral culture has every reason, at the same time, to improve his sentient and perceptive powers, that so he may not run the risk of sinking from his moral height, by giving way to the enticements of an ill-regulated fancy, and degrading his moral nature by allowing it to take delight in tasteless baubles, if not in something worse." The pious niece could not suspect that the speaker was levelling at her; but neither could she avoid the recollection of the insipidities in some of the spiritual songs that used to edify her; nor help feeling that much of the imagery which she associated with her religious ideas would have found little favour with her uncle. Until now she had known no other mode of singing than the usual style of rendering hymns practised by good folk whose pious emotions are little disturbed by hoarse or discordant pipes. Here in her uncle's hall she has the pleasure of listening to devotional songs in the Latin language arranged for eight voices. The music "seemed to originate in the deepest feelings of the

most accomplished human beings; . . . without pretending to edify, they elevated and made me happy in the most spiritual manner." She has in a measure learned her uncle's lesson; he has not once troubled the purity of her faith or disturbed the harmony of nature to which she has attained; but he has added something to her spiritual culture. As she is about to take her departure he gives her the cross of her order beautifully wrought and hanging upon a large brilliant, the noblest stone in his collection; it is a symbol signifying that the religious spirit gains, not loses, by an association with what is beautiful, and that the more completely we bring into harmonious action all the higher powers of our nature, the richer and the more excellent will be the result.

When Wilhelm Meister finally abandons the stage, he has uprooted from his imagination the chief illusion which led him astray. He begins to perceive that true human happiness and human worth are to be attained by right dealing with the real stuff of life, which lies near to our hand, limited indeed as are our powers of fashioning it, and fortunately limited for creatures such as we are. He learns that only through definiteness can strength be attained or service be rendered; "the safe plan is always to do the task that lies nearest to us." And now he becomes connected with a group of persons who, like the Count and the Baron, are of high station, and raised above the necessity of common toil, and yet each has taken upon himself or herself a share in the labour and the responsibilities of life, each toils with unwearying earnestness in some field of well-directed,

practical activity. Lothario, as long as he lived for an abstract idea, cared little for the human relations which were nearest to him and which ought to have been dearest; he contracted debts, quarrelled with his uncle, left his sisters to themselves, despised the obvious duties of life. In America he fancied that he might accomplish something. And then came his discovery of the truth: "I will return, and in my house, amid my fields, among my people, I will say, *Here, or nowhere, is America.*" He manages his estate, rigidly insisting on his servants doing each man his proper work; his land increases in value, his income is augmented. "And shall I," he says, "alone enjoy this growing benefit? Shall not those who labour with me and for me partake, in their degree, of the advantages which expanding knowledge and a period of progress are procuring for us?" Were it better that he should part with his fortune in a fit of fantastic benevolence, and seek for some new imaginary duties? Such a sacrifice were, after all, but a selfish mode of relieving himself from the burden of daily service, a sacrifice made, as it were, in despair. Better by far is the active sacrifice implied in the steadfast administration of his wealth and influence at once for his own good and the good of others. Here is a worthy example for William, that bird of paradise with soiled and draggled plumes, whose feet have never yet touched the earth.

And at this fortunate moment William's long-lost son is found. This, indeed, Goethe declares, is something to live for better than the dreams of stage-struck youth.

"How zealously he contemplated repairing what had been neglected, restoring what had fallen! He no longer looked upon the world with the eyes of a bird of passage; a building was no longer to him as a grove hastily put together and withering before one quits it. Everything that he proposed commencing was to be completed for his boy; everything that he erected was to last for several generations. In this sense his apprenticeship was ended; with the feelings of a father he had acquired all the virtues of a citizen." He has lost his mere individuality, and with it his absorbing desire for his individual culture. His son has bound him to the whole human race.

But William, while he is about to accept loyally the bond of life and cheerfully acknowledge its limitations, is not to degrade into a Philistine. Werner, his former young companion of the counting-house, now appears at the age of forty. "The honest man seemed rather to have retrograded than advanced. He was much leaner than of old; his peaked face appeared to have grown sharper, his nose longer; brow and crown had lost their hair; the voice, clear, eager, shrill; the hollow breast and stooping shoulders, the sallow cheeks, announced indubitably that a melancholic drudge was there." He talks of his bourgeois household; the women are satisfied and happy, never short of money; half their time they spend in dressing, the other half in showing themselves when dressed; they are as domestic as a reasonable man could wish. "My boys are growing up prudent youths. I see them in my mind's eye already sitting writing, reckoning, running, trading, trucking; each of

them as soon as possible shall have a business of his own." As for recreation when the day's work is over, Werner can while away the evening with cards. It is not such a home of material abundance and spiritual indigence that could content Wilhelm Meister.

The voice of life and love is heard in these closing chapters of the romance, summoning its hero to the duty and the joy of wise living. But there also sounds in them the voice of death. In the house, modest and yet ennobled with dignity and beauty, where William is to find the highest happiness of his future life, is a spacious passage leading to a door, in the Egyptian fashion, before which lie two granite sphinxes. Within is a place of tombs, the Hall of the Past, where lies the body of the former owner of the mansion. All is planned and contrived so as to produce a feeling of cheerful serenity. Here are no grim emblems of death; here is no grinning skeleton, dart in hand, or bearing a scroll with the familiar legend, *Memento mori.* Yet death is here remembered, not thrust out of view, and this Hall of the Past might as justly be named Hall of the Present and the Future.

"Opposite the door, on a stately sarcophagus, lay a marble figure of a noble-looking man"—the uncle of the pious lady of the Confessions—"reclined upon a pillow. He held a roll before him, and seemed to look on it with still attention. It was placed so that you could read with ease the words that stood there. They were these—'Think of living'"

And around are sculptured forms representative of the joys and duties of life: the mother pressing her infant to her bosom; the bearded man playing with his little son; the bridegroom and the bride; the

maiden with her pitcher by the well; the king invoking the gods at the altar as he solemnizes some great alliance of peoples. In this hall the body of Mignon is afterwards laid—youth resting here by the side of age, the old man and the child as companions in death. But it is not of death that the chorus sings. After the due of sorrow and of tears is given, the voices of the invisible singers and of the bright-robed boys raise a chant not of death, but life:

"*Chorus.* Children, turn back unto life! Your tears let the fresh air dry, which plays upon the winding waters. Fly from Night! Day and Pleasure and Continuance are the lot of the living.

"*Boys.* Up, we turn back unto life. Let the day give us labour and pleasure, till the evening brings us rest, and the sleep of night refreshes us.

"*Chorus.* Children, hasten into life! In the pure garments of beauty may Love meet you with heavenly looks and with the wreath of immortality!"

We have travelled far from the disorderly vagabondage of the poor gipsies of the stage, far from the riot and racket and folly and vain dilettantism of the aristocratic gathering at the castle before we are permitted to hear such strains of life and death as these.

One thing is still lacking to William—the love and helpful companionship of a noble woman. And in the company of men and women, to which he is now introduced, there are two, Theresa and Natalia, of whom one is surely to take her place by his side. Which of the two is best qualified to be his true helpmate? Theresa delights in much serving; her motions are all with a purpose and alert; nothing, however minute, escapes her clear blue eyes. She manages her own property in the country, and superintends the large estate of her

old neighbour who cannot see to it himself. She, if anyone ever has been such, is practical and definite; from her earliest youth the store-room, the granaries, the fields have been her chosen province. Her firewood is sawed to the precise length and exactly split and piled; her tubs are of the cleanest and are ranged each in its precise place; everything needed for convenience, cheerfulness, durability, is at hand. And she is most successful in her bringing up of little ones entrusted to her care, such children as promise to be lively, serviceable housewives. With her William would possess a secure, terrestrial life, order in prosperity, courage in adversity. But while she is perfect in the moral virtues, she is deficient in spiritual graces. "Instead of faith she has insight, instead of love she has steadfastness, instead of hope she has trust." Natalia's occupation is that of educating a number of little girls, especially those who show a fine and gentle nature, and guiding their minds to what is good. Theresa breaks in her pupils, Natalia forms them. In her presence William feels that she has the power to form him for higher things and build up not his fortune but his spirit. Her peculiar gift is that of discovering the wants of others, and of satisfying those wants; satisfying them not by money but in a higher way, for all her gifts are distributed in kind. She has a firm faith in the wise governance of life by law and order: "I could almost venture to assert," she says, "that it is better to be wrong by rule than to be wrong with nothing but the fitful caprices of our nature to impel us hither and thither; and in my way of viewing men there always

seems to be a void in their nature, which cannot be filled up except by some decisive and clearly settled law." For the beauty of nature, for the charms of art she cares but little; all her concern is for the needs of men and women. It was Goethe's intention to have drawn with careful detail the figure of Natalia—that of the woman whose life is one happy, harmonious, active self-surrender; unfortunately the portrait is a somewhat slight and hasty one. Still we can clearly divine his intention. William, the lover of the ideal, could not be quite happy with a Theresa. But Natalia will know his wants and supply them; she will guide him to obedience to the true law of his nature. And it is to Natalia that his fate is entrusted. All is well that ends well. Truly may the sprightly Friedrich say to him: "To my mind thou resemblest Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to seek his father's asses, and found a kingdom." "I know not the worth of a kingdom," answered William, "but I know I have attained a happiness which I have not deserved, and which I would not change for anything in life."

We have now traced the story of Wilhelm Meister in the sense in which, it seems to me, Goethe intended that it should be understood. On its artistic faults I have not cared to dwell; the imperfect construction, the *longueurs*, the somewhat absurd device of the secret society, the theatrical preparation of the poor little body of the dead Mignon, and other matters of offence are sufficiently obvious. As to the alleged immoral tone in which Goethe treats of the relations of men and women, we constantly feel that he had none of that

quick, indignant spirit of purity, which feels a soil as if it were a wound. His men can act with baseness or live in careless license, as Lothario has acted and lived, and yet, like Lothario, can leave their baser selves behind, and suffer meanwhile no keen compunctious visitings. But at least there is the figure of the uncle in the "Confessions" to condemn all base and ignoble pleasure by showing us the higher purposes of existence. And as we look back over the book we feel how Mariana's shameful ways, and that error of girlish abandonment, which half cleansed her careless life, and the conscienceless frivolity of Philina, and Mignon's hopeless brooding passion, and the Countess's transitory love-in-idleness, each and all stand convicted and condemned by the pure and generous affection of Natalia. There are readers, and among them I find some of the best of readers, who refuse to dwell among ill or doubtful company in a book, even for sake of a subsequent moral gain. And there are other readers who, sensibly or insensibly, get more evil from such doubtful company than they can get good from any of the larger meanings of a book. Let readers of both these classes turn away from "Wilhelm Meister," and let them include in their well-justified private *index expurgatorius* not this only but many other great works of literature.

With one remark on "Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre" I must end. It is Goethe's express opinion that William's way of buying experience at a high price in the market is a way, if possible, to be avoided. With some men it is indeed inevitable. If one is wrapped round with illusions, as William was, there is nothing for

it but that life should rudely strip them off. But far better is it if, by early training, pure and true, we can avert such harsh necessity. Accordingly in "Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre," a pendant to the "Apprenticeship," Goethe sets forth an ideal of education for children which shall serve, as far as may be, to make them true men, sane, vigorous, frank, laborious, helpful to themselves and to others, clear-souled, and, therefore, clear-sighted, reverential, and religious. Above all else reverence—which Shakespeare names "the angel of the world"—presides over their spirits; reverence for what is above us, reverence for what is around us, reverence for what is beneath us; and, arising from these three reverences, the fourth and last—self-reverence. All selfish isolation is rendered as impossible, in this school of education, as it is unnatural. In union with his equal, each boy grows up into a man, who, a serviceable member of the great community of men, can courageously meet life and death.

GOETHE.

II.—GOETHE AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.[1]

In his relation to the thinkers and poets of young Germany who were coming to manhood in his elder years, Goethe has been compared by Heine to a venerable oak, which with its great boughs overshadows and for a time checks the growth of the woodland saplings. Bitter murmurs, he says, began to be heard against this majestic king of the forest. To the extreme right of religious orthodoxy was united in opposition to Goethe the extreme left of the Revolution. Those who held by the old faith were afflicted because they could not find in the tree-trunk one niche sanctified by the image of a saint, and because the dryads all undraped, with their heathen witcheries, had here their haunt; and, like St Boniface, these people would have rejoiced to level to the ground with some consecrated axe the old enchanted oak. Those who held by the new faith, the apostles of liberalism, were angry because they could not appropriate it as a tree of liberty, nor even construct from its timber a barricade. "In truth," goes on Heine, "the tree was too high; they were not able to plant on its summit the *bonnet*

[1] An Address delivered by the writer as President of the English Goethe Society, in Westminster Town Hall, June 28, 1889.

rouge and dance the *carmagnole* at its foot. The public in general, however, honoured the old oak because it stood erect in lordly independence, because it filled the whole world with its perfume, because its branches rose so majestically to the sky that it seemed as if the stars were only the golden fruits of this wondrous tree."

We cannot plant the *bonnet rouge* on the tree-top; and yet Goethe belonged to the century of Revolution, and was, as much as any man, a child of his own time. In considering his relation to the revolutionary movement critics have erred by fixing their attention too exclusively on those works of Goethe which deal in a polemical or critical spirit with the Revolution, as it manifested itself with sanguinary violence in France, or was propagated by its missionaries in the neighbouring countries. These works are indeed worthy of attention, and we shall do well to give them their place—a minor one—among the creations of his genius. But the Revolution which has changed the face of Europe was not confined to France, nor did it begin its work in the year 1789. Republican Paris discredited the Revolution by madness and crime, and prepared the way for a gigantic military tyranny. The disastrous orgies of anarchy were in no sense inevitable, except as shipwreck is inevitable when the crew is mad with strong drink and a blinded helmsman steers for the boiling surf. But Robespierre and Marat, Hébert and St Just, were not the true representatives of the European revolution; they were only its madmen or its bandits. The great movement which they and such as they misrepresented

and deformed was, as its apologist Mr Frederic Harrison has lately said, a movement of the human race towards a completer humanity. Adam Smith and John Howard, Turgot and Condorcet are names more important in the history of the advancing movement of the human mind in the eighteenth century than those of the brigands and assassins who betrayed, robbed, and strangled freedom and justice. That movement, indeed, in its inner spirit was, as its apologist has asserted, an *evolution* rather than a *revolution*. It aimed at much more than political liberty, at much more even than social reform; it aimed at freedom for the thinker—intellectual liberty; at the emancipation of the artist from barren rules and worn-out conventions; at a return to nature, a simplification of life, a fuller deploying of the emotions, a more complete development of all the powers of our manhood. And who will question that Goethe bore a part, and no inconsiderable part, in the great war of liberation?

But before 1789 the poet of "Goetz" and "Werther" had passed through his revolutionary period of destruction, if he ever cared to destroy, and had set himself actively to the work of constructing, to the work of reconciling. "Goetz von Berlichingen" had been a cry for freedom, such freedom as the natural man by his generous but rude instincts, and his spontaneous but rude sense of justice may attain. The central figure, after whom that play is named, is a vigorous and noble child of nature. He is tough and brawny as our English Robin Hood; a lover of free air, and if a draught of wine cannot be had, the stream will satisfy his needs; joyous of temper;

ruling his followers by the bonds of personal loyalty and affection; not overbearing in prosperity; undepressed in adverse circumstances, except when all things darken towards the close; merciful to the poor; bold against the tyrant; a man, as Brother Martin describes him, whom princes hate but to whom the oppressed throng; a promise-keeper; loyal to the Emperor; a lover of his wife; bound to his fellows by the bonds of faithful comradeship. And all this virtue of his is unlearned by rule or rote; it is native to his soul. In his own perceptions and his own will lies the initiative of his deeds. Rule and precedent he scorns, and under God and the Emperor he knows no lord or master save his own sense of right. When his head falls back in death it is with the cry, "Freedom! freedom!" upon his lips.

In point of form also the drama "Goetz von Berlichingen" was an assertion of independence. But the freedom of the artist was more expressly maintained in the "Prometheus." The great shaper of statues, the moulder of man and woman, acknowledges no other almighty and immortal Power above him than time, which shall subdue the Olympians. And when his brother Epimetheus urges compliance with the will of Zeus, and predicts that the gods will give him a place upon Olympus from whence he may rule the earth, if only he will submit to their authority, Prometheus rejects with disdain the thought of acting as deputy for another. No; let each keep his own.

> "*Epimetheus.* And how much then is thine?
> *Prometheus.* The circle my activity doth fill
> Nor more nor less than this."

In his essay of 1772 on German Architecture, Goethe describes the artist as a demi-god who breathes the breath of his own spirit into his creations; schools and doctrines can but trammel him; in order that art may be living it must needs be "characteristic;" and characteristic art must spring directly from the inward, individual, independent genius of the artist.

But in due time Goethe puts himself in many ways under discipline. When Prometheus reappears in the "Pandora," written some four-and-thirty years later than the drama and monologue which bear his name, how different is the conception of the great artist and patron of humanity! He has sunk into the utilitarian toiler; a vigorous master-smith, content to forge serviceable weapons of war, and fearing not a little those visions of ideal beauty, which, arising smoke-like from the casket of Pandora, may draw away his workers in iron from their appointed task. The Titans, declares Eos in the closing words of the fragment, may make a large beginning; but to lead to everlasting good and immorta beauty is the work of the gods. Not by the storm o passion—such is the teaching of Goethe's allegory—can true beauty in art be attained; not by this, but by clear and solemn thought inspired by purified emotion. Phileros, the son of Prometheus, must rise from the sea, with all his grosser ardours purged away. Epimeleia, the daughter of Epimetheus, must rise ennobled from the flames, before they can be wedded in the Temple of Peace, when Pandora shall have returned to earth, restored in joy to her rejuvenated husband.

Goethe's years of Titanism were past before the

earthquake began to rumble in revolutionary Paris. He had inherited from his father a sense of order and method which could not fail in time to assert itself. We know how in his elder years it was a happiness to him to arrange his scientific and artistic collections in the way which best exhibited their meaning. When the boy Mendelssohn played for him, Goëthe requested that the musical pieces might be given in a chronological sequence. We are told that he was exact and neat even in the folding of a letter. And the ordering of his external possessions was only the projecting outwards of what constantly went on in his mind. He tabulated his facts, methodised his ideas, endeavoured to introduce order into his feelings, aimed at bringing each observation, each thought, as he himself would express it, under its proper rubric; trusting all the while that the one spirit of life within him would animate and give unity to the accumulated items, and that the result would be no lifeless classification but an organic whole.

He had uttered his cry for freedom in "Goetz" and in "Prometheus." But he had learnt that true freedom for the individual comes not through tumult of passion, not through anarchy of will, not through the vague and infinite longing of a Werther, but through wise limitation, through intellectual clearness and order, through purity of feeling, and through activity within a definite sphere. The Revolution, we are told, was a movement of the human race towards a completer humanity. Goethe, if any man of the eighteenth century, aspired towards this completer humanity; but he thought it was to be attained, if at all, by patience and discipline,

by love and toil, not by the intoxication of intellectual abstractions qualified by the intoxication of the guillotine.

His public services to the State, his scientific studies, and his feeling for art as matured during his sojourn in Italy, alike indisposed Goethe for sympathizing with the revolutionary spirit in France. He had learnt, from his own experience as a public functionary, how much can be effected by a steadfast effort at reform and improvement, apart from violence. He had in a great measure put aside the tasks and the joys which were dearest to him in order that he might devote himself to the concerns of the State. He had set himself to revive the mines at Ilmenau ; to plan and superintend public buildings in Weimar ; to see that the roads were not swamps and hollows, but fair ways of passage ; to inspect the public domains, and perform the duties of an enlightened steward or land agent ; to reform the finances by constant care and the most watchful economy ; to regulate the War Department, softening as far as it lay in his power the harshness of military discipline, and lessening the burden which the common people bore. He had undertaken all this, and effected much ; nor did he neglect the interests of art, for while his time and strength permitted he endeavoured to elevate and purify the dramatic performances in the Weimar theatre ; while at Jena he busied himself in the affairs of the university, and made such effort as he could towards a complete system of school reform. "Goethe," said his keen if friendly critic Merck, "is all-important and all-directing, and everyone is content with him, because he serves many and injures none. Who can resist the

disinterestedness of the man?" Goethe took things up where he found them, and tried by close attention to principles and to details to make things better. He did not start from the year One, nor lay down laws for all mankind, nor hatch a series of brand-new constitutions, nor expect the millennium. He could not be an optimist, for he knew something of the nature of man; but a meliorist of the most earnest and practical kind Goethe was. Among many good works of his perhaps the best was that he helped to form the Grand Duke's character, so that from a crude and passionate youth Karl August grew to be a wise and beneficent ruler; but it does not appear that at any time Goethe had a desire to serve humanity by cutting off the Grand Duke's head.

His scientific studies led him in the same direction; they taught him to expect much from a gradual evolution; they taught him to believe that the way of natural development is not a way of violent cataclysms. Goethe's discovery of an intermaxillary bone in man may seem to have only a remote connection with his feeling towards the French Revolution; but his joy in that discovery was part of the happiness with which he contemplated the external universe as a great harmonious whole, as an eternal process moving on, free from convulsive interruption and lawless change; and his contemplation of nature as a harmonious whole governed by law predisposed him for trust in *evolution* rather than *revolution* in the affairs of men. His theory that the skull is only a modified vertebra, his theory of the metamorphosis of plants, his preference for the Neptunian over the Plutonic hypothesis in

geology, are tokens of an intellect which loved to trace out harmonies and connections and order in nature; and such an intellect is little pleased by the presence of catastrophes in the history of society.

It is, indeed, under the similitude of a geological catastrophe that Goethe, in his Rabelaisian fragment, "The Travels of the Sons of Megaprazon," describes the huge convulsion in France. Pantagruel, in the fourth book of Rabelais' extraordinary work, embarks on shipboard to visit the Oracle of the Holy Bottle, and on his voyage makes acquaintance with certain strange islands. In Goethe's unfinished romance of the early Revolution days, Pantagruel's descendants, the six sons of Megaprazon, each endowed with his own peculiar gift of craft, wisdom, beauty, strength, persuasive speech, inquisitive skill, sail for the Rabelaisian islands of Papimany and Pope Figland, which have curiously changed in character since the epoch of the Reformation. From an inhabitant of Papimany the voyagers hear of strange occurrences in the neighbouring island of Monarchomany. This land of monarchy, in the first intention of the allegory, obviously means France. It had been one of the most famous and beautiful islands of the Papimanian Archipelago. The palace of the king, a building of superb dimensions, was planted upon a lofty promontory. Hard by were rocky heights, beautified by art, and adorned with all flower and fruit-bearing trees, whereon stood the splendid mansions of the aristocracy. The country generally was fruitful, and was tilled by a vigorous peasantry; but by a law of the island these tillers of the fields were forbidden

ever quite to satisfy their hunger with the fruits of their toil. The aristocracy suffered much from gastric diseases, but they could always tempt their appetite with every dainty. The king could do, or thought he could do, as he pleased. Unhappily, the island was of volcanic origin, of which there was abundant evidence in scoriæ, shoots of flame, earth tremors, and boiling springs. The lively temper of the inhabitants seemed to have in it something that betrayed a kinship to this fire. Recently, earthquakes had been felt, especially where the fields of the labourers adjoined the heights occupied by the dwellings of the nobility; and at length at this point a volcano made a vent for the subterranean forces. One night the sky seemed all aflame, and the sea was violently disturbed. When morning dawned the island of Monarchomany no longer existed; it had been split into three fragments, and each fragment, torn from its roots below the sea, went floating hither and thither, like a rudderless ship driven before the winds of heaven. The majestic promontory with its palace had drifted into the dim north-east. Sailors brought reports that the rocky headlands, crowned with noble dwellings, had been observed aimlessly wandering in some wild and distant sea. What had become of the main body of the island, where the humbler inhabitants had lived and laboured, was as yet unknown in Papimany. Such was Goethe's gloomy view of the events in France; and we cannot wonder that those of his friends who trusted that some day the island might be more fertile than ever it had been before, and that its poor inhabitants might for

the first time eat freely of the fruits of the field, were little pleased with this offspring from the earlier and more joyous "Pantagruel." Few, however, will dispute that the subterranean fires still exist in the island, no longer named Monarchomany ; that the volcano has from generation to generation been in active eruption, and that the quaking and gaping of the soil may even now justly give rise to grave apprehensions.

If Goethe's work as a servant of the State and his scientific studies alienated him from the revolutionary spirit and revolutionary methods, so also did his convictions and feelings with reference to art. "Oeser taught me," says Goethe, "that the ideal of beauty is simplicity and repose ;" but this lesson of his early master was not fully learned until the pupil had studied in Rome, as in the high school of the world. There his vision was calmed and purified ; there his energy was at the highest, and at the same time his repose was most profound. In the presence of the masterpieces of classical sculpture he felt that intellectual sanity and obedience to law produce nobler results in art than eruptive fervours or fantastic caprices of the imagination. In Italy Goethe finally decided in favour of the Olympians as opposed to the Titans. His period of revolt was at an end ; he would henceforth build up, if possible upon true lines, and he would waste none of his strength in destroying. Or if he annoyed dulness, hypocrisy, and folly, it should be with his sling, in jest and epigram, as a humorous recreation after earnest toil. In the Hellenism of such works as "Iphigenia," recast from prose to verse in Rome, and

"Hermann and Dorothea," Goethe was in a certain sense doing the work of the European revolution of the eighteenth century; he was seeking after a completer conception of humanity; he was delivering the ideal man alike from the faded fripperies of courtly art and from the violences and sentimentalities of the earlier revolutionary days to which belong his own "Goetz" and "Werther." But the spirit in which these products of Goethe's Hellenism were conceived and executed lay as far removed as is possible from the spirit which could be carried away in sympathy with the fierce and turbid passions of the Parisian demagogues.

And yet this very Hellenism of Goethe, which opposed itself to all turbulence of passion, had certain points of contact with the French revolutionary movement, even in its days of wildest frenzy. The young Republic loved to demonstrate, in somewhat theatrical fashion, its kinship with the republics of antiquity. Altars of liberty and high-priests of the god of nature were to the taste of the time. The actor Talma, as Proculus in the tragedy of "Brutus," appeared no longer in eighteenth-century costume, but wearing a veritable Roman toga. "How absurd he is!" exclaimed his sister artist, Louise Contat, "he looks like an antique statue!" The painter David, a deputy for Paris in the Convention, designed ceremonies in the Greek or the high Roman fashion, for the great public functions. His last words, as he gazed with dying eyes at the engraver's proof of his *Thermopylæ*, expressed a pride in his art as true to the classical ideal: "None but myself could have conceived the head of Leonidas."

And the exquisite singer and victim of the Revolution, André Chenier, who dedicated to Louis David his ode *Le Jeu de Paume*, is the author of poems which, for antique grace and beauty fresh and young, yet withal severe, are unsurpassed even by the Hellenics of our English Landor.

In truth there was a certain relation between the politics of the Revolution and its classical or pseudo-classical art. Each tended towards the abstract; each was an effort towards simplification. A multitude of concrete details, specialities of time and place, were disregarded both in art and in politics, in order that the ideal or abstract man might appear disencumbered of his accidental surroundings. It was not the rights of Frenchmen or Germans or Englishmen concerning which the politician declaimed—not these, but the rights of *Man*. And the artist desired to exhibit typical or representative characters rather than individuals, so that Goethe himself, in "The Natural Daughter," defines neither dramatic place nor time, and refuses to give the persons of his drama any other names than certain general titles. The king, the duke, the count, the monk, the abbess, appear before us; but in dealing with a work of art we must not ask the questions which have a merely historical interest, What king? and king of what country? "The high symbolism with which it is handled," wrote Schiller of this play, "so that all the crude material is neutralised, and everything becomes portion of an ideal Whole, is truly wonderful." But, as in politics, it is easy to advance from useful generalisations to vacuous abstrac-

tions, so in art, if we abandon what is concrete and individual, it is easy to pass on from what is ideal to colourless and lifeless symbols, nor did Goethe or Schiller always know where lay the true bounding-line of dramatic characterisation.

But in politics Goethe was almost as little inclined as Burke to adopt the abstract way of thinking. He concerned himself much less about the rights of man than about the needs, especially the intellectual and moral needs, of his own countrymen. And as he felt strongly that each individual makes the most of his powers when he consults his own turn of mind and peculiar character, so he felt with respect to nations. He would capture for the uses of his countrymen whatever they could really appropriate and assimilate from foreign nations, and he willingly set himself to the task of a translator and adapter from Voltaire and from Diderot; but he could not tolerate any attempt to Gallicise the German people, and he looked with impatient scorn on efforts to transplant the revolutionary ideas into a soil to which they were not native. He was a German. He confessed that he often thought with sorrow of the weakness of his country in its days of division; he confessed that in art and science which belongs to the *world* he at times found wings to raise himself above such sorrow. But he found his best comfort in his faith that a great future awaited Germany. "I cling to that faith," he said. He confidently looked forward to a Germany united in heart and will, while yet the several centres of culture should retain each its own special character. "I am not

uneasy," he said a few years before his death, "about the unity of Germany; our good highroads and future railroads will of themselves do their part. But, above all, may Germany be *one* in love! and may it always be *one* against the foreign foe!"

Goethe, however, as all who know anything of him must be aware, though an admirable public servant, was not a political thinker in the highest sense of the word. He was deficient in the historic sense, and the universal culture towards which, like Bacon, he aspired, hardly included the study of political history. The history of science, the history of literature and of art interested him profoundly, but he cared little to follow the career of dynasties, or to investigate the causes which underlie the rise and fall of governments. It often happens that those who are profoundly occupied with what is inward in man, with what belongs to character, acquire a certain degree of indifference to the external machinery of society. And such persons as being free from party passions and on the watch for whatever can aid the intellectual and moral development of men, are by no means the least useful members of the community, and form an admirable reserve power ready to throw in their weight on either side in favour of moderation and good sense. But it is also true that they are liable unjustly to depreciate the importance of the external conditions under which men pass their lives. It seemed to Goethe, as Chancellor Friedrich von Müller said of him, that an honest and vigorous will could make to itself a path, and employ its activity to advantage under every form of civil society. "Sir,"

cried Dr Johnson, "I would not give half a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual." And on another occasion: "They make a rout about *universal* liberty, without considering that all that is to be valued, or indeed can be enjoyed by individuals, is *private* liberty. Political liberty is good only so far as it produces private liberty." There is a portion of truth in this paradox of the sturdy old Tory, who doubtless would have sacrificed several half-guineas to displace the "Whig dogs" from power. Goethe's political indifference did not extend as far as this professed indifference of Dr Johnson. Among the "Venetian Epigrams" we read the following:—

"All the apostles of freedom to me have ever been hateful:
Each in the end desires licence alone for himself.
Would you enfranchise the people? Up then, and venture to serve them!
Ah! but the danger of that only a trial will show."

Yet an epigram hard by pleads against any attempt to deceive the multitude, and closes with the words "Only be honest, and you will lead the populace on to humanity." And that Goethe was not indifferent to the intellectual gains which result from political freedom another epigram may suffice to prove:—

"'These men are mad,' you say of the eager and violent speakers
Whom in France we hear declaiming in street and in square;
I too think they are mad; yet a madman utters in freedom
Wisdom's words, while ah! wisdom 'mid slaves must be dumb."

Goethe was not indifferent to freedom; but it seemed to him that most men have some special non-political business of their own to do, which they will probably

do well if they attend to it closely, ill if they attend to other things; and he believed that the country in the long run gains more by each man doing his own work well than by every one doing badly the public work of the nation or of the government. He felt very deeply the demoralising effect of violent party-spirit, and especially its ill-effects in relation to culture and learning. Addison, writing at a time when the strife between Whig and Tory ran high and a furious party-spirit divided the nation against itself, proposed that honest men of all parties should enter into an association for the vindication of truth and the defence of merit, to whatever party it might belong. According to the articles of association each member should set his hand to a declaration that as long as he shall live he will call black black, and white white. "And we shall upon all occasions," so ran the declaration, "oppose such persons that upon any day of the year shall call black white, or white black, with the utmost peril of our lives and fortunes." Goethe might serve as patron saint of such a guild as this. In "The German Emigrants" he has represented the disinterested enthusiasm of one enamoured of French republican ideas in the person of Cousin Charles. His estates are in the hands of the enemy, and yet he cannot hate a nation whose principles he approves and in whose large promises to the world he still confides. Privy Councillor S., who joins the party of which Cousin Charles is a member, has also suffered much from the French invasion. "He had come," says Goethe, "to know the licence of the nation which spoke only of law, and felt the tyranny of

men who had always the cry of freedom on their lips." But it is his error to view all things in a splenetic way, and to yield up his sounder judgment to passion. He speaks with bitter mockery of young people who are inclined to idealise every object, while Charles is equally severe against men who can tolerate nothing which does not agree with obsolete forms and lifeless precedent. The amiable Baroness would fain keep the peace between the contending parties, but her efforts are in vain; her old friends leave the house in wrath, and as a last resource she proposes that among those who remain there shall be a general agreement to avoid subjects of dispute, and seek for such pleasant neutral ground as without contention they may occupy in common. And so begins in the midst of the revolutionary storms that series of tales which, like the romantic and mirthful stories of the "Decameron" narrated in the happy garden while the plague raged outside in Florence, were to withdraw the mind from the troubles, vain fears, vain hopes, and rancorous party-passion of the time.

But the infection was in the air, and who could escape the fever of the age? In the "Travels of the Sons of Megaprazon," the symptoms of this malady—the "fever of the age" (*Zeitfieber*), or, as some call it, the "journal-fever" (*Zeitungsfieber*)—are described. "The sufferer all at once becomes oblivious of his closest concerns, mistakes his truest and most obvious advantages, sacrifices everything, even his desires and passions, to a notion which has become his master passion. If help is slow to arrive, the notion fixes itself in his

brain, and forthwith becomes the axle around which whirls a spirit of blind delusion. The man neglects the business which benefited his domestic circle and the commonweal; he sees father and mother, brothers and sisters no more." Such is Goethe's diagnosis of the disease from which he saw his friend Knebel suffering, and from the attacks of which Herder and Fichte were not free. Three youths of high and generous temper in our own land, Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth, had their imagination dazzled for a time by what seemed the splendour of the rising sun of liberty; and assuredly in young men it was a venial error. To hope too boldly of human nature, Coleridge has admirably said, is a fault which all good men have an interest in forgiving. But Goethe was a man of forty; he had been actively employed within his own sphere during many years in the work of a high-minded reformer, the work of an earnest meliorist; and who can blame him because he was unwilling to risk the fruits which had been obtained by the sweat of his brow in order to pursue what might prove to be the phantom fruits of a mirage, and perhaps to find himself at last in a burning waste of sand?

It was the affair of the diamond necklace, revealing as it did the depths of baseness and the heights of audacity in France, that first startled Goethe, and stared upon him, as he says, like the Gorgon's head. In his earliest design for a dramatic rendering of the affair, he made the mistake of supposing that the subject could be treated as an opera. Such a theme could not call forth a joyous spirit, and the opera made

no progress. In 1791 he took up his unfinished work, recast it, and produced, in the theatre at Weimar, his prose comedy, "Der Grosskophta." The reception of the piece was not favourable, nor can the fact surprise us. Knaves and dupes are indeed excellent material for comedy, but when their frauds and follies rise to the dignity of an affair of State, and when we see their doings stand forth from a wide and dark historical background, the artist must handle his material somewhat in the spirit of our Aristophanic humorist, Carlyle, whose "Diamond Necklace" serves as a brilliant dramatic prelude to his huge farce-tragedy of the "French Revolution." Thus, and thus alone, can the theme be ennobled. Goethe, to afford the spectators some relief from the company of titled thieves, and charlatans, and fools, introduces a feeble love-episode, which fails to interest us. The only piece of human virtue in the play to which our heart gives a prompt response is the obedience to orders of the Swiss guards who, in the garden scene, arrest the grand impostor, and care not a straw for his supernatural pretensions. "Are you aware," asks Cagliostro, rising to the height of the occasion, "that I am the Conte di Rostro, di Rostro, impudent fellows, a foreigner, honourable, and everywhere held in honour, a master in the occult sciences, one who has power over spirits——" at which point he is roughly interrupted by the Swiss soldier: "Tell this to our captain, look you, who understands the Italian lingo; and if you don't walk straight, we shall give it to you right and left in the ribs; we will show you the way, as he has given us orders." *Cagliostro.*

"You fellows, have you no human understanding?" *Swiss.* "He has who gives us our orders." And for once the magician, unable to command the spirit of the rough soldier, thinks it the part of prudence to obey.

But Goethe's play, although unsuccessful as an acting drama, is interesting in two respects. It gives us a view of the corruption of French society, and especially society of the upper class, in the days which preceded the Revolution; and it is a very curious and striking study of the arts of the impostor who plays upon the credulity of mankind in what we may call the grand style of charlatanry. We can investigate in the play the nature of that hotbed in which the gigantic mushrooms of mendacity and folly sprouted and spread; we see a society in which the very virtue of simple truth seems extinct; in which there are eager and exorbitant desires, but not the honesty to compass those desires by the slow and toilsome methods of nature. As long as men hold fast by the old truth of experience that in order to have oaks we must plant acorns, they afford no chance to the charlatan; but when we would fain possess worldly fortune and power, or know the heights and depths of science, or even enjoy the illumination of divine wisdom, and at the same time look for some short-cut to grandeur or wisdom or spiritual illumination, then is the fortunate moment for such a pretender as Cagliostro. At such a moment he becomes, as it were, the incarnation of our own desire for self-deception. The fact is somewhat remarkable that the eighteenth century, which has been named the *sæculum*

rationalisticum, the age of enlightenment, when every old belief was cited to the bar of reason to justify its existence, was also towards its close, as Carlyle has said, the very age of impostors, swindlers, and enthusiasts; "quacks simple, quacks compound; crack-brained or with deceit prepense; quacks and quackeries of all kinds and colours." A cynical observer of mankind might allege that there is always about the same dose of folly in the human brain, and that when it is not afforded a safe mode of relief in certain time-honoured superstitions, prejudices, and conventions—that is, in nonsense which has grown inert or quiescent—it takes its revenge by breaking forth in more active and mischievous forms of absurdity. And it is undoubtedly true that persons who throw away the crutch of tradition, and would fain walk by the aid of reason alone, are often precisely the persons who find their way into the most guarded enclosures of folly. There is a pride and joy in the possession of nonsense which has on it the bloom of novelty, and which is not the common heritage of mankind.

But, indeed, Goethe's Grand Cophta, Cagliostro, with his "greasy prophetic bull-dog face," is a great artist who can touch the various stops of the human soul, and make it discourse much curious music. He knows how to mingle truth with lies, to appeal to the generous as well as the baser instincts of men, to overawe and to cajole, to assume the air of universal benevolence and superiority to all self-interested passions, while he is in fact devoured by vulgar greeds. And he has learnt the profound truth that the appetite for delusion

grows by what it feeds on. He has promised his disciples to reveal to them the Grand Cophta, that mysterious being whose envoy he is; and when the veil of the awful stranger is removed, behold the greasy prophetic bull-dog face of Cagliostro himself! Ah, slow of heart! has he been thus moving among them and watching over them, and have they not known that it was the greatest of all mortals who was in their midst? The mouths of his dupes, which had gaped for some new wonder, gape delightedly still wider to meet the larger miracle. This is indeed charlatanry in the grand style. Should a political Grand Cophta ever arise in our own or any other country, what serviceable lessons in the art of moral jugglery he might gather from Goethe's play!

The "Bürgergeneral," written in three days in April, 1793, is a dramatic jest, but not without a serious intention underlying the fun and frolic. Goethe found his characters ready-made to his hand in Florian's comedy "Les deux billets," together with the connected French plays and the German adaptations. But Florian's comedy had no relation to politics, while Goethe's "Civilian-General" is designed as a light satire directed against the attempts made to convert the quiet rural population of Germany by means of the evangel of Jacobinism. The newly-wedded George and Rose are the happy peasants of the eighteenth-century stage, contented with rustic toil and rustic love. But Old Martin, the father of Rose, is afflicted with the fever of the age, which some call the "journal-fever." He pores over the latest gazettes,

and is much concerned on behalf of the oppressed French nation.

Rose. And when father reads the newspapers, and troubles himself about the affairs of the world, then we press each other's hands.

George. And when the old man is disturbed because things go so wrong elsewhere, then we draw closer and rejoice that all is so peaceful and quiet here with us.

Rose. And when father cannot imagine how he will save the French nation from debt, then I say, "George, we will at all events take care that we don't go into debt ourselves."

George. And when he is beside himself because yonder in France they rob every one of his goods and chattels, then we consult together how we may improve our bit of land, which we think of buying some day with a lottery-prize.

And the kindly nobleman who is their landlord commends the excellent sense of these prudent and happy young people.

The greybeard Martin, however, is no disciple of this egoistic philosophy of good sense; and wily gossip Schnaps knows how to play upon the old man's infirmity to his own advantage. Schnaps has become possessed of the uniform of a French prisoner of war who had died in the neighbourhood, and has found in the poor devil's haversac a *bonnet rouge* and tricoloured cockade. Bearing these borrowed plumes in his carpet-bag (which carpet-bag in the first representation was one actually picked up on the French frontier by Goethe's servant), Schnaps appears in solemn secrecy before old Martin, and announces that he has received his commission as Civilian-General under the French Republic: for the Jacobin Club had heard of his liberal opinions and secured his adhesion to the cause through the agency of an accredited envoy; in proof of which

assertions, behold the uniform of freedom, sabre, cap, cockade, and besides all these a magnificent pair of mustachios, which it has been decreed every Civilian-General must wear! The German Revolution is to begin forthwith, and in this very village. There are presently alarms and excursions in the cottage caused by the unexpected return of George, threatening a drubbing to the rogue Schnaps if he be found on the premises. But George withdraws baffled, and Schnaps reappearing from the hayloft resumes his exposition of revolutionary principles, and employs, to honest Martin's dismay, for the purposes of demonstration, the various good things in Rose's cupboard, this standing for a village and that for a fortress, which the learned expositor greedily eyes with intent to devour. The fun as we read this scene seems laborious and overwrought, yet we are told that it went merrily on the Weimar boards. In the end the impostor Schnaps is of course discomfited, and is rudely reduced from his rank of Civilian-General. The whole winds up with a moral address from the amiable lord and landlord, who expresses, perhaps even too plainly for dramatic art, Goethe's own convictions. Let Rose and George continue to love each other, to cultivate their field and tend the house. Let old Martin be proud to know the nature of the soil and seasons and the succession of crops; as to the political heavens and the signs of the times, it will be enough if he study them on Sundays and feast days. Let each one begin with himself and he will find enough to do; so he will in the end contribute most to the good of all. And for the judge who

is impatient to unmask the grand Jacobinical conspiracy, and to punish the offenders this wise moderator has also a word.

"Be at ease! unseasonable orders, unseasonable punishments only cause an outbreak of mischief. In a country where the Prince is always accessible; where the classes and the masses think kindly of each other, where no one is hindered from his proper activity, where sound views and knowledge are spread abroad,—there no parties can come into existence. What goes forward in the world will claim our attention; but the seditious sentiments of entire nations will have no influence. We in our quietude will be thankful that we see above our heads a calm heaven, while miserable tempests devastate boundless tracts of country."

Such was Goethe's lesson of practical wisdom for rural Germany in the days of Revolution.

Let us not forget that Goethe had himself seen the horrors of an invasion. He had advanced into France with the allies in the autumn of 1792, and had heard the thunders of the cannonade at Valmy. He accompanied the invading army not as a soldier, but as a student—a student of new and profoundly interesting aspects of life. Nor could he in the midst of the turmoil forget those studies in natural philosophy which calmed and fortified his spirit. He was told that once only—and that was when he had to part from his "Lexicon of Natural Philosophy"—did he shew a peevish countenance, once only did he fail to sustain his friends with wise words or else to entertain them with witty ones. He observed all things in a disinterested spirit, and did not fail to note the citizen dignity, kindliness, and graceful bearing of the inhabitants of the French provinces, maintained even in the presence of the enemy and amid accumulating miseries.

"Of such a state of society we can form no conception," he says, "either from the actual condition of our own country, or from its attempts to imitate its neighbours." And with what he describes as the idyllic, Homeric, country life in France Goethe was delighted. All the more deeply therefore did he suffer when he saw how rudely war dealt with the deep affections and strong if simple passions of the cottier and the husbandman. Wordsworth has told in an affecting poem of the tears shed by a strong man as he bore in his arms for sale the last lamb of his dwindled flock. Goethe was an intellectual aristocrat, but his sympathies with the common folk were deeper than those of many who compensated for their indifference to the joys and sorrows of men by a zeal on behalf of the rights of mankind. The German invaders did not pillage as they advanced; they obtained supplies by a convenient and highly moral method of compulsory purchase, giving bills for the value of what they secured upon King Louis XVI., the father of his people. Such a piece of imposition greatly exasperated the people of the towns and villages through which they passed.

"I myself," Goethe writes, "witnessed a scene which I remember as a most tragic one. Several shepherds, who had succeeded in uniting their flocks, in order to conceal them for safety in the forests, or other secluded places, were seized by some active patrols and brought to the army, and found themselves at first well received and kindly treated. They were questioned as to the several owners; the flocks were separated and counted. Anxiety and fear, but still not without hope, hovered upon the faces of these worthy people. But when the proceedings ended in the sharing of the flocks among the regiments and companies, while the papers drawn upon Louis XVI. were politely handed to the proprietors, and their woolly favourites were slaughtered at their

feet by the impatient and hungry soldiers, I confess that my eyes and spirit have seldom witnessed a more cruel spectacle or more profound manly grief in all its gradations. The Greek tragedies alone have anything so purely, deeply pathetic."

With which scene may be compared for tragic effect, though of a different kind, the march out from Mainz of the conquered French garrison, as described by Goethe—first the columns of infantry, short, black-looking men, dressed in rags of all colours, some faces grave and sullen, but all resolute, even in defeat; then the *chasseurs à cheval*, their band playing to a slow measure the ominous revolutionary Te Deum, the *Marseillaise*: "It was impressive and fearful, and a solemn sight when the troopers drew near, long, lean men of somewhat advanced years, whose mien accorded well with the melancholy music; singly you might have compared them to Don Quixote; in a body they looked most venerable."

The strain of the events told upon Goethe, in spite of his efforts to possess his soul in calm. When he visited Pempelfort, almost immediately after the campaign in France, his kind friends there, Jacobi and the members of his household, gave him his own "Iphigenia" to read aloud to them in the evening. But he could not endure this work of calm, ideal beauty and unclouded moral feeling. The "Œdipus at Colonus" was then produced. Its lofty sanctity, Goethe declares, was hateful to his mind, hardened as it was by the events of the late campaign. "I could not read a hundred lines of it." More in accord with his mood at this time was that famous satirical beast-epic of the Middle Ages, "Reynard the Fox." Here he found the animal nature of

man—his greeds, and lusts, and wiles—of which he had himself seen and heard too much, represented with a certain cheerful humour. The satire mirrors rather the life in princely courts than the life of the people; it was in this respect at least a change from what had chiefly occupied his mind. But in modernising the narrative Goethe could not resist the temptation to insert a piece of what he held to be good doctrine for the masses, in a passage not to be found in his original ("Achter Gesang," v. 152—160), a passage which dwells on the madness of men who, in the pride of their self-will, suppose that they can govern or rearrange the world. If each man, he says, could keep his wife and children in order, could hold insolent servants under restraint, could quietly be happy with a modest competency while fools lavish their means, things would improve. But how is the world to amend? Everyone gives himself up to licence, and would violently compel others to his will, and so we sink deeper and deeper into evil. If this teaching of Goethe's is only a fragment of the entire truth, it is certainly a fragment which has important uses at certain times and seasons of a nation's history.

In the unfinished drama "Die Aufgeregten," which we might name in English, "Agitators and the Agitated," and which originally bore the title "The Signs of the Times" (*die Zeichen der Zeit*), is contained not indeed a complete confession of political faith, but one which more nearly approaches completeness than any that can be elsewhere found in Goethe's writings for the stage. Here the characters are admirably con-

ceived, and the partisan spirit is conspicuously absent. The scene is a German village, whose humbler inhabitants have been grievously wronged by the selfishness of a deceased lord of the soil and the fraud of an unjust steward. The grandfather of the present count, who is still a child under his mother's wardship, sensible of the burdens under which the good folk of the village laboured, had granted them certain generous remissions, and a deed to that effect had been drawn up, but the document has since disappeared; the copy which exists has no legal force, serving only to make known to the villagers that their privileges have been forfeited. The good count's immediate successor—a hard and selfish master—would make no concessions, and the iniquitous dues are still exacted. His widow, the countess, fearing to compromise the rights of her son during his minority, has done nothing, although her kind heart prompts her to all that is liberal. But the ideas of 1789 have taken wing and have flown across the Rhine. The surgeon, Breme von Bremenfeld, a worthy man, now well advanced in years, but of infinite energy, and much possessed with a notion of his own fitness to figure on the great political stage, passes the long winter evenings at the pastor's house, in reading the journals which contain the latest news from Paris, in arguing endlessly, and forming plans for effectively asserting the claims of the defrauded peasantry. "What good or ill the French Revolution has done I cannot determine," cries his niece, Louise, a maiden of true German prudence, who sits up to make her uncle's midnight coffee. "I only know that this

winter it has knitted several pairs of stockings for me."

But the French Revolution, as it appears, has in fact done good, and the good extends to this province of Germany; for the large-hearted countess has been for a time a resident in Paris, has seen many things there to sadden her and few to make her glad, but has brought back to her German home an ardent resolve that she at least will add nothing to the accumulating wrongs of the world. "Since I have seen with my own eyes," she says, "how human nature can be oppressed and degraded, but not suppressed or annihilated, I have made a firm resolve to abstain for my part from every act which seems to me unjust, and to express my opinion aloud with reference to such acts in society, at the court, and in the town. I will no longer be silent in the presence of any injustice, I will tolerate no meanness under a fine appearance, even though I also were to be decried under the hated name of a democrat." And her wise and trusted friend the councillor commends her resolution. Let her point out the faults of her own class in society; we can never be quite sure that we are right when we criticise those either of a higher or lower station than our own; for which reason he, the councillor, being a bourgeois and intending to remain one, may declare that he recognises the great importance of an aristocracy in the State, and that he cannot tolerate the bourgeois vices—petty jealousies and envies, blind hatred of rank nourished by a miserable egoism, which pretentiously attacks pretensions, and becomes formal in condemning formalities; nor will he ever deny that to

have descended from illustrious ancestors is a real advantage, no, not if they should brand him with the odious name of an aristocrat.

These two, the countess and the councillor, represent the temper of moderation and good-will in the play, a temper which is alike helpful in noble, bourgeois, or peasant; and the surgeon's niece, with her practical sense and cheerful disposition, makes a third of the group. Minor personages present the vices, or the mingled vices and virtues of the several classes in society: the young baron, who takes thought only of the frivolous pleasures of an aristocrat without remembering that high station has its duties; well acquainted with the amusement of love in idleness, and impertinent in his advances to persons of lower rank and another sex than his own; the countess's daughter, self-willed, proud, domineering, but energetic, ardent, and capable of acts of capricious kindness; having the good qualities and the defects of her caste; it is she who, by her prompt and determined action, discovers the whereabouts of the concealed document; and, on the other side, the worthy but not over-wise surgeon Breme, who organises the peasant's revolt; the clerical tutor to the young count, devoured by the discontent and envy of the baser Radical; and the rustic folk who follow the leadership of the great Breme von Bremenfeld, and for whose political capacity Goethe had as little respect as had Shakespeare, though, like Shakespeare, he recognises the fact that a good heart may often go with a very poorly-furnished head. Unhappily, the play is a fragment; but though the entire fifth act and some

earlier scenes are wanting, we possess materials by which we can trace the whole of the intended action. We have particularly to regret the lack of a mirthful scene in which, on the suggestion of the baron, almost all the *dramatis personæ* were to form themselves into a mock National Assembly, each playing a characteristic part, and humorously setting forth the views of rival parties on the great events of the day.

If we have cause to lament that "Die Aufgeregten" is unfinished, much more must we lament that only a single play exists of the vast trilogy in which Goethe, at a later date, designed to embody all his maturest views and reflections with reference to the French Revolution. "The Natural Daughter," founded—but with a free hand—on the "Mémoires historiques de Stephanie Louise de Bourbon-Conti," is but the exposition of the great theme, and unfortunately Goethe's memoranda with reference to the scheme of the later plays are so slight, that in many places they leave ample room for the rival conjectures of contending critics. The play which we possess presents as the background of the intrigue that forms its plot a view of monarchy toppling over into anarchy. The later plays would have exhibited the wild confusion of the time, and the creation from chaos of a better order. Through all the high-hearted heroine would have moved as one connected with the court through her parentage and her devotion to the throne, and at the same time connected with the people through her union with the worthy republican magistrate, who, to save her from banishment and the persecution of a brother,

had given her his loyal affection and the name of wife.

"The Natural Daughter" in which Goethe's Hellenism tends perhaps in some respects to an ideality proper to sculpture alone, has been described as marble-smooth and marble-cold. The remark of Goedeke, that the coldness is more apparent than real, seems to me to be just. But however this may be, there is one work of Goethe's, the happiest offspring of his period of Hellenism, which no recent critic, unless it be the late M. Scherer, has described as cold—that most charming of epic-idylls, "Hermann and Dorothea." Here once again the French Revolution, with the invasion of Germany by the armies of the Republic, forms the background. The betrothed of Dorothea, her first love, had been drawn into the revolutionary maelstrom, and had perished in its mad vortex. She herself is a fugitive from her home, driven forth as an exile by the armies of freedom and fraternity. In the book of the poem which bears the name of the "Muse of History," the magistrate tells in vivid words of the high hopes inspired by the ideas of 1789, and of the melancholy blight which had fallen upon these hopes:—

"Who will deny that high within him his heart was uplifted,
And that his pulses throbbed with a freer and purer emotion,
When he beheld the sun uprise in his freshness and glory;
When of the Rights of Man he heard as the wide world's possession,
Heard of Freedom, Equality—glorious names and inspiring?"

But soon the sky was overcast, the rain descended, and the floods came. A vile crew strove for the

mastery, men too base to be authors of anything that is good :—

"Murderers one of another, and foul oppressors of new-found
Neighbours and brethren, commanding their ravenous hordes o'er
the frontier."

And so this once enthusiastic believer in the new gospel of the age has come almost to despair of human virtue.

But the author of the poem of "Hermann and Dorothea" does not despair. The poem is throughout ennobled by the presence of goodness, courage, hope, and love. Iphigenia, the priestess-daughter of Agamemnon, is an admirable figure; her spirit is one of pure and high devotion; yet I am not sure that I do not love better the daughter of the people, Dorothea, noble in her large simplicity, with her strong, sweet German heart, sound to the inmost core, as she tends the feeble mother and new-born infant, or holds her water-jug to Hermann's lips, or flushes with honest indignation at the imagined affront to her maiden dignity in the guest-chamber of the Golden Lion, or as she stands at last by the side of her betrothed making his life so full of worth. In the background we see the wild storm of the Revolution; but here all is blessedness and peace. To build up one happy home, Goethe would say, after all serves the earth better than to discourse infinitely of rights of man or to enforce the doctrine of fraternity at the point of the bayonet. May this better way be the German way! Such is the closing aspiration of the poem :

"Thus she spoke, and she placed the rings by the side of each other,
And the bridegroom spoke with a manly accent of feeling:
All the firmer amidst this universal disruption
Be Dorothea the tie! And thus we will hold and continue
True to each other, and still maintain the good that is given us;
For the man who in wavering times has a mind ever wavering
Only increases the evil and spreads it wider and wider;
But who firmly stands he moulds the world to his posture.
Not the German's work should it be, this fearful commotion
Onward to urge, or to reel in his courses this way and that way.
'Here we take our stand.' Such be our word and our action!"

And thus in the strength and love of the German home, Goethe sees the foundation and the root of German society.

In 1807, after the peace of Tilsit, the members of the ducal family, parted for a season by the events of the Napoleonic war, were reunited, and for the occasion was written one of the most admirable of Goethe's later poems, and one which is as wise in thought as it is beautiful in expression—the *Vorspiel* of that year. Germany at this date might almost be described as lying in ruins. But Goethe did not indulge in weak lamentations. He had faith that Germany might be built up anew; not by doctrinaire abstractions; not by beginning with the human race and descending from it to patriotism, civic virtue, domestic loyalty, and individual self-culture: not thus, but by the reverse process: by a gradual ascension from the individual and the family to the city and to the state, and in the end perhaps to universal humanity; by each man and each woman doing the duty that was nearest to him, and gradually widening, if possible, the sphere of this beneficent activity. It

was a modest but a sound programme. Do not, says Goethe, despise little things.

> "For in little things as in the greatest
> Nature ever works, the human spirit
> Works, and each alike is a reflection
> Of that primal Light from highest heaven
> Which invisible all the world illumeth."

Who then is the true patriot? He answers Goethe, who begins by ordering his own house, who builds up himself first, in order that by-and-by, with other worthy assistants, he may help to build up the commonweal.

> "Er ist Patriot, und seine Tugend
> Dringt hervor und bildet Ihresgleichen,
> Schliesst sich an die Reihen Gleichgesinnter.
> Jeder fuhlt es, Jeder hat's erfahren;
> Was dem Einen frommt, das frommet Allen."

Such is Goethe's unpretentious, but not useless lesson in political wisdom.

GOETHE.

III.—GOETHE IN ITALY.[1]

His visit to Italy may be regarded as a capital event in Goethe's intellectual life. Several aids towards the fuller understanding of this memorable passage in the story of his life have appeared in recent years. In the Hempel edition of Goethe's works the "Italianische Reise" is edited by Düntzer with that writer's exemplary diligence and erudition. He has included among his illustrations of the text many important letters belonging to that period written by Goethe to his secretary Seidel, to the Grand Duke, to Friedrich von Stein, and others. An excellent monograph, narrative and critical, entitled "Goethe en Italie," has been written by a French author, M. Théophile Cart. Ingenious essays on two projected works belonging to the Italian period, the "Nausikaa" and the "Iphigenie in Delphi," are included in the posthumous collection of studies, "Aufsätze über Goethe," by that admirable critic and historian of literature, whose untimely loss we deplore, Wilhelm Scherer. The second volume of the publications of the Goethe Gesellschaft presents us with the first fruits of the examination of the Goethe archives in diaries and letters from Italy to Frau von Stein and Herder, from which, a quarter of a century after

[1] An Address delivered by the writer as President of the English Goethe Society, on June 28, 1888, in the Westminster Town Hall.

they had been written, portions of the "Italiänische Reise" were formed.[1] Here is ample material for study; but in essentials the impression which we had obtained from Goethe's own account of his Italian sojourn remains unchanged. If in his delightful book there be a certain element of "Dichtung" as well as of "Wahrheit" the "Dichtung" is in no sense opposed to the "Wahrheit," but is rather its development or expression in a higher sphere of feeling and of thought.

It is exactly one hundred years since Goethe returned from Italy to his German home. On June 18, 1788, he re-entered Weimar after an absence of nearly two years. This evening we celebrate the centenary of the close of that memorable epoch in the history of Goethe's intellectual development. He himself has spoken of the Italian journey as if it were no less than the beginning of a new life. "I reckon a second birthday," he writes, "a true new birth from the day that I entered Rome." And again:

"The new birth, which is re-moulding me from centre to surface, is still in process. I thought indeed that there was something to be learnt here; but that I should have to take so low a place in the school, that I should have to forget so much that I had learnt, or rather completely unlearn so much, is what I had not suspected. Now, however, I am convinced of this, and have wholly yielded up myself; and the more I am obliged to renounce myself, the happier I am. I am like an architect, who would build a tower, and finds that he has laid a bad foundation; he becomes aware of the fact betimes, and willingly pulls down what he had raised above the earth, endeavours to broaden and

[1] I may also note as valuable the lectures of Hermann Grimm, and his article "Goethe in Italien," in his "Funfzehn Essays," and the introduction to Schuchardt's edition of the "Italianische Reise." The edition of that work, illustrated by Julie von Kahle, with an introduction by Düntzer, I have not seen.

improve his ground-plan, to strengthen his basis, and already rejoices in anticipating the assured stability of his future erection. Heaven grant that, on my return, the moral gains which this life in a larger world has brought to me may be discernible! Yes, indeed, the moral sense as well as the artistic is being renewed within me."

So Goethe himself felt, and the students of his life and the critics of his works have generally admitted the fact that the man who left Rome in 1788 was not the same man who entered Rome in 1786. Some have maintained that then for the first time his genius found its true direction. Others, and among them M. Scherer, have dated from the Italian journey a gradual cooling of his temperament, and a marked increase in what they term his artistic egoism.

What is the truth in this matter? Was so great a change really effected in Goethe during the two years in Italy? If so, what was the nature of that change? And did loss or gain preponderate?

If any one thing more than another may be indicated as the secret, the open secret, of Goethe's life, it is the double nature of the man, and the need felt by him of adjusting to each other the halves which made up this complex nature. On the one hand he was a poet, with a poet's ardent temperament, caught at times in the toils of his own passions, following lures of his imagination, imposing his own moods upon external nature, seeing objects in colours projected on them from his own emotions. On the other hand he was from the first a man of reason and reflection, one who felt the need of self-mastery and self-regulation, who valued order in things external, and still more order in his

thoughts and harmony in his feelings, one resolved not to be imposed on by his moods, but if possible to see things as they are. We know how in his writings Goethe is profoundly interested in two opposite types of character—the man of emotions and of imagination, and again the man of reflection and self-control; we remember how it pleases him to set the one over against the other, Werther set over against Albert, Wilhelm Meister set over against Jarno and Lothario, Tasso set over against Antonio, Edward and Ottilie set over against Charlotte and the Captain. Goethe represents in his art that which he best understood from his own experience, and thus all his writings, as he himself said, had first been *lived*, all are fragments of a great confession, all, as he declared of "Tasso," are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. The contrast between these two types of character is in some degree also the contrast between the earlier Faust, who, gazing on the setting sun, longs for wings on which to follow the ebbing flood of light—

> "I hasten on, his beams eternal drinking,
> The Day before me, and the Night behind,
> Above me heaven unfurled, the floor of waves beneath me,—
> A glorious dream!"

between this Faust and the elder Faust who needs no wings and whose whole desire is to rescue a piece of solid earth from the encroaching sea as a region for habitation by a race of free and energetic men :—

> "Let man look round him here! Here plant his foot!
> The world is to the Active never mute.
> We know but what we grasp. What need have we
> Of thoughts that wander through eternity?"

Such an enthusiasm of well-defined, beneficent activity as that of the aged Faust suffices well, Goethe assures us, for the needs of earth, and prepares a man, if anything can prepare him, for his future "Himmelfahrt," that ascent which the spirit of Faust experiences under the guidance of contemplative wisdom, innocence, and love, from circle to circle of the celestials.

Nothing, perhaps, is expressed by Goethe with a deeper accent of sincerity than the desire for inward harmony which possessed him. And the pain of moral dissonance and the need of moral reconciliation often form the motive of his poetical creations. Earlier poetry represents heroic persons contending against the forces of external nature, contending against their fellows or vainly struggling with fate. There are seas to be rowed through and justling rocks, monsters to be tamed, robbers to be bound or slain, cities and champions to be subdued. Or by some impious deed committed, it may be unaware, the immitigable wrath of a God is aroused, and through sire and son the inexorable doom must be accomplished. Even in Shakespeare's tragic dramas how strong is the stress of external circumstance. The love of youth and maiden in Verona grows upon the hatred of the rival houses, and is brought to an untimely end by that hatred. In what a world of chicanery, fraud, espionage, secret crime Hamlet moves, and how terrible a duty is imposed on him by fate! In what strong toils of serpentine craft and malice the heroic Othello is enfolded! But in Goethe's dramatic studies of character it is not so, or

at least it is not so in the same degree.[1] An inward malady is studied; it is life itself which ails. Why must Werther die? Because measureless desire within the limits of a human breast makes him its victim: could he but regulate that desire, and bring his inward being into harmony, he were saved. Who has brought Faust to that pass in which he must needs summon Mephistopheles to his aid? Who but Faust himself, since he can set no bounds to his passion for knowledge and his thirst for the joy of life. Man, as Goethe expressed it, is the offspring of two worlds, the finite and the infinite, and hence the riddle of his existence. But if we cannot solve that riddle in its deepest meanings, we can at least meet it with a provisional, practical solution. We can strengthen and build up the regulative side of our nature; we can calm and clear our sense of sight, train our will, seek the infinite by pressing on every side into the finite, and lose ourselves and find ourselves again by pure, disinterested attachment to the external objects which are most in harmony with our nature.

"The Sorrows of Werther" gave literary expression to the eighteenth century reaction against the tyranny of the understanding; it rendered into art all the excess of sensibility, the new feeling for nature, the revolt against formality and convention proper to the movement which in England produced "Clarissa" and "The Sentimental Journey," which in France produced the "Nouvelle Heloise," and which in Germany became known as the "Sturm und Drang." But though one-

[1] See Bernays: "Der Junge Goethe:" Einleitung, xxxviii.-xlii.

half of Goethe's complex nature furnished material for the character of Werther, Goethe himself, as Mr Lewes truly says, was no Werther. Endowed with extraordinary sensibility, he had that within him from the outset which in due time would regulate his sensibility, and bring it into obedience to a law of reason. When a child, and tortured by the irritation which follows smallpox, he held down his hands lest he might disfigure his face by a touch. At another time he invited his schoolfellows to beat him with rods in order that he might acquire the power of mastering bodily pain. A little later he fell in love with Stoicism, and took Epictetus for his master. To conquer a giddy head he regularly climbed the Strasburg spire, and sat on the narrow resting-place at the summit, looking down on the abyss. What else, indeed, does Goethe do in "Werther" but climb to a giddier height, from which others had flung themselves down to destruction, and there study his own sensations with a view to mastering them, as he afterwards studied the battle fever when, in the French campaign, he went under fire at the outwork of La Lune? Goethe was no Werther, and yet it would be untrue to say that the sentimental fever described in his novel was not in his blood. In his blood it certainly was, as the letters to the Countess Stolberg, of a later date than "Werther," suffice to prove:—

"'On this day of last week,' he writes to her, 'Lili was here. And at that time I was in the fearfullest, gayest, sweetest state in all my life (I might say). O Gustchen, why can I not tell anything about it? Why? How I looked at the moon and the world through the hottest tears of love and everything rapturous surrounded me.

And in the distance the forest-horn and the noisy mirth of the wedding guests. Gustchen, since the storm I am—not at rest, but quiet—quiet for me, and only fear another tempest which in the most peaceful days is ever gathering, and—good-night, Angel. Rarest, rarest maiden!"[1]

This outbreak is quite in the Werther manner, and it is evident that when the letter containing this passage and other letters in the same tone were written, Goethe was still either actually subject to the sentimental fever or at least in love with the sentimental style.

At this time Goethe was in his twenty-seventh year. Within a few weeks he had begun the ten years' residence at Weimar which preceded his Italian travels. These ten years of service at Weimar gave his character its adult shape and set. As he advanced towards mid-manhood, the reflective and regulative side of his nature naturally gained in strength. The public duties undertaken by him acted as a counterpoise to his passions and imagination. It was necessary to turn his attention to matters which were indeed of great importance, but which had no peculiar affinity for his genius; it was necessary to master a mass of practical details connected with affairs of the state; and in order to do this Goethe was obliged to direct his mind outwards, and become, for the time at least, disengaged from his private emotions and imaginings. While superintending the revival of the Ilmenau mines, while acting on the Commission of Buildings, while studying the subject of finance, while presiding over the War Department and the Department of Public Roads, he was in truth

[1] "Der Junge Goethe," iii. 107; and translated in Mr E. Bell's "Early and Miscellaneous Letters of Goethe," p. 257.

delivering himself from the sentimental fever and widening the basis of his moral being. "I will manage the War Department well," Goethe notes in his diary (February 1, 1779), "because in business I have no imagination at all; I will originate nothing on my own account, but only rightly know and faithfully order that which is." Much of this public work never ceased to be irksome to Goethe, but some of it led him on to the pursuit of scientific knowledge, a pursuit conducted in his own peculiar way, which was not altogether that of a man of science. The creator of Werther, with his tears and his sighs of limitless desire, can now spend his days collecting or arranging mineralogical specimens, and his nights, not in reading Ossian beneath the moon, but in writing an essay on granite. Botany and comparative anatomy now interest him profoundly, and everywhere in external nature he finds himself in the presence of order, law, constant uniformities, which he delights to trace; and in following the processes of nature he comes to venerate her harmonies and to acquire something of her calm. Thus, by ways laborious and sometimes even painful, Goethe, during these first ten years at Weimar, was gaining in the power of reflection and self-control; was submitting to the limitations of the intellect and the will, learning at the same time to work strenuously within those limits; was becoming capable of pure and disinterested observation; was delivering himself from the errors of his own temperament and passions.

But how did it fare during these years with the poet in Goethe? The oppression of public business beyond

question weighed heavily on the poet. It was not always that he could feel as when he wrote in his diary of January 13, 1779: "The pressure of business is very beautiful for the soul; when the burden is gone the play of the spirit is the freer, the enjoyment of life is quickened." More often he painfully recognises the fact that the life of the man of affairs is fatal to the continuity of imaginative effort. It was a period of great designs interrupted, and, if not foiled, at least held in check. "Faust" and "Egmont" still remained fragments; "Wilhelm Meister" was written in part and was laid aside; "Tasso" was conceived and was carried as far as the second act; "Iphigenia," indeed, was completed, but in a form which was afterwards rejected as unsuitable for the matter; that poem of large and singular design, "Die Geheimnisse," stood still when little more than the introduction was written. Obviously there was a danger that the poet in Goethe might be overborne by the statesman and public servant—or there would have been such a danger if the emotional and imaginative side of Goethe's nature had not been kept constantly quick and stirring through the ardour of his feeling for Frau von Stein. During ten years she was a centre for his hopes and fears, his happiness and his troubles, a representative for him of the ideal, a rallying point for his emotions and his imagination.[1] Goethe's lyrical feeling during this period

[1] The latest expression of opinion which I have noted, that of Erich Schmidt, on the once disputed question of the nature of Goethe's relations with Frau von Stein, is that of all competent students of Goethe's life in recent years. "No one now need get angry," he says, "over any formal bills of indictment against Frau von Stein, they have descended voiceless to Orcus."

is to be found less in the pieces of verse written on rare occasions than in his daily letters to his beloved friend. What her influence upon him was may be understood from reading the "Iphigenia." She was both law and impulse to his heart, at once quickening all his emotions and calming their turbulence, and setting strict bounds to their advance. She instructed him in refinements of feeling which were beyond the comprehension of the passionate young man who had flung himself into the boisterous pleasures of the Court during the first wild days at Weimar. And yet it must be frankly said that the relation with Frau von Stein was not and could not be soundly and securely based; it necessarily lacked all the quietudes and trustful ease of domestic life; it suffered from a constant tendency to an unhealthy strain.

It seems as if I had forgotten the subject of Goethe in Italy; but that subject has from the first been before my mind. We have seen how the great affair of Goethe's life was his need of inward harmony; that this harmony was difficult to attain in his case, because of the existence within him of powers which to a certain extent were rival powers—on the one hand his passions and imagination, the passions and imagination of a poet, and on the other hand his intellect and will—such an intellect as cannot be satisfied until it sees things as they are, unstained by the cross-lights of passion or temperament, a will set upon gaining the power of complete self-control and self-regulation. And we have seen how during the years at Weimar, which preceded Goethe's sojourn in Italy, these two sides of

his nature stood apart each from the other; how public duties tended to cultivate and strengthen the regulative side of his character, and yet that these duties were often irksome and alien to his truer self; how, on the other hand the influence of Frau von Stein cultivated and refined his passions and imagination, and yet that the relation to Frau von Stein was necessarily, to a certain extent, an unnatural and unhealthy relation. We may now put the question again, What new development in Goethe's genius and character was effected during his two years' residence in Italy?

In answer to this question I would say: Nothing essential was added to Goethe's nature by his Italian travels, but that was the season when he came into full and happy possession of himself; then for the first time he was at harmony with himself and with the world around him; then for the first time the two parts of his complex nature were organically united, and instead of contending within him for mastery, helped each the other, so that his imagination and passions became regulated, ordered, and rational, and his self-control and his methods of the intellect became almost like a happy instinct; then first for his mind order became one with freedom.

His own delightful book, the "Italianische Reise," tells us of the various objects which made each its due impression on his spirit — the Græco-Roman sculptures, the frescoes of Michael Angelo, the tapestries after Raphael, the Church ceremonies, the life of the people, the sun and sea of Naples, the vacant streets of Pompeii, the fires and rumours of Vesuvius,

the Sicilian bays and headlands. It would be an interesting study to trace the succession of his varying moods, and to inquire how these varying moods stand related to his abiding personality. Here, from the point of view which we have taken, it is less important to note the objects seen by Goethe than to consider *how* he saw them. The temper and habits of mind, the intellectual methods which he had acquired in the course of his public duties and his scientific pursuits at Weimar, were now directed upon objects not alien to his genius but in closest kinship with that genius. The seriousness and steadfastness with which he had applied himself to the mining operations at Ilmenau, to finance, to the duties of the War Department and the Department of Public Roads, were now turned to account in the study of things for which a poet and lover of beauty could care with his whole heart. The habits of pure, disinterested observation which he had found to be essential in his efforts to master the affairs of State were now employed in the world of the imagination. Had Goethe visited Rome ten years earlier we should probably have received some remarkable records of a sentimental journey, like the earlier "Letters from Switzerland," which were represented as having been found among Werther's papers after his death.[1] The writer would probably have allowed his imagination to play around all the romantic memories of the capital of the world. But of senti-

[1] The "Letters from Switzerland," of 1779, are written in a very different spirit, and show how much Goethe had gained in the interval.

ment or of phantasy and romance there is not a word in the "Italian Travels." In the Viceroy's palace at Palermo Goethe made the acquaintance of a lively little Maltese gentleman, who had had some acquaintance with Weimar in former days. Having asked after old friends, he added: "And how is the person who, full of youth and vivacity when I was there, in himself made rain and fine weather? I forget his name, but he is the author of 'Werther.'" After a little pause, as if he were considering, Goethe replied: "I am the person about whom you are kindly inquiring." With the most manifest tokens of astonishment, the little Maltese drew back and cried: "There must have been a great change then." "Oh, yes," rejoined Goethe, "between Weimar and Palermo I have undergone many a change." Among the many changes which took place between the Werther period and that of the Italian Travels, perhaps none was more important than the change from that habit of mind which led him to project his own moods over all external objects to the habit of mind which enabled him to submit patiently to the object and receive from it a pure and true impression.

Although it was happiness to Goethe to escape from the strange miscellany of occupations which made up his public duties at Weimar, he travelled, not for rest or pleasure, but for fresh toil and effort. He speaks with a touch of contempt of those tourists who bring back with them, in return for their fatigue and money, nothing but a mere *I have seen it.* His own feeling

was not that of a sight-seer, but of a scholar going through his classes. He quotes with approbation the words of Winckelmann: "In Rome, I believe, is the high school for all the world, and I also have been purified and tried in it." And at a later date, when Rome had grown familiar to him, he himself writes: "I have entered too big a school to get speedily through my classes. My sense of art, my small talents must here go through the whole course and become matured, else I shall bring you back but half a friend, and the old longing, labouring, groping, crawling will go on anew." When looking back at the four months of his earlier residence in Rome he could declare that not a moment had been lost; that, he adds, is much to say, but not more than the fact. In order the better to escape distractions and concentrate himself he travelled incognito, and avoided society, except that of the group of friendly German artists (including among them the charming Angelica Kaufmann) whom he felt to be aids to his progress. "People would like to entice me here, too," he writes (Aug. 18, 1787), "out of my stillness and methodic arrangements, and draw me into the world. I guard myself as well as I can—promise, postpone, slip out of it, promise again, and play the Italian with the Italians. . . . I am as shy of ladies and gentlemen as of some sore disease; I feel ill as often as I see them driving."

In such self-concentration and solitude Goethe's study of the public buildings and statues and paintings of Rome was a noble excitement of all his faculties, but an excitement in which his faculties worked so har-

moniously that it put on the aspect of a blissful calm. We feel in every page of his "Italian Travels" how his whole nature was quickened and exalted by the presence of beautiful things as it had never been before, and at the same time we feel that he possessed his soul in a profound composure—such a peace as we see in a river when, swift and crystalline, it moves forward with all the weight of its waters, meeting no obstacle, but under strict control of its restraining banks. "According to my fashion," he writes (Feb. 27, 1787), "I am quite still and calm." And again: "Here we come into a very great school, where one day says so much that we dare say nothing of the day. Yes, indeed, it were wise if, tarrying here for years, one should preserve a Pythagorean silence." And again, at Naples: "To pass through such a countless multitude, for ever restless and in motion, is indeed something remarkable and salutary. How they all stream to and fro, and yet each finds his own way and aim. In so great a crowd and bustle I feel myself perfectly calm and solitary; the greater the turmoil of the streets, the more I am at rest." If we look at the portrait of Goethe painted by his friend Tischbein, we shall see in his face the calm which possessed his spirit, and that earnestness without severity which at this time characterised him. He rests on an overturned Egyptian obelisk, and gazes forth over the Campagna; and through his eyes we read the union of energy and repose in a great spirit. "Goethe," wrote Tischbein to a friend, "was already known to me fairly well through you and other friends, and the

descriptions which I had heard of him. I found him what I had imagined him to be. Only his great calm and tranquillity I could not have conceived beforehand, nor the power which he possesses of everywhere finding himself at home. What especially delights me in him is the simplicity of his life. He asked of me only one little bedroom in which he could work undisturbed, and a frugal meal, which I could easily procure, so content is he with a little. There he sits now, working at his "Iphigenia" till nine o'clock; then he goes out to see the great works of art. He is seen by few people of distinction, and receives no visitors except the artists." [1]

At first there seemed something overwhelming and almost terrible to Goethe in the greatness of Rome—not, indeed, its material greatness, but the vast output of human intellect and will here made manifest. "Can man," he asks, "ever make himself equal to all that here surrounds him of the noble, the vast, and the cultured?" As we find the sea deeper the farther we advance into it, so, Goethe declares, was it with him and the study of the city. "I have lately," he writes, "been tossed hither and thither by mighty forces, and, as indeed is natural, I do not always know where I am standing." But he had learnt at Weimar how to deal with an oppressive weight of facts requiring to be gradually mastered and thought into clearness, and now he could apply his method to this mass of new sensations and delights. On revisiting what at first had filled him with amazement, he felt the amaze-

[1] December, 1786, "Aus Tischbein's Leben und Briefwechsel," p. 39.

ment pass away, or at least diminish, and an intelligent sympathy and a purer perception of the true value of objects take its place.

In Goethe's method of study the first principle was that nothing should be allowed to stand between himself and the individual, concrete object; no tradition, no second-hand criticism, no doctrinaire generalisation. He required an immediate impression as the foundation of all knowledge. Not that he was slow to make use of what others have accomplished for our benefit; he read his Winckelmann devoutly, and placed perhaps too much reliance on his guide-book by Volkmann; nor did he fail to turn to good account the culture of his artist friends. But he held that real knowledge did not begin until he had placed himself in direct contact with the objects. "I will not give myself any rest," he says, "till nothing remains a mere word or tradition for me, till everything becomes a living conception." And again: "In art I must at least attain this—that everything shall be direct, intuitive knowledge, that nothing remain a tradition or a name." But in order to see things in their truth and purity it is necessary to come to them without prepossession, or prejudice, or self-will; it is necessary to yield with a wise passiveness, or rather with a strenuous submission, to the object while it works upon us. Goethe speaks of himself as having acquired only lately the power of seeing things, for formerly he saw in and with things what actually was not there; and he valued his attempts at drawing from the antique, from the life, and from landscape, chiefly as a means of learning to see all that is in

an object and nothing that is not in it. For such pure observation he felt that he needed a certain strictness and severity in dealing with himself. "The best thing was this," Goethe writes, "I had no self-conceit, no pretension, nor did I make any conditions or demands when I came here. And now I press forward until nothing remains for me a name, a word. Whatever is accounted beautiful, great, or venerable I will see and apprehend with my own eyes. But this is impossible without myself reproducing the objects. I must now set myself to the gypsum heads. The right method is being pointed out to me by artists. I hold the reins of all my powers in hand as far as possible." In such words as these we discern that union of a resolved will and an intellectual method with the play of imagination and a passionate but well-directed ardour, which is characteristic of the Italian period in Goethe's life.

The art which surrounded him in Rome favoured and supported the tendencies of his mind. It represented a union and balance of human faculties which he had not found in the art of the north. It was ideal art, but it was not fantastic, for here intellectual sanity was always present, directing and controlling the play of the imagination. It seemed inexhaustible and infinite in the perfection of its beauty, and yet the bounding limit was as strict as fate. All was subject to a law which could not be transgressed, yet through obedience to law the ancient artists seemed to have attained the happiest freedom and a more liberal and blither life than was known at any later period of the world's history. The idea and the form in which the idea was embodied were

here in perfect equipoise. Was it not because the old artists had got, as it were, upon the track of nature, and so their creations came to possess the life and reality and inevitableness of the works of nature, having grown from within outwards with as much freedom as a flower or a shell, and yet all the while being under the control of law? "These high works of art," writes Goethe, "are also the highest works of Nature, produced by men in accordance with true and natural laws. All arbitrariness, all self-conceit is banished; here is necessity, here is God." And yet, as if the contrast between classical art and the wild inventions of northern mediævalism had quickened within him a new sense of the grotesque, it was in the noble surroundings of the Borghese Gardens that Goethe wrote the most wildly fantastic scene of "Faust"—that in which are represented the mad humours of the witch's kitchen.

It must be admitted that to some extent Goethe's feeling for classical art was imperfect. "The greatest men," he wrote in the "Elective Affinities," "are connected with their own century always through some weakness." Goethe judged of art as a man of the eighteenth century, as one who distinguished imperfectly between sculpture of the Greek classical period and the copies reproduced by the later artists for their Roman patrons. Nor did Goethe perceive clearly that in the eighteenth-century work of such artists as his friend Angelica Kaufmann—work which won his admiration—there was a large element of pseudo-classicism, a modern sentiment, or even a modern sentimentality draped in antique costume. Goethe did not transcend his age, but he

helped to carry it forward to more exact knowledge and a truer feeling than were accessible to himself. And in turning from the study of antique sculpture to the study of the living human form he was assuredly on the way to rectify whatever errors he may have incurred. "Now at last," he writes from Rome in August, 1787, "the Alpha and Omega of all known things, the human figure, has taken hold of me, and I of it, and I say, 'Lord, I will not let thee go until thou bless me, though I should wrestle myself lame.'" By such means he was training his eye to precision of form, and the results of his education in definiteness and exactness can be traced in the fine outline of such poems as "Alexis und Dora" and "Hermann und Dorothea."

I have said that the first principle of Goethe's method of study in Italy was to come into direct contact with the object. "My habit of seeing and taking all things as they are," he writes, "my fidelity in letting the eye be my light, my entire renunciation of all pretension, have again come to my aid, and make me in my quietude happy in the highest degree." Yielding himself thus to the object, he was really preparing to spring forward and seize its motive and meaning. He could not be satisfied until he had submitted these new sensations, this new delight to the intellect, and had discovered their secret. Indeed the delight became a real trouble unless he could decipher and interpret for himself its inward significance. "What at first furnishes a hearty enjoyment, when we take it superficially," he writes, "often weighs on us afterwards most oppressively, when we see that without solid knowledge the true de-

light must be missed." The first overpowering sensation caused by objects which were supremely beautiful or sublime gave place in due time to an intellectualised enjoyment; and then, as soon as he could interpret aright his new mental experiences, Goethe, with that sense of the value of order which was now habitual with him, set to work to arrange in his mind these precious acquisitions, so that from a troublesome crowd of sensations he created in a short time a cosmos, and found that again there was space in his brain for further acquisitions.

"'For the last fortnight,' he wrote a little before his departure from Rome for Southern Italy, 'I have been moving about from morning to night; I am searching out everything I have not yet seen. I am also viewing for a second and a third time the most important objects, and they are all arranging themselves in something like order in my mind; for while the chief objects are taking their right places, there is space and room between them for many a less important one. My enthusiasm is purifying itself and becoming more definite, and now for the first time my mind can rise in untroubled sympathy to the height of the greatest and purest creations of art.'"

And several months later, when again in Rome, he expresses himself in a similar way. "Rome is now quite familiar to me, and I find hardly anything in it that overstrains me. Little by little the objects have lifted me up to themselves. I enjoy with ever more purity and ever increasing knowledge: good fortune will still help me further forward."

Two pleasant examples may be found in the "Italian Travels" of the mode in which Goethe, by applying his intellect to objects which seemed to have no special interest for him, discovered in them sources of a real

and deep interest. He was present in Rome during two successive springs on the occasion of the carnival. The carnival, seen for the first time, impressed him as a folly unworthy of the venerable city; he only wished that he might never witness it again. "Nothing," he says, "can be written about it, though one may talk of it with some amusement; there was incredible tumult, but no heartfelt joy. The sky, so infinitely pure and beautiful, looked down nobly and innocently upon the mummeries." On the second occasion the thought occurred to him that this popular festival, like every other recurring portion of the web of life, must have its definite history and meaning. This thought, he tells us, reconciled him to the hubbub; he viewed it as a significant product of nature and as a national event, and in this sense it acquired an interest for him. "I observed minutely the course of the follies," he writes, "and how everything ran its round in a certain prescribed form and propriety." The idea of the carnival he found to be that of a festival given by the people to themselves; and he was pleased to conceive it as no cataclysm of popular life, but as a continuation or, rather, the acme of the usual Sunday and festival-day recreations. "It is nothing novel, nothing foreign, nothing unique; but attaches itself quite naturally to the general Roman style of living." To this thought, which reconciled Goethe to the carnival, we owe that curious study of all its features which was amongst the earliest published records of his visit to Italy. Again, when at Naples, he determined that he would not allow the swarming population to remain for him a vast,

unintelligible, meaningless phenomenon; rather he would patiently decipher its meaning. He had read in his guide-book that in Naples there are from thirty to forty thousand idlers, and he conjectured that this was very probably a northern view of things which takes every one for an idler who is not drudging all day long. Accordingly he determined to investigate the matter on his own account; and hence we possess an admirable study of the popular life of Naples in its manifold forms and varieties. He found as the result of his investigations that no one was idle, not even the *lazzaroni;* that they worked, however, not simply to *live,* but to *enjoy;* that they were most shrewdly industrious, not to make riches, but to live free from care. Having thus discovered the meaning of that amazing phenomenon of the swarming streets, Goethe could contemplate it with a certain intellectual satisfaction and moral sympathy.

Such studies as those of the Roman carnival and the Neapolitan populace are really the work of a great critic, in which intellect and imagination operate together, each reinforcing the other. And as he winds himself into these social phenomena and, so to speak, lives himself into them, so also by the aid of intellect united with imagination penetrating the phenomena of external nature, he made the discovery, which is connected with his Sicilian expedition, that all the several parts of a plant are but various modifications of the same primary form which is best seen in the leaf. Mr Hutton happily compares the method in which Goethe's mind worked in making this discovery with the method

by which he winds himself into the open secret of the amphitheatre at Verona. Such an amphitheatre is made in order to give the people the imposing spectacle of themselves, to amuse the people with themselves. "If anything worth looking at happens on a flat space, the hindmost seek in every possible way to get on higher ground than the foremost; they get on benches, roll up casks, bring up carriages and plank them over, cover any hill in the neighbourhood, and thus a *crater* forms itself. If the spectacle is often repeated such a crater is artificially constructed." Thus, as Mr Hutton expresses it, Goethe fits his mind so close to the objects he studies, that he not only takes off a perfect impression of their present condition, but becomes conscious of the secrets of their tendency, and has often a glimpse back into what they have been.[1] He does more indeed than fit his mind to the objects; he lives himself, as I have said, into them, and thus grows aware of the forces which animate them, and which have moulded their forms. "If I can only attain to so much of any object as a finger's tip, I shall be able by hearing and thinking to make out the whole hand." These words were written just before Goethe left Naples for Sicily, and they look like an unconscious prophecy of what came to him in the public gardens of Palermo, when the vision of his Nausicaa vanished before the idea of the primordial plant.

Such a critical method as Goethe's is as nearly as possible akin to creative genius. "Properly, I ought to devote the rest of my life to observation," he wrote

[1] "Essays, Theological and Literary," ii. 83.

from Naples, "I should discover much that would enlarge man's knowledge." But he could not be a mere critic and student, however admirable; his nature compelled him to be also a producer, and there were times when he felt himself to be so saturated with knowledge that he could receive no more: "I wish now to know nothing more, but to produce something, and only practise my faculty." And to produce, he was well assured, must prove the best possible road to yet higher knowledge. Thus the creative and critical forces of Goethe's nature alternately had mastery within him, or worked together to a common end. He was indeed enlarging the ground-plan of his existence, and laying the bases more solidly and securely. "I have so much to bring up and assimilate," he wrote, "that I see no rest before me for ten years."[1]

This last word, "I have so much to bring up and assimilate," a birthday comment of Goethe's, suggests an explanation in part of what has been spoken of as the cooling of his genius, a *refroidissement* which is alleged to have commenced during his residence in Italy. "Ce qui est certain," says M. Scherer, "c'est qu'il s'y est refroidi." If a swift military advance is to be made, a small body of troops lightly equipped will be pushed forward; unquestionably no experienced commander will hope to push rapidly forward a grand army, with infantry, cavalry, heavy and light artillery,

[1] "Und wenn ich auch ein isolirtes, privates Leben fuhren sollte, habe ich so viel nachzuholen und zu vereinigen, dass ich fur zehn Jahre keine Ruhe sehe." 28 August, 1787.

baggage, and commissariat. But Goethe's mind, from his fortieth year onwards, refused to send forward a single faculty on an adventure, unsupported by the rest; it was one of those minds like Wordsworth's cloud, "which moveth altogether if it move at all." He could not now perhaps strike as rapidly at a single point as he could in earlier years; his advance covered a wide area, and was made in force. To some persons it seemed as if he had lost his early ardour, but in reality the massive ardour of his mid manhood contained a body of heat incomparably greater than that which sufficed to produce a "Goetz von Berlichingen" or a "Sorrows of Werther." It is only a superficial observer who looks for the evidence of passion in tears and sighs. One who considers the matter more deeply will perceive in Goethe's studies in optics—studies not altogether fortunate or well-directed—a passion as strong and deep as that which dictated his letters to Frau von Stein; it is, however, an intellectualised passion, and takes the name, not of love-making, but of investigation and research. And yet Truth is a mistress who requires a heart's whole devotion, and sometimes, as was the case with Goethe in his investigations of the laws of light and colour, she is a coy mistress, who eludes her pursuer in the end.

Assuredly in the delightful pages of the "Italiänische Reise" we shall find no trace of that cooling down of Goethe's temperament of which M. Scherer speaks. It shows us how Goethe's enthusiasm was purified and made definite; but at the close of the two years he is as ardent as when he first passed the frontier, and

rejoiced to hear the speech which he had always loved now living on the lips of men and women. During his later residence in Rome he devoted himself to the artistic study of the human body, and he speaks of it with the same capacity for a fine wonder and admiration in which he had written at an earlier time of Michael Angelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, or of his first Roman love, the Juno Ludovisi ; "The interest of the human figure now abolishes every other. I had felt it indeed before now, and always shrank from it as one shrinks from the dazzling sun, knowing, too, that all study of such a subject outside Rome was vain." These are not the words of a disenchanted enthusiast. The slow processes of drawing from the life only made this wonder and admiration more definite, while it educated Goethe's eye, and served in a measure the purposes of intellectual analysis, his mind at every moment working along with his hand. From all his attempts at drawing, however, from all experiments in plastic art—experiments which decisively proved his incapacity for any high success—from these, and from all analytic processes of mind, he finally returned to the pure contemplation of beauty—a contemplation now lifted far above all gross or crude astonishment. In the narrative which he has given of the last month in Rome he describes this mode of calm, illuminated contemplation as the highest result and ultimate attainment of his sojourn in the world of art :

"In Rome, where we are constantly in the presence of the plastic art-works of the ancients, we feel as in the presence of Nature, that we are compassed about by the Infinite, the Unsearchable. The impression of the sublime, the beautiful, however great a gain,

disturbs us; and we wish to embody our feelings and our perceptions in words. For this, however, knowledge, insight, conception are necessary. We begin to separate, to distinguish, to arrange, and this too we find, if not impossible, in the highest degree difficult. We therefore at last fall back on contemplative admiration which is pure enjoyment."

Thus Goethe's word to Herder, "*I am ever the new-born child*," came true in a strange and beautiful sense of the word, when through knowledge and thought and intellectual analysis he reached an altitude of feeling where these were no longer needed, and where simple intuition, a frank and happy gaze at objects, like that of a wide-eyed infant, filled his spirit with complete content.

The greatest gain, however, which came to Goethe during this period in Italy was not that his eyes rested with a fine delight on forms of ideal beauty, but that here and now he entered into full possession of himself. "In Rome," he writes, "I have for the first time found myself, for the first time come into harmony with myself and grown happy and rational." It was not merely that he learnt to distinguish what was appropriate to his nature and what alien to it; nor was it merely that he was able to see whither he and his faculties were definitely tending, that he quenched his erroneous desire to excel in plastic art, and turned that passion for plastic beauty to account in his proper pursuits as a poet. The inward harmony now attained by Goethe meant before all else that the reflective and regulative side of his nature, which he had been painfully building up during the ten years at Weimar, came at last into happy relation with the imaginative and emotional side

of his nature—that his feelings were not dulled by his judgment, but were rendered sane and wise; that his imagination was inspired and controlled by reason; that his will no longer toiled after achievements in an alien province; that his faculties were at length fully organised and each subserved the ends of the complete man.

I find a happy symbol of this union of Goethe's powers in that drama of his which belongs more than any other of his dramatic works to the period of his sojourn in Italy. The "Iphigenia in Tauris" was re-handled in Rome, and its form was elevated from prose to verse; but in essentials the "Iphigenia" belongs to the years at Weimar, and translates into drama the calming and reconciling influence of the spirit of Frau von Stein on the troubled spirit of Goethe. But "Tasso" is in great measure a direct product of Italy. Now conceive to yourselves two opposite types of men—one who finds his be-all and end-all within the compass of his own heart and brain—a narrow compass, and yet containing infinite desires, and aspirations, and strivings towards thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls; who broods on his own passions and is therefore weak and restless; who lacks a clear outlook on the external world; who is therefore suspicious of his fellows; yet who thrills to the touch of sympathy or love. Conceive such a type of man, and now conceive his opposite: one who has subdued his self-will, his turbulent desires and dreams and extravagant thoughts; who turns his eye outward on the broad, substantial world; who binds his own life to the life of his fellows by social action;

who is therefore strong, calm, and prudent; who masks his force under forms and compromises and courtesies; no man of genius perhaps, but at least a master of the machinery of human life; who can deal wisely and energetically with circumstance and mould events with his powerful shaping hands. These two men are Goethe's Tasso and Antonio. It is a mistake to name one the poet and the other the statesman; or to name one the dreamer and the other the man of action; nor do the names idealist and realist quite express the contrast. The contrast between them is wider and deeper than any of these names suggest. I will venture to call them the adept who reveres the sign of the microcosm and the adept who reveres the sign of the macrocosm. No other titles seem to be so fitting.

In Goethe these two men existed side by side. In the Weimar days the man of the microcosm expressed his troubled joys, his hopes and fears and aspirations in the letters addressed from day to day, and almost from hour to hour, to Frau von Stein. The man of the macrocosm was superintending mines, raising recruits, regulating finances for Karl August. Which of the two was to be the master within him? Or was it possible that they might one day hold hands in a mutually beneficent friendship?

These are the precise questions put and answered in Goethe's "Tasso." "What idea did you endeavour to represent in 'Tasso'?" asked Eckermann of the aged poet. "Idea!" exclaimed Goethe, "as if I knew anything about it! I had the life of Tasso, I had

my own life . . . I can truly say of what I have presented in the play, *It is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.*" The double nature of Goethe is parcelled out between Tasso, the self-involved dreamer, lover, poet; and Antonio, the wide-seeing, strong-willed, prudent statesman. Tasso wins all the sympathy of our heart; Antonio, the respect of our understanding. To Antonio, the man of the world, Tasso, as we at first are led to suppose, seems no better than an idle dreamer; and Tasso in his turn thinks hard things of the man who has wounded him by his cold reserve and worldly scepticism. He draws his sword upon Antonio even in the precincts of the palace; the prince arrives and condemns Tasso to a light imprisonment in his chamber; and there in solitude and tears the unhappy poet devours his own heart. The princess endeavours to soothe, relieve and strengthen him; but Tasso in the very weakness of his joy exceeds the bounds of a subject's duty, and in one wild moment demands from her a woman's love. That moment is fatal; the princess retires, and the poor dreamer is left to the bitterness of shame and despair. In "Iphigenia" a sister's devotion saved the afflicted Orestes; but it is no woman who can save Tasso. To the solitary and despairing man of genius enters Antonio, the man of calm intelligence and steadfast will. A cry of anguish is about to break from the unhappy poet at the arrival of this tormentor. And then we perceive Antonio drawing towards him with gracious earnestness and strong benignity; he is at Tasso's side and takes him by the hand. The man of the macrocosm and the man

of the microcosm have met, have understood each other, and are reconciled; passion and imagination stand supported by intelligence and will. It is Tasso who speaks :—

> "Oh, noble man! thou standest firm and calm,
> While I am like the tempest-driven wave.
> But be not boastful of thy strength. Reflect!
> Nature, whose mighty power hath fix'd the rock,
> Gives to the wave its instability:
> She sends her storm, the passive wave is driven,
> And rolls, and swells, and falls in billowy foam;
> Yet in this very wave the glorious sun
> Mirrors his splendour, and the quiet stars
> Upon its heaving bosom gently rest;
> Dimm'd is the splendour, vanish'd is the calm!—
> In danger's hour I know myself no longer,
> Nor am I now asham'd of the confession.
> The helm is broken, and on every side
> The reeling vessel splits. The riven planks,
> Bursting asunder, yawn beneath my feet!
> Thus with my outstretch'd arms I cling to thee!
> So doth the ship-wreck'd mariner at last
> Cling to the rock, whereon his vessel struck."[1]

Italy was the genius which placed the hand of that Tasso who lived in Goethe's complex nature in the hand of his Antonio. Henceforth opposition and rivalry ceased; each became the friend and ally of the other.

[1] Miss Anna Swanwick's translation.

GOETHE'S FRIENDSHIP WITH SCHILLER.

Of the friendships of authors none is so illustrious as that of Goethe and Schiller, and none is more truly remarkable, for it was a friendship between two great spirits of opposite types; it overcame a long resistance, it resulted in the most strenuous co-operation for the highest ends, it bore the richest and the most abundant fruit.

In July 1787, when Goethe, having returned from Sicily, was settling to his second and more deliberate study of Rome, Schiller visited Weimar. A deserted Weimar, for the Duke as well as Goethe was absent; but Wieland was to be found, and was willing to quit his translation of Lucian to greet a distinguished visitor. Herder was here, and was favourably impressed with what he had read of Schiller's latest play, "Don Carlos"; and in the presence of his friend and admirer, Charlotte von Kalb—ailing, unhappy, excitable, exacting—Schiller found an uneasy pleasure. In that year Goethe's age was thirty-eight; Schiller was ten years younger. He was already famous. "The Robbers" had made a conquest of young Germany when he was only twenty-one; since then his reputation had been sustained and widened, if not by "Fiesco," certainly by "Kabale und Liebe" and his lyrical poems. But in his reception at Weimar there was clearly no enthusiasm; the ex-medical student and

revolutionary playwright was made to feel that he was admitted somewhat on sufferance to the aristocratic circle of the Court; despondency descended upon him, and, partly to resist its invasion, he worked fiercely at the "Revolt of the Netherlands." Everywhere he was met and foiled by a kind of tyrannous *numen*, a spiritual presence of the absent Goethe, to which all paid unquestioning homage. Now he encounters the Duke's favourite, Knebel, and finds that he sets small store by a young poet's criticisms and æsthetics—prefers, indeed, to these the gathering of herbs or examination of minerals; too evidently Knebel is of Goethe's faction. Now the Court-singer, Corona Schröter reads aloud to an admiring audience Goethe's classical "Iphigenia." Now it is Goethe's birthday, and in the wanderer's garden his friends have gathered to drink his health; Schiller must drink it, too, in a goblet of Rhenish; "he little thinks, in Italy," wrote Schiller, "that he has me among his guests; but fate brings men and things wonderfully together."

Schiller had already seen Goethe. When Goethe, in 1779, carried Karl August to Switzerland to work off some of his redundant energy, they stayed for a week at Stuttgart, and attended the distribution of prizes at the Military Academy. A lank, red-haired youth advanced to receive his three prizes and to kiss the hem of the Duke of Würtemberg's garment. It was Schiller, and there, on the right of "The Anointed," stood Karl August, of Weimar, and on the left, in stiff Court suit, the illustrious author of "Goetz" and "Werther," conscious that he was gazed at, and colouring visibly.

Before Goethe's return from Italy, Schiller had left Weimar for the little village of Volkstädt, where he could wander on hillside and river-bank in company with his beloved Lotte. "I am very curious to see Goethe," he writes to Körner (27th July, 1788); "on the whole, I feel well disposed towards him, and there are few whose abilities I so honour." And a little later: "I have not yet seen Goethe, but we have exchanged greetings. He said he should have paid me a visit if he had known he must pass so near me on his way to Weimar. We were within three miles of each other. I am told he has retired from active life." In September of that year Schiller's desire was gratified. At Rudolstadt, in the house of his future mother-in-law, Frau von Lengefeld, the meeting took place. There, beside Schiller's Lotte and her more intellectual sister Caroline, were Herder's wife and Goethe's sometime friend and confidant, Frau von Stein. The first meeting did not inspire Schiller with any strong wish to advance from acquaintance to intimacy. There was, indeed, no coldness nor formality on either side; Goethe was in a happy mood, and spoke much and delightfully of Italy, and the manners and morals of its people; his movements seemed to Schiller—himself nervously irregular in his gestures—somewhat stiff, and his countenance not open; yet his eye could beam and rivet attention; there was an earnest kindliness in his expression, and his voice was singularly pleasing. But as he spoke the ladies fluttered or settled around him; there was small chance for the new comer, unless it might be once on a ramble by the Saale, to converse with him alone. Schiller had

looked forward with ardent expectation to this meeting; it was over, and nothing had come of it; he could not but feel somewhat mortified. "The high idea I had conceived of Goethe," he tells Körner, "is not in the slightest degree lessened by personal acquaintance; but I doubt if we shall ever draw very close towards each other. Much that still interests me, that I still wish and hope for, he has outlived. He is so far ahead of me—not so much in years as in experience of the world and self-development—that we cannot meet on the road. His whole life, from the very first, has run in a contrary direction to mine; his world is not my world . . . But from so short an interview it is hard to draw a conclusion. Time will show."

Goethe has himself explained why it was impossible for him at this time to approach Schiller with cordiality. He had brought back with him from Italy, a conception of art which made him look, with something like impatient scorn, on the movement of which he had, himself, once been a leader—the movement of storm and revolt—and in which Schiller, as a dramatist, was now the banner-bearer. "An energetic, but immature talent had poured over the country in full torrent, just those ethical and theatrical paradoxes from which I was endeavouring to clear myself. . . . The applause universally bestowed on those extravagant abortions, by wild students as by the cultivated Court lady, fell like a shock on me. All the pains I had taken with myself seemed to me entirely lost." A past self which we have transcended sometimes seems to us to revive as our most hateful adversary. The

earlier plays of Schiller were turbid and revolutionary. "Don Carlos" was doubtless felt by Goethe to be rhetorical and doctrinaire. And, on the other hand, Schiller, on reading "Egmont," was conscious that it cast him down from his heights; here in Egmont was a veritable hero, fashioned by history for the drama; how he, himself, could have exalted and idealised Egmont! And this hero who might have declaimed so eloquently on the great truths of politics, on freedom and nature and virtue, had been degraded by Goethe into the cavalier of a love intrigue! The criticism of "Egmont," published by Schiller, appeared to Goethe to prove that its writer knew more of morals and politics than of poetry. Perhaps, when, by his influence, Schiller was appointed to the Professorship of History at Jena, he supposed that he had rendered the young enthusiast a more than material service, that a better way was now opened for this crude intellect, and that out of a bad, or at least a mischievous, poet, he had helped to create a useful professor.

Schiller guessed that to this Pharisee of art he himself must appear irregular and riotous. "Don Carlos" had again drawn the eyes of Germany upon him; but Goethe coldly averted his face. And he had the fatal power of binding other hearts in ice, for Moritz was also cold, and valued the smallest finished work of Goethe more than the most daring attempt of another. "It would make me unhappy," wrote Schiller, 2nd February, 1789, "to be much with Goethe; he never overflows even to his closest friends; nothing attaches him; I believe that he is an egoist in a supreme degree. He

possesses the talent of putting men under an obligation to him by small as well as great acts of courtesy; but he always manages to remain free himself. He makes himself known by acts of beneficence, but only as a god, without giving himself. This mode of action seems to me a calculated plan to obtain the highest gratification for his self-love. Men should not tolerate near them a being of this kind. Hence he is hateful to me, though I love his intellect with all my heart, and have an exalted idea of him. . . . He has aroused in me a most singular combination of hate and love, a feeling not unlike that which Brutus and Cassius must have had for Cæsar. I could murder his spirit, and then love him from my heart." One more quotation from Schiller's letters to Körner will show how foiled he was by Goethe's unapproachable distance, and how, desiring to get rid of this mortifying sense of defeat, he gave it expression in bitter words that really meant more of disappointment than of wrath: "This man, this Goethe, is an impediment in my way; and he reminds me too often how hard Fate has been to me. How tenderly was his genius led on by Fate, and how I have even still to struggle! I cannot repair all I have lost—after thirty a man does not refashion himself. . . . But I pluck up a good heart, and believe in a happy revolution in the future."

These words were written in the spring of 1789. Five years followed, during which no real advance towards friendship was made on either side. Goethe had returned from Italy an altered man. He saw his way, and would not be tempted to forsake it. He

shook off the burden of miscellaneous public cares, and was resolved not again to give himself away to uncongenial tasks. Though still ready to advise and assist the Duke, he ceased to appear at the council table. The estrangement from Frau von Stein before long became complete. More and more Goethe secluded himself in his home. He had not gone forward with the stream of popular literature; he was now in opposition. As a poet he was no favourite with the mass of readers, nor did he seek to please them; he lived his life, and if his life yielded poetry, he wrote it down; if not, he was silent. The collected edition of his poems was not warmly welcomed. He occupied himself more and more with scientific pursuits, and with the history of art. On his return from the disastrous French campaign, Goethe, saddened by the mournful events of the war, and oppressed by an unusual feeling of desolation, visited Jacobi at Pempelfort. Here, if anywhere, he would meet a genuine friend. A sorrowful change had indeed taken place in the household—Jacobi's bright wife ("one of Rubens' women," said Goethe) was dead; but still there were some who would receive him with open arms. Alas, it soon appeared that even here Goethe's hermit spirit dwelt apart; he was not less solitary than before; nay, he was more so, for the sense of an impassable gulf between himself and his friend seemed a crowning proof of his isolation. They begged him to read aloud to them the "Iphigenie"; he could not endure its pure and tender ideality. They produced the "Œdipus at Colonus"; he could not get beyond a hundred lines. His mind had

been hardened by the events of the campaign; he was disposed to look on human affairs as a severe and satirical critic. But in the laws of nature, in the forms of plants, in the phenomena of light, he was profoundly interested. And to live with these he must return to solitude, or form a community, as it were, from the faculties of his own many-sided intellect. In the quiet of his Weimar home Goethe founded, as Herman Grimm has put it, "an invisible university, where he filled every department himself—rector, professor in all the faculties, private tutor, pupil, and beadle; everything revolves about him, and he cares for everything separately."

The dream of perfect union of heart with heart had faded away. If any woman could be the companion of his spirit it was Charlotte von Stein; and now her love was but a memory or a pang. If there was any man on whose heart his own could find repose it was Jacobi, and in Jacobi's house he was not happy. Perhaps he could altogether dispense with friendship; to find a true comrade might be impossible, but in the place of such an one he might establish many ministers to his intellect. Herman Grimm, from whom I have just quoted, observes justly that at this time Goethe ceased to cultivate companionship as of man with man, and attached to himself a number of specialists, each of whom could yield something to some fragment of his mind. He became a general with his adjutants; a prince with ministers who accept their portfolios for this department or for that. He was far from unhappy; he was delightfully and pro-

fitably occupied; and yet one thing was wanting. Nor was a serious danger absent — that in gathered materials, in variety of studies, in optics, and osteology, and botany, and art-history, Goethe might lose himself, might parcel out his mind into fragments, and cease to possess the force and momentum of one living character, or as he himself would have said, one living nature.

The incident which brought together Goethe and Schiller has been often told, but a brief notice of it is necessary here as an essential part of the story, and because its significance has not always been accurately perceived. Leaving at the same moment a meeting of Batsch's Natural Research Association, Schiller and Goethe entered into conversation. It was remarked by the former that such a fragmentary way of treating nature as that adopted by the lecturer must fail to interest such of the audience as were not specialists. In these words he touched the very heart of Goethe's method of envisaging external nature. "There might, indeed, be another mode of presenting nature," said Goethe, "not dismembered and in fragments, but operative and alive, and striving definitely from the whole to differentiate itself in the parts." And thereupon he plunged into his theory of the metamorphosis of plants. When they reached Schiller's door, Goethe followed him into the house, and, seizing a pen, sketched the type-plant. "That is not an observation," said Schiller, "that is an idea." "My surprise," adds Goethe, in relating the incident, "was painful, for these words clearly indicated the line that divided us."

Thus at the moment when the union was effected, it was wrought through opposition. "That is not an observation but an idea":—Goethe, gazing at an actual plant and comparing one plant with another, held that he really divined, really saw within the visible forms that typical form which they were striving to manifest. To Schiller who, in his own creations, started from an idea and proceeded to adapt his material to the idea which he desired to set forth, it seemed as if Goethe were but following a like method—that he had conceived the typical plant *à priori*, and was accommodating by aid of his intellect and imagination the actual forms of leaf and flower to his preconceived idea.

The incident took place at a fortunate moment. In the preceding year Schiller had made the acquaintance of a man whose name is most honourably associated with the literary movement of the time—the publisher, Cotta. The scheme of the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung*, still a leading journal of Germany, was in Cotta's head, and he proposed that Schiller, whose interest in politics was deep and whose historical studies had given him a certain political education, should become its first editor. His delicate health forbade the acceptance of so arduous a post, but he would gladly undertake the conduct of a monthly magazine, from which politics and religion should be excluded. To his surprise Cotta gladly listened to the proposal. The name *Die Horen* was approved; the most distinguished thinkers and men of letters in Germany were to be invited to assist; if Kant, Jacobi, Herder, Klopstock, Voss, Lichtenberg, Fichte, Hum-

boldt, Goethe could be secured all would assuredly go well.

On the 13th June 1794, Schiller forwarded to Goethe a prospectus of the magazine, and respectfully invited his co-operation, promising that, if he joined, he would find himself in good company. Goethe let ten days pass before he replied; then gave in his adhesion to the scheme of *Die Horen*. "Keep me in friendly remembrance," he wrote, a month later, "and believe me that I am looking forward with sincere pleasure to a frequent interchange of ideas with you." Such cordiality from an Olympian had in it something overpowering. The attractions of Batsch's Scientific Association and of the new periodical drew Goethe more than once from Weimar to Jena, and in friendly communion with Schiller the league was almost cemented. We can picture to ourselves the meetings —on the one side the stiff Geheimerath, a middle-aged courtier, now grown somewhat stout and heavy-jawed, enjoying a tranquil self-possession, having a fund of varied experience, and bearing a reputation for Epicurean tolerance; we can imagine him as he allowed his true personality gradually to reveal itself through the masks and disguises of life; and on the other side the eager idealist, his tall, spare figure, his narrow chest, his restless energy, his aspiring gaze, his exalted air, his phrases from the Kantian philosophy; and now his head drooped upon his breast, his racking cough, a martyr to enthusiasm, looking, said Goethe, like an *Ecce Homo*. They discussed philosophical questions. Schiller, as a believer in a system, was

armed at all points; Goethe's philosophy was a vague pantheism, fed from a mass of observations of nature, both poetical and scientific; systems he waived aside as having of necessity only a subjective or personal validity. It was easy to worst Goethe in argument, and he was himself at times disturbed by the force with which Schiller assailed the grounds of his convictions; but somehow in the end he escaped from the trammels of argumentative discussion, and Proteus stood free. Nor was his skill in argument the sole advantage on the side of Goethe's new friend. "Idealist" we name Schiller, and he is rightly so named. But it was soon apparent to Goethe that in the art of handling men the idealist was his superior. In all the deeper and broader wisdom about human life, Goethe was beyond measure the better instructed of the two; but in this or that case where difficulties or perplexities had arisen, Schiller would be alive at all points, would deal skilfully with this person and that, and extricate himself cleverly from an untoward position. Goethe would accept things with a large carelessness, and would somehow outlive them in the end.

Soon after they parted in July 1794, Schiller wrote a long and memorable letter, which may be looked on as the real starting-point of that correspondence kept up incessantly for so many years, a correspondence which covers the whole time from 1794 to the month of Schiller's death, May 1805. The entire period of the union of these two eminent spirits was ten years. In Schiller's brief life, ten years counts as a great epoch, and they were the crowning years of his existence,

those towards which all the rest had tended, those during which he was advancing in the race with a runner's speed. Had Schiller died before he gained the friendship of Goethe we should have known him as a young, ambitious writer of irregular imagination, and an intellect afflicted with a tendency to philosophical speculations which did not aid his genius as a poet; and Goethe would have appeared to us, through Schiller's letters to Körner, as cold, calculating, egoistic. Happily, Schiller's martyrdom was slow; and hence we are the possessors of "Wallenstein," "Mary Stuart," "The Maid of Orleans," "The Bride of Messina," "William Tell," the ballads, and the later lyrics; hence we can observe him at work by means of that long correspondence, to read which is like looking into a glass bee-hive, and seeing the bees shape their cells, only that here the bees are poets, and the cells are filled with other sweetness than that of the heathbell or the honeysuckle; hence, too, instead of Goethe the calculating egoist, we know Goethe the loyal and generous friend, such as he is described in a letter of Schiller (1800) to the Countess Schimmelmann: "It is not the noble qualities of his intellect which bind me to him. If he had not the highest worth of all in my eyes—worth as a *man*, whom I have personally learnt to know, I could only wonder at his genius from afar. I can truly say that for the six years during which I have lived in closest union with Goethe, I have never for a moment been mistaken in his character. There are in his nature a lofty integrity and truth, together with the highest earnestness on behalf of what is right and good."

But let us return to the first remarkable letter of the correspondence. It is nothing else than an attempt on Schiller's part to set up a mirror in which Goethe may view his form and features, for "genius," he says, "ever remains the greatest mystery to itself." The chief impression left upon Schiller after their recent conversations was not that he had acquired a number of new ideas, but that he had been contemplating an extraordinary mind, and that this mind had a power to draw his own towards itself out of intricacies and extravagances, and into broad sane ways of feeling and of thought. "Your calm and clear way of looking at things," he writes, "keeps you from getting upon the by-roads, into which speculation as well as arbitrary or self-directed imagination is so apt to lead one astray. Your direct intuition grasps all things in their completeness which are sought for laboriously by analysis, and because this lies within you as a whole, the wealth of your mind is concealed from yourself; for alas! we know only that which we take to pieces. . . . You look on nature as a whole in order that you may obtain light as to each particular part." And so he goes on to point out how, getting as it were upon the track of nature, Goethe ascends from simpler organisms to more complex, until at last he arrives at man, and creates beautiful human forms and characters in the deep, silent, mysterious way of nature herself. "Had you been born a Greek, or even an Italian, and had you from the cradle been placed in the midst of choice natural surroundings and of an idealising art, your path would have been infinitely shortened, perhaps

even have been rendered quite superfluous. . . . But being born a German, and your Grecian spirit having been cast in this northern mould, you had no other choice but either to become a northern artist, or, by the power of thought, to furnish your imagination with what reality did not supply, and thus to create from within outwards a land of Greece by a reasoning process." At first, in his romantic period of "Goetz von Berlichingen," Goethe—so it is implied by the criticism—was a German, and in any attempt to correct this original Germanic nature there was a danger that he might have remained in the region of abstract conceptions, and have never got so far as to translate these conceptions into intuitions and the concrete forms of art. From that danger Goethe had been most happily and completely delivered.

So runs on the letter, with its ingenious theory of Goethe's genius and its development—a singular opening to a series of friendly communications, but one characteristic of the whole correspondence in its conscious striving after the highest culture, its strenuous effort towards a clear comprehension of the conduct of a poet's mind. Schiller has more of system in his body of philosophic or æsthetic doctrine; Goethe is the broader and more penetrating in his glances. Both strive—and each in his own fashion—after things of the mind with rare intelligence and zeal as others strive for worldly wealth or place and power. The correspondence is not easy reading; it taxes the patience of one who is fain to repose now and again in pleasant quietudes of feeling, or who would gladly over-

hear the gossip of daily life. We do not perceive its true value until we have formed acquaintance with the works of Schiller and Goethe which belong to these years, and study the correspondence partly as a commentary and partly as a document in the history of origins.

To Schiller's long letter of analysis and theory Goethe replied almost with effusion. Writing on the eve of his forty-fifth birthday, he tells his new friend how he regards the days of their first cordial intercourse as an epoch in his life; and how it pleases him to reflect that this union came in a natural, unforced way, "for it seems to me that after so unexpected a meeting we cannot but wander on together." He dares to hope that some of his manifold undertakings may be bequeathed to his young contemporary to carry to completion, and promises as soon as possible to place in Schiller's hands the proof-sheets of the book which occupies him at present. Nor can he be content that his friend should only hold an intellectual mirror up before him; rather let Schiller write about himself, the course of his progress, and the point to which it has brought him.

The approach of mind to mind is very grave and noble. They do not throw themselves into each other's arms, as new friends were accustomed twenty or thirty years earlier, and shed the tears of sentiment. Each maintains himself in his place, and gives the other his right hand in pledge of helpful comradeship of mind with mind. What higher, what more moving spectacle does the world afford than such loyal alliance of strong man with strong man, such fellowship of athletes wrestling for the solid prizes of the universe!

Very beautiful in its tone of moderation is Schiller's next letter: "Our acquaintance—late, but awakening in me many a delightful hope—is for me another proof of how much better it often is to let chance have its way than to forestall it with too much officiousness. . . . The very different paths along which you and I moved could not, with any advantage to ourselves, have brought us together sooner than at the present time. I now can hope, however, that for as much of the way as remains we may travel as companions, and with so much more advantage as the last travellers on a long journey have always the most to say to one another." Then, having finally remarked that all Goethe's mental powers seemed to have agreed with his imagination that it should be their representative, while in his own little world of man the philosophical and the poetic minds embarrass each other in their operations, he goes on to refer to his bodily infirmity: "I can scarcely hope for time to accomplish any great and general mental revolution in myself; but I will do what I can, and when at last the building falls, I shall, perhaps, after all, have snatched from the ruins what was most worthy of being preserved."

The activity of the new friends has been represented by Herman Grimm in an algebraic formula; it was, as he says, much more than doubled; the new force, as he puts it, was not simply G + S, but rather (G + S) + (S + G). A new Goethe reinforced by Schiller stood side by side with a new Schiller reinforced by Goethe. There were boundless possibilities and ever-opening vistas in this friendship, for the friends were constantly

faring forward, fellow-travellers in untried ways of intellectual experience, fellow-pioneers in new worlds of the imagination. And in its character the friendship was thoroughly masculine; neither spirit rushed into the other to be absorbed and lose its identity; each held its own. There was no feigned consent of opinions; each could protect himself, if needful, against the other's influence. The first fact recognised by each was that of his own individuality; the next, that each individuality supplied something wanting to the other. And as time went on each was aware of a great accumulated gain. "The change which your personal influence has wrought in me," writes Schiller (12th August 1796), "I feel to be perfectly marvellous, and though as regards one's essential self and one's ability nothing can be altered, a great purification has taken place in me." And Goethe (6th January 1798): "If I have served you as the representative of much that is objective, you have led me back to myself from a too exclusive observation of outward things and their relations. . . . You have given me a second youth, and made me once again a poet, which I might be said to have ceased to be." And once again Schiller (23rd July 1799): "My being will receive quite a new momentum when we are together again, for you always know how to propel me towards the outer world and into wider latitudes; when I am alone I sink back into myself." When the public had failed to distinguish the separate authorship of certain writings which they had published in association, Goethe finds pleasure in the evidence thus given that each of them was escaping

from mannerisms, and was attaining an excellence free from merely personal peculiarities: "It will then be for us to consider," he goes on (26th December 1795), "what a glorious space may be spanned by each holding the other by one hand, and stretching out the other hand as far as nature will permit us to reach."

Herder would willingly have transformed the rulership of German literature into a triumvirate. His jealousy of Schiller, and the painful breach with the Duke and Goethe, in which questions relating to money were involved, rendered alliance with him impossible. There was much that was lovable in Herder's nature, and yet his temper was easily irritated, and springs of bitterness made all the sweeter waters brackish. Goethe valued Herder's powers highly, but his moods of barren harshness were peculiarly alien to Goethe's feelings. "Herder's two new volumes," he wrote in June 1796, "I have read with great interest. The seventh especially seems to me admirably conceived, thought out, and executed; the eighth, although containing much that is excellent, does not impress me favourably. . . . A certain reserve, a certain caution, a turning and twisting, an ignoring, a niggardly dealing out of praise and blame, renders, more especially what he says about German literature, extremely meagre." And then follows a sentence which all who concern themselves with the appreciation of literature may well lay to heart, and which contains encouragement for those who are not afraid to love well lest they might sometimes love unwisely: "It may be owing to my present mood, but it seems to me when speaking of what is written as of what is done in act,

that unless one utters oneself with affectionate sympathy, or even with a certain one-sided enthusiasm, the result is so small as to be hardly worth mentioning. Delight, pleasure, sympathy with things—this alone is real, and again calls forth reality; all else is empty and vain."

Three chief objects were aimed at by the now united friends: to cultivate and direct the public taste of Germany; to harry and if possible to scatter the forces of the Philistines; and above all, to enrich their native land with great and enduring works in literature. Each wrought in his own manner. Schiller was the author by profession; he turned over the leaves of books to find themes, and then adapted them to his own ideas. He "sucked his subjects," as he himself expresses it, "out of his fingers' ends." When a dramatic theme had been found there came upon him first, as he tells us, a musical mood of mind, from which after a time emerged a clear conception; he would then arrange his materials, and put together a skeleton drama—the most material process of all; last he would clothe the dry bones with flesh, and breathe into them the breath of life. Goethe's poems were not thus brought together, constructed, and animated. They were more like vital organisms, growing, in some mysterious way, from a living germ. Or if he dutifully gathered material, it was of no avail until some power other than that of the conscious will came to unify the lifeless mass and animate it with a soul. "We can do nothing," he says, "but pile the wood and dry it thoroughly; then it takes fire at the right moment, and we ourselves are amazed at the issue." His larger works, into which

self-consciousness necessarily entered, Goethe would sometimes submit to Schiller, and at least in the case of "Wilhelm Meister" some things far from happily conceived are due to Schiller's suggestion. In other cases he bore his growing design about with him in silence, and feared to submit it to consideration or discussion. So it was with the "Hermann und Dorothea;" though he often mentioned the fact that he was at work upon his epic-idyl, not once did he yield his poem to his friend's scrutiny and analysis. Schiller, on the other hand, was well pleased to discourse concerning his poetical projects, and discussed all the later dramas with Goethe, scene by scene. They did not grow in silence: they might well gain by such discussion, because there was little in them of the inevitable; their author was never decided, never could let his work rest, and often altered a part just before rehearsal. "He seized boldly on a great subject," Goethe said long afterwards to Eckermann, "and turned it this way and that, and handled it now in one fashion, now in another. But he saw his object, as it were, only on the outside; a quiet development from within was not within the province of his art." Yet with every new piece, adds Goethe, he made an advance towards perfection.

Although he chose subjects from history unconnected with his own life, Schiller is always exposing himself through his admirations, his idealisings, his enthusiasms. His imagination delights in noble attitudes, and through the creatures of his art we discover himself—a beautiful and well defined personality. His dramatic

characters and the man himself are clearly intelligible. Goethe—in this at least resembling Shakespeare—has some of the taciturnity of nature. All his works are indeed confessions; all grow from his veritable life; and you think you have seized him in some dexterous critical theory, but lo! he has escaped, he is far away, and mocks you with ironical laughter. If you search for the roots of "Faust" or of "King Lear," you must dig to the depths from which Igdrasil grows, that tree on which all we mortal men hang like fluttering leaves. With a certain feeling that it was impossible to make himself completely intelligible, Goethe was often pleased to veil his true self, and he indulged a whim for disguises; thus he supposed that he might remain himself, whole and undivided, and produce his true impression by degrees, whereas if he were known in person, a group of notions connoted by the name of "Goethe" would, so to speak, be severed from his total self, and the real Goethe would be obliged to act up to this notional Goethe in the minds of other men—an irksome and unprofitable task. Sometimes this tendency carried him into idle mystifications, but it was deep-seated in his nature. In later days even the good Eckermann was now and again too painfully perplexed by the oracle. When his famulus humbly asked the master for some explanation of "the Mothers" in the second part of "Faust," Goethe only turned his face full upon the enquirer and, with wide open eyes, repeated the line:—

"Die Mutter! Mutter!—'s klingt so wunderlich."

His meaning must be received whole by the imagination

and not be apprehended piecemeal by means of explanations designed for the understanding.

Lines of difference so deep-drawn between the pair of friends created no difficulty in their communion of thought and feeling, or if it did, that difficulty was happily overcome. Both felt strongly that popular taste in Germany needed to be elevated and purified, that a public opinion on matters of literature and art must be created and trained. "The public," writes Schiller, "no longer has that unity of taste which belongs to childhood, and still less that unity which is the outcome of perfected culture. It stands midway between both; hence it is a glorious time for bad authors." Schiller held that a true body of doctrine respecting works of art might be ascertained and inculcated, that a party might be formed under his own and Goethe's leadership, and that by a vigorous attack the pedants and obscurantists might be driven from the field. Goethe, if not cynical, at least older and more realistic, expected less from anything which they could effect. Every effort indeed should be made, but "who can separate his ship from the waves on which it is floating? In working against wind and tide one makes but little headway." Something, however might be done. "Things were the same," he writes, "twenty-five years ago, when I began, and will be even so long after I am gone. Yet . . . it does seem as if certain views and principles, without which no one ought to approach a work of art, must by degrees become more general."

As he read one day in Martial, it occurred to Goethe

that a retort upon the enemies of *Die Horen* might be made in the skirmishing way of epigrams. Schiller eagerly took up the idea, and enlarged its scope; and so came into existence the "Xenia," foxes with firebrands at their tails, let loose in the corn of Timnath. Literary mediocrity, learned pedantry, pietistic sentimentalism, metaphysical wordspinning—against each of these a lively attack was directed. To Schiller the "Xenia" were almost a serious poetical occupation; he looked on them as miniature works of art; and, in truth, his genius adapted itself more happily than did that of Goethe to the epigram. "What time I wasted over them!" was Goethe's feeling in later years, and while he wrote them it was with a half-cynical feeling that to be modest, able, and deserving during our three-score years and ten will not prevent the devil's advocate from appearing beside our corpse, and that perhaps it is better to anticipate his appearance by the aid of a little well-timed aggressiveness, which will compel our contemporaries to say what they have against us *in petto*, while we are still alive and stirring. A man can efface the impression produced by malignant comment or lie at any time, said Goethe, by his presence, his life, and his activity. Schiller was a little disturbed by the coarse attacks which the epigrams called forth; he was especially anxious that the "Xenia" should not be mistaken for vulgar satire, but rather be recognised as poetical productions in their own kind. "I hope," replies Goethe, taking things in his easy way, "that the 'Xenia' will continue to produce an effect for some time to come, and that they will keep alive the evil

spirit that has been raised against us. We will meanwhile advance with our positive works, and leave to it the torment of negation. If only our humour holds good we must again stir up their spleen from its very depths, but not till they are quite at ease, and think themselves secure."

In that remarkable letter with which the correspondence between the two friends may be said to have begun, Schiller speaks of Goethe's transforming himself by a self-conscious effort from a German into a Greek. The period of their union is that of Goethe's Hellenism, and to it belong both the "Hermann und Dorothea" and the more admirable portion of the "Helena," which represents the union between Faust, as the genius of Northern art, and Helen, the ideal of beauty as conceived by classical antiquity. Schiller died when the Hellenistic tendencies in his work were obtaining their purest expression. Goethe moved forward, and without ever ceasing to render homage to Greek poetry and Greek art, he passed out of his period of exclusive Hellenism into what has been named by one of his critics, correctly enough, though the name is a cumbrous one, his period of "eclectic universality." But did Goethe at any period transform himself into a Greek, or was he at best only what M. Paul Stapfer suggests as an appropriate description—the greatest of the Alexandrians? The very presence of a self-conscious effort to become that which naturally he was not would have rendered him incapable of attaining the frank spontaneity of Greek art. Schiller, however, has overstated the facts; Goethe never attempted to transform himself into a

Greek; on the contrary, it seemed to him essential for the object which he had in view that he should remain a German, since it was from the alliance of the Teutonic genius with the genius of Greece that he hoped for the birth of the ardent child, Euphorion. And in the representative poem of this period, "Hermann und Dorothea," if Goethe is more than elsewhere a Greek in the bright purity of his art, and its fine simplicity of outline, here also more than elsewhere in the body of thought and feeling he is a German of the Germans.

We can trace part of Schiller's way towards Hellenism, and it is curiously connected with his views in ethical philosophy. "Through all Schiller's works," said Goethe to Eckermann, "runs the idea of freedom, and this idea assumed a new shape as Schiller advanced in his culture and became another man. In his youth it was physical freedom which inspired him, and expressed itself in his poems; in his later life it was ideal freedom." The justice of this remark is obvious; from "The Robbers" to "William Tell" the change is indeed remarkable; but the idea of freedom is a central idea in each. From the French Republic he obtained the diploma of citizenship as author of "The Robbers," and in honour of his devotion to liberty. But the course of the Revolution convinced Schiller that civil liberty is vainly sought by those who have not yet attained to human liberty—the freedom of cultured manhood. The poet of freedom was in philosophy a disciple of Kant, whose ethics are the strictest ethics of duty. The categorical imperative, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," written on the conscience, seemed to Kant to be a sublimer manifesta-

tion of the cosmos to which we belong than even the starry heavens at night. But Kantian ethics did not quite satisfy the needs of Schiller's poetical nature. To the idea of virtue he could not choose but add the idea of beauty, and of this an essential element was freedom. Not painful self-subjugation to a moral law appeared to him to be the highest ideal for man, but rather a joyful embracing of law. The duty to which he did homage was the duty of Wordsworth's ode :—

> "Flowers laugh before thee in their beds
> And fragrance in thy footing treads."

It was the conception of duty incarnated in Plutarch's men ; and that cultured humanity from which, as Schiller believed, civil freedom might rise as on a solid basis, he found happily exemplified in the Athens of Pericles.

Their tendency towards ideal art, in which certain abstractions of passion and of beauty were to be incarnated, led Goethe and Schiller to distrust merely personal emotion, which had not been completely taken up and purified by the imagination, and in a certain sense generalised. As dramatists they endeavoured to stand above and away from their own creations, related to these not as a man to offspring which is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, but as a demiurge to the world which he fashions. As poets learning daily more of their craft, they naturally set a higher value each day on poetic form, and spoke at times as if it were an advantage to the artist that he should be indifferent to the subject-matter with which he dealt. We smile at Schiller's touching devotion to a theory when we find

him congratulating himself, while at work on "Wallenstein," upon the circumstance that he feels coldly towards the characters of his drama; none of them can tempt him to put any of his own personality into them; he is not far from hating them all; therefore he can with single mind occupy himself with the poetic form of the piece. And though the coldness of Goethe's "Natural Daughter" is more apparent than real, we cannot rejoice to see a poet who, at his best, was so true, natural, and spontaneous, setting himself deliberately to create type-characters, like some of the *dramatis personæ* of that play, upon whom the author will not even condescend to bestow proper names. From abstractions it was easy to pass on to symbols; if once we leave the surface of this dear old mother-earth, we are but too likely to wander farther and farther towards the Inane. Some of the lifeless symbolism, the allegorical ingenuities of Goethe's later poetry, may be viewed as the last product of the intellectual movement which began so admirably in the form of ideal art and Hellenism. The scientific studies of Goethe, his passion for the discovery of type-forms in nature, indirectly confirmed this tendency in art; it seemed to accredit his new doctrine with the authority of Nature herself. But at the same time it is right to remember that his habit of observing natural phenomena helped also to keep Goethe in close connection with reality, and encouraged that method of intuition, that comprehensive and penetrating gaze from which, whether in science it led to discovery or error, some of his happiest poetical motives were derived.

The year of "Hermann und Dorothea," 1797, was also

the year of Ballads. Singularly enough, that year is memorable for ballad poetry in England as well as in Germany. Then it was that Southey, in his home at Westbury, caught, in "Bishop Bruno," the right tone, as he conceived it, of the modern ballad. Then it was that Wordsworth and Coleridge, residing at Alfoxden and Nether Stowey, made that autumn excursion to Lynmouth on which was planned *The Ancient Mariner* to be included next year among the "Lyrical Ballads." Then, too, Goethe and Schiller, in Weimar and Jena, were adding to German literature a wealth of poetry now familiar to us all. In that year Goethe wrote *The Bride of Corinth, The Magician's Apprentice, The God and the Bayadere;* Schiller produced in rapid succession *The Diver, The Glove, The Cranes of Ibycus, The Ring of Polycrates,* and other ballads which take rank among the best that he has written.

As contrasted with Goethe's early songs and lyrics, these poems of the period of his friendship with Schiller appear to be less the overflowing of instincts and spontaneous nature than the shapings of the self-conscious artist. "I had come," Goethe writes of his earlier period, "to look on my indwelling poetic gift quite as nature; the more so as I was inclined to regard external nature as its proper object. The exercise of this poetic gift could, indeed, be excited and determined by circumstances, but its most joyous and richest action was involuntary, or rather in opposition to the will:—

"Through field and forest roaming,
My little songs still humming,
So went it all day long."

As I lay awake at night the same thing happened, and I often wished, like one of my predecessors, to get me a leather jerkin, and to accustom myself to write in the dark so as to fix at once such unpremeditated song. So frequently had it happened that after repeating a little song to myself I could not recall it, that I sometimes would hurry to the desk, make no delay to adjust the paper as it lay slantwise, and write down in diagonal lines the poem from beginning to end without once stirring from the spot. . . . For the poems which came thus into existence I had a particular reverence, for I felt towards them somewhat as the hen does towards the chickens which she sees hatched and chirping about her." These early poems, many of which are songs, springing sometimes from purely imaginative motives, sometimes from personal feeling or from incidents in Goethe's life, are perfect in technique but the workmanship is seldom of an elaborate kind. From among the earlier ballads or romantic songs one may be named as illustrating the character of all, "The Fisher," inspired, as Goethe told Eckermann, by the mysterious charm of water, the irresistible seduction of the rippling, lapping, whispering stream at noontide under a summer sun. Or we might name "The Erl-King," a poem in which terror and love, the icy fears which cling to the heart of popular superstition and the mysterious suggestions of the sights and sounds of night and lonely nature are marvellously blended. The poems of the later period are very different from these. It was inevitable and right that the spontaneity of youth should give place to the self-

conscious study of the literary artist. Some of these later poems aim at effects which might almost be described as approaching those of plastic art; the form in all is contrived with the subtlest skill; if they belong, as Goethe said that his early lyrics did, to nature, it is to nature which has grown aware of itself, and which exercises over its own creative instincts an exact and exquisite superintendence.

In May of the year 1805 the end came. Schiller lay dying. Goethe himself was seriously ill. In his household they feared to tell him the saddest tidings of all. At night they listened, and could hear him weeping in the darkness, alone. When morning broke he asked, "Is it not true that Schiller was *very* ill yesterday?" For only answer to his question he heard the sobs of Christiane. "He is dead?" said Goethe, putting his assurance as an interrogation, and so leaving an avenue for hope. On learning the truth he turned aside, covered his face with his hands, and spoke no word.

No: in May of the year 1805 the end did not come; nor has it come to-day. For Goethe, though so much was lost, his friend remained a living presence. He had known no spirit which stood so close to his own, as comrade beside comrade; and the new life engendered by that companionship could not pass away from him. We recall those fine verses written by Goethe as an epilogue to Schiller's poem, "The Bell," when it was recited in honour of his memory in August 1805. There is consolation in the repeated words, *Denn er war unser!* ("For ours he was!") and as the poem

closes in its form of ten years later, the thought changes; "Even still he is with us, nor could we receive all his best gifts until he was taken from us by death." When Goethe was in his seventy-seventh year, it was ordered that the vault to which Schiller's body had been indecently hurried should be cleared. There they found one skull of peculiar beauty; it was declared to be Schiller's. They placed it on the pedestal of Dannecker's bust of the poet. A poem in the solemn *terza rima* of Dante tells us what the old man felt in presence of this relic of the grave, what mystic joy, what solemn ecstacy, for a fount of life seemed to spring for him from the inmost cavern of death:

> "Mysterious chalice! Oracle most dear!
> Even to grasp thee in my hand too base
> Except to steal thee from thy prison here
> With pious purpose, and devoutly go
> Back to free air, free thoughts, and sunlight clear."

Back to these, not for relief or rest or pleasure, but, amid the frailty of old age, corroborated for renewed toil by the memory of such a friend as Schiller, and by the thought of such a life as his, so pure, so daring, so steadfast to high aims.

GOETHE'S LAST DAYS.

(WITH A DOCUMENT HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED.)

AN eminent French critic has lately taken upon himself to rebuke the passion for unpublished documents —valuable or valueless—which is a disease of the present time, *la fureur*, as he terms it, *de l'inédit*. With much that M. Brunetière has said persons who care more for literature than for trivialities of pseudo-scholarship are likely to agree. But I do not think that I shall be expected to offer an apology for printing for the first time a record of circumstances attending the death of the most illustrious writer of Germany which has come into my hands, and which, though it adds little to the knowledge we had previously possessed, has the interest of being a contemporary document written in English by an honest and intelligent man, having good opportunities for acquiring information.

The writer, Dr Wilhelm Weissenborn, was thirty-three years of age at the date of Goethe's death. He held for a time the position of Gymnasial-lehrer and afterwards Gymnasial-Professor at Eisenach. For several years, from 1821 onwards, he lived in Weimar, "where he worked," I am told, "at the Landes-Industrie Comptoir." "He has the merit," writes

Goethe's biographer, Düntzer's, in a letter to my friend, Mr Lyster, the translator of Düntzer's "Life of Goethe," "of being the author of an excellent Latin grammar for schools (1838) and the editor of an important school edition of Livy in six volumes. From 1838 to 1842 I had a correspondence with the admirable (tüchtigen) man on the 'Latin Grammar,' but we never came to speak of Goethe." It is evident from letters of Weissenborn, which are in my possession, that he gave lessons to the occasional English residents in Weimar who desired to learn German. The friend to whom the letters are addressed had been one of these pupils, and in 1832 was an *attaché* to the English legation at Berlin. Possibly the future author of "Vanity Fair" and of "Fitz-Boodle's Confessions" was another pupil. "I look into your last letter," writes Weissenborn (May 1, 1833), "and find to my utter contrition that you want to know little Thackeray's direction at Paris. If he have the organ of adhesiveness sufficiently developed for the occasion to keep him at the same house in the same city till now, he is still drawing both breath and caricatures at the Hôtel Lille, in Rue Richelieu. He wrote to me that he intended to stay at Paris for the winter. Now there's no knowing when that season ends, but I believe the other one has not begun yet. If you should write to him, remember me kindly to this old friend of ours. I remember now that I have given you the same direction already about the latter end of October last year."

Weissenborn's interest in literature and in Goethe

as a great poet was real and intelligent; the manuscript poems of his own contained in his letters are not without merit: but he had unfortunately allowed himself to be prejudiced against Goethe as a man, and he never sought that personal acquaintance which would probably have caused his suspicions and alienation to vanish as morning ground mists disappear before the summer sun. Of Goethe's private character he thought unfavourably; Goethe's teaching he looked upon as a dangerously subtle form of Epicureanism; but Weissenborn honoured Goethe's genius, and was a manly and open antagonist. "Have you read the 'Second Part of Faust'?" he asks. "It is a very curious production, and though many may think of Horace's—

'Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne'—

I think we must be grateful for having the worldly Gospel of the Germans complete. It abounds in splendid wit and invention, and the language is music throughout; the Sirens sing quite in character. I find that the *old women* are particularly incensed against it, because many of them find their own portraits too well drawn to be mistaken in the Lamiæ and Empusæ, and there are even men who think it rather too gross that the devil's attention is withdrawn from his prey (Faust's soul) by the well-formed limbs of the angels. I believe nobody ought to drink spirits unless he has got a stomach that will stand them; and though I be still of opinion that Goethe has sown in the hearts of men more weeds than the present generation is able to destroy by the knowledge he has put in their heads,

yet I trust the good will, in the progress of time, far outweigh the evil, and in despite of my own insignificancy I am sometimes painfully remembered of Goethe's words :—

'Was raucherst Du nun Deinen Todten?
Hattst Du's ihm so im Leben geboten!'

But I am sure I have *his* forgiveness." [1]

With these notes and explanations the reader will be able to place the following letter aright among Goethe documents and assign their true value to the opinions which it expresses.

"My Dear ———,

"Gothe became ill of his last disease on the 16th of this month; it was a catarrhal fever, which, however, yielded to the proper medicines so soon that in the evening of the 17th he declared to Mr Vogel [2] his willingness to begin again next day his wonted occupations. Already his friends thought that all danger was over, when on the night between the 19th and 20th he was seized with a violent rigor that lasted for ten hours, attended with severe pains in the abdomen. When Vogel arrived he administered remedies that effected a reaction, evinced by profuse perspiration, but not sufficient for removing all the bad symptoms. From this time the illness took a dangerous character, though the patient did not suffer much. On the 21st, in the morning, there could already be perceived symptoms of approaching dissolution; his limbs began to become cold, the expression of his countenance was less lively, and the features altered, in consequence of paralysis of the lungs, as the physician stated. The night between the 21st and 22nd was passed partly in slumber, but life was fast drawing to its close. In the morning between seven and eight he *walked* (since he sat during the whole illness in his armchair) to the adjoining room, where he bid his grandchildren be cheerful, since he felt much better, and hoped to pass a very pleasant summer. He then walked back, supported by two friends as formerly, and sat

[1] I owe some of my information respecting Weissenborn to inquiries kindly made on my behalf of Dr von Scheffler by Sir W. W. Hunter.

[2] Goethe's physician.

with a hurried respiration and in a state approaching to stupor, from which he would recover now and then and talk more or less coherently; his words indicated that he felt no pain. For instance, he wanted the curtains to be removed from the windows; he asked the servant to bring him a letter-cover for despatching a letter that was not written; he wanted to read Salvandy's newest publication.[1] About an hour and a half before his death he bid his daughter-in-law go out of the room, and asked his servant how much money he had made with the manuscripts he had stolen from him; and after a pause said, 'You have certainly not stolen them in order to make presents.' In the last hour of his life he was continually writing with his forefinger on his thigh, viz., characters that seemed to be his signature, as he began always with the letter W (Wolfgang Gothe). By eleven o'clock almost all movement stopped; he reclined on his armchair, and expired at a quarter past eleven, without other agonies but those occasioned by a few struggles against suffocation. Madame de Gothe has told a friend that he died whilst holding her hand in his, leaning with his face on her bosom, and looking steadfastly at her, so that she perceived what she thinks was his last moment only by a sort of tremor pervading his system.

"I may here mention a few interesting circumstances which I forgot to speak of in their chronological order. Gothe's last words were directed to his daughter-in-law (who has nursed him tenderly during his whole illness), and bore the expression of perfect serenity. They were, 'Komm, mein Tochterchen, und gieb mir ein Pfotchen,'[2] terms that he was in the habit of using when uncommonly gentle and good-humoured. His last written verses were destined for Countess Vaudreuil,[3] but found a different destination in going to Jenny Pappenheim.[4] The reason was this: Gothe was very partial for Countess Vaudreuil, who is young, beautiful, intelligent, and, as far as is consistent with feminine delicacy, uncommonly frank in expressing and maintaining her

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[1] "Seize Mois, ou la Révolution de 1830 et les Révolutionaires."

[2] Literally, "Come, my little daughter, and give me a little paw."

[3] The Countess Vaudreuil was the wife of the French *chargé d'affaires* at Weimar.

[4] Jenny von Pappenheim, daughter of General von Pappenheim, was one of the court beauties of Weimar. On Goethe's last birthday she sent him a pair of slippers which she had embroidered, together with some verses "Zum 28 August 1831" (see "Goethe-Jahrbuch," vi. p. 172). Goethe was gratified and sent his thanks in verse; the lines may be found in the Hempel edition of Goethe's works, vol. iii. p. 367.

opinions (but do not think that I am in love with her !). She was often in company with him, and he showed his attention for her by sending her different curiosities of which he knew she was fond. He promised her likewise his portrait, and she made a similar promise. About six weeks ago Countess Vaudreuil got painted for herself Miss Pappenheim's portrait and her own, both being so strikingly like that her husband thought fit to have the Countess's portrait copied. Gothe, who had heard of the proceedings, held a couple of verses ready with which to receive the Countess's portrait ; but as only Jenny's portrait was sent to him for the present, and for mere inspection, he decided that these verses must belong to Pap. However, the last verses which he shaped in his head incontestably belong to Countess Vaudreuil. He received his copy of her portrait on the day before his death, when he was no more able to write, though he expressed a wish to do so, and said that the verses were quite ready in his head. The leading thought in them was probably expressed in the words which he uttered whilst looking at the portrait, 'Ich freue mich dass der Mensch nicht verpfuscht hat was Gott so schon geschaffen hat.' [1]

"Some persons, being in the adjoining room at the time of Gothe's death, pretend that they heard a tune, as if played by a large band of music. This music, however, cannot have been very celestial, as the same persons allege in corroboration of their statement that they sent over to the next houses to inquire why the *noise* was made. Some persons find it very curious that Gothe died in the beginning of Spring, and I might think it very strange that he actually died on my birthday, and who could contradict me if I maintained that he did so at the very same hour when I was born ? Who but my parents, who would not perhaps expose their dear child ? There exists likewise a portrait of Gothe, where he sits in his armchair with a clock on the desk before him showing the time to be half-past eleven ? *Dubit Deus his quoque finem.*

"When this great life was extinguished the busy people about Gothe's corpse began to quarrel whether his body ought to be publicly exhibited. The ultras maintained that it was profanation to expose those divine features (which according to the expression of one of his admirers, glowed, a few hours after death, with the reflection of all the characters portrayed in Gothe's works—Mephistopheles not excepted) to the dull eyes of the mob. But to the chief supporter of this opinion it was objected that when the late Grand Duke died, he had himself been instrumental in causing the

[1] "I rejoice that man has not spoilt what God has made so fair."

country and expense of 50,000 dollars to have the corpse exhibited, on the plea that what had been so glorious in life, and so eminent in character, ought to be honoured after death by all the externals that mortals could bestow; and the Whig party carried off the victory. The corpse was exhibited on the 26th between eight and one o'clock in Gothe's own house, the back gateway having been transformed into a sort of chapel. He lay with a laurel crown on his head, and a gown of white satin covering his breast. Over and behind him there were three golden stars, and beneath these different emblems, among which the lyre was the most prominent feature. Near the sides of his bed there burned numbers of wax-candles, and behind the latter stood a honorary guard of four men on each side, numbers of friends to the sciences and arts relieving each other. The expression of his countenance had much of truly majestic in it, and I thought he looked more like an old warrior than anything else.

"I now come to speak about his funeral. The day after his death there was circulated a manuscript regulation about the order of the procession and solemnity, couched in the following terms.—

"'Arrangements with respect to the funeral of the late Minister of the State, His Excellency Mr de Gothe, on the 26th of March, 1832.

"'In the afternoon at four o'clock for the first time, and at half-past four o'clock for the second time, the great bells of both steeples will be rung; and at five o'clock, when the procession will move from the house of the defunct, all the bells will toll until the coffin will be arrived at the chapel of the burial-ground. The persons that wish to join in the procession will be at Gothe's house at half-past four. The funeral procession will be formed in the following order:– [I omit the list of functionaries, which may be found in Dr K. W. Muller's "Goethe's letzte literarische Thatigkeit, &c.," pp. 87-89.] As soon as the coffin is taken from the carriage the chorus begins to sing the verses (which I subjoin; they were originally composed by Gothe for the funeral solemnity that took place at the Lodge of the Freemasons on the late Grand Duke's death: they are exceedingly beautiful, in my opinion, but leave us very little hope of a future existence as individuals; Herder would never have written such verses, although the evident, and it seems not accidental, *double entendre* of the last two lines allows of an interpretation favourable to the hopes of a future state. The music is by Zelter at Berlin [1]). Then follows the funeral speech by Rohr;

[1] The verses are those beginning "Lass't fahren hin das allzu

then a short song of Riemer (on the other side of the leaf), the music by Hummel.[1] Afterwards all the people present, except a few officers of the court, will leave the Chapel.'

"The funeral took place, as much as I could observe, in the above order. However, it was to be lamented that one of the carriages looked more like an old post-waggon (and probably was one) than a carriage belonging to the funeral, and the mob behaved very ill; boys with pastry (Bretzeln) went about, tinkling with their bells, and on the cemetery there was great confusion and unbecoming merriment, so that the whole looked more like a Catholic saint's-day and procession than the funeral of Gothe.

"On the following day there was Tasso acted, and a Prologue spoken, by whom I know not, but I'll try to learn it before I send this letter.[2] Numbers of persons who had better saw wood or knit stockings rack their brains with a view to erect eternal monuments to the honour of Gothe, and a lady of rank actually showed me a paper that she had written on the occasion, and which she intended for immediate publication, which ends thus:—'But the pen, overwhelmed with sorrow, sinks down!!' Do not take this for a bad piece of humour: it is as true as truth itself.

"In Gothe's papers there was found nothing about the manner in which he should like to be interred. The funeral therefore was shaped after that of the Minister that died last. The corpse was put into a coffin that was like Schiller's, and therefore according to the taste of Gothe, who had planned that of Schiller. It stands in the Grand-ducal vault near Schiller's.

"With respect to Gothe's will I have learnt the following authentic circumstances. The heirs to the property left (which is said to be very considerable) are his three grandchildren. His

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Fluchtige" ("Gedichte," ed. G. von Loeper, ii. p. 265). I give the last verse:—

"So lost sich jene grosse Frage
Nach unserm zweiten Vaterland;
Denn das Bestandige der ird'schen Tage
Verburgt uns ewigen Bestand."

[1] An extract from Dr Rohr's funeral address is given in Dr K. W. Muller's "Goethe's letzte literarische Thatigkeit," &c., pp. 91, 92, Riemer's song, "Ruhe sanft in heil'gem Frieden," is printed in the same volume, p. 94.

[2] Query—Epilogue? This Epilogue, a poem in ten stanzas of *ottava rima*, written by Chancellor von Muller, is given in Dr K. W. Muller's book, pp. 104-107.

daughter-in-law has been bequeathed a decent income for herself and another for bringing up her children. Besides she gets a considerable pension from Government on account of her late husband. The administration of the property is confined to the tutors of the grandchildren, Mr de Waldungen, and your old landlord, Court Advocate Buttner. These tutors were named by Gothe's son and confirmed by Gothe. The assets bequeathed to his servants are so little that even Gothe's best friends cannot speak of it without some indignation. To his nephew, who during the last years has, with the greatest care, trouble, and to the very neglect of his own houshold, kept in order that of Gothe, he has bequeathed 200 dollars, say 200 dollars Saxon money. Nor has he given a farthing to any public institution, thereby showing evidently that he was only interested in the progress of the arts, sciences, &c., as long as they were instrumental in making his own self great. His collections will be under the care of Chancellor Muller, and Secretary Kreuter will be appointed as Custos, so that the public may hope to arrive at the sight of them at length. These collections Gothe has wished to be sold, in preference to the Weimar Government, if a considerable sum were offered. The Library is not to be sold, but shall remain for his grandsons. Many volumes of unpublished manuscripts have been found ready for publication (I understand eighteen) Dr Eckermann will superintend this task. The correspondence between Gothe and Zelter is to be published after the death of the latter. Four hundred letters of Schiller are to be published in 1850.

"This is all I could learn about the circumstances connected with the death of this remarkable and lucky person, who died, it seems, without a sting of conscience, and after having fulfilled his whole misson (as he said himself two months before his death, when having completed the *last part of his Faust*, adding that Providence now allowed to him only loans of days or weeks), and from whose character still nothing can wipe the stain of *mean* egotism. I am in possession of many first-rate and first-hand facts by which I can prove this assertion, which I do not speak out for asperging [aspersing] the character of a great man, but because it is just that it should be duly appreciated what practical result the leading tendency of such a reformer has bred in his own self ; and I have a right to speak out without fear my own opinion about the man at a time when he is dead, because I have, during his life-time, never courted his favour, nor could I have done so but against my feelings. But as you have not wished for an incrimination, but for

a plain statement of the circumstances that preceded and immediately followed Gothe's death, it would look like private animosity if I did further expatiate on his failures; and I may only add, that had Schiller or Herder been the last survivors of the heroes of our literature, I should have felt the loss much more severely than in the present case, though I think we ought to be thankful to God that he has allowed Gothe to live so long and to fulfil his mission upon earth.

"I understand that you would rather have me send the above information immediately than wait till the autograph of Gothe that has been positively promised to me by a trustworthy person, and which I believe I shall receive within this week, has reached me. As soon as I have got it I'll send it you. I have applied to Vogel, who sends you with his compliments the following scantling.

"Believe me, truly yours,

"W. WEISSENBORN."

"*Weimar, March* 28, 1832.

"Excuse the very bad writing and other imperfections of this letter."

The chief sources of information about the closing days of Goethe's life, and the offices rendered after his death are Dr Vogel's "Die letzte Krankheit Goethe's," which describes in detail the medical aspect of the case, and Dr Müller's very interesting little volume, "Goethe's letzte literarische Thatigkeit, Verhaltniss zum Ausland und Scheiden." It is somewhat remarkable that an account of the circumstances of Goethe's death, written by the architect Coudray, who arranged the ceremony of the lying-in-state, remained unprinted until a recent date. Coudray visited Goethe for the last time on March 12, 1832, the day before his departure from Weimar on business to Allstedt. He found the old poet engaged in looking through his drawings and sketches of past years with a view to separating those that were worth preserving from those which might be destroyed.

Coudray pleaded that none should be destroyed as there were persons to whom the slightest of them would be of interest. Some were coloured, and as Coudray gazed long at one of these which represented a calm sunset, Goethe expressed his thought in the words—"Yes, great even in departure" ("Ja, auch im Scheiden gross"), words which afterwards recurred to Coudray's memory as though they had been a prophetic intimation of the approaching end.

The talk after the two o'clock meal on that day turned on the sketch sent to Goethe from Pompeii of the mosaic representing Alexander's battle with the Persians at Arbela, which had been found in the house excavated in presence of Goethe's son and named the "Casa di Goethe." In the evening Coudray said farewell, little anticipating that he would never again see Goethe except in the shadow of death.

On returning from Allstedt on the 18th he called at Goethe's house, but was informed by a servant that the master was unwell and could not receive him. Next morning Goethe, remembering their last conversation, sent Coudray the letter accompanying the drawings from Pompeii, which he had not been able to lay his hand on during their recent after-dinner talk. On the following day the sick man suffered much; Coudray was in the house, but did not enter the bedroom; through the open door he could hear sounds which betokened a state of pain. An apparent amendment on the morning of the 21st soon passed away. On the night of that day Coudray offered to watch beside his ailing friend, but his help was not needed. At seven o'clock next morning he called and found all in the

Goethe house full of deep agitation ; the physician had declared that the case was hopeless. From Goethe's study Coudray could see the patient in the adjoining bedroom, seated beside the bed in his armchair; he appeared to be calm and free from suffering; and evidently his mind was occupied, for he uttered from time to time intelligible words. On drinking some wine and water he became brighter and asked for light. The blinds of the bedroom had been kept down, and even the light which came from the study windows had appeared to cause him some inconvenience, for he frequently shaded his eyes with his hands. Supported by his amanuensis and his servant Friedrich, he raised himself from the armchair, and as he stood, asked what day of the month it was; on hearing that it was the 22nd of March, he said, "So the spring has begun, and we may get well the sooner." He again seated himself in the armchair, took the hand of his daughter-in-law Ottilie, who since the previous day had remained constantly by his side, and fell into a gentle slumber. From time to time he spoke. "See that lovely woman's head with black curls in splendid colours—on a dark background"; and later, "Give me the portfolio yonder with the drawings" (pointing to the place with his hand). A book and not a portfolio lay before him; the servant handed it to him, but Goethe repeated, "Not the book but the portfolio." When the servant assured him that there was no portfolio but only a book, "So then," he said, "it was a spectre" (*Gespenst*), the word in this sense being adopted by Goethe from his own "Theory of Colours."[1]

[1] Coudray, "Goethe's drei letzte Lebenstage," pp. 6, 7.

Having tried to take some food and sipped a little wine and water, Goethe again was raised from his chair by his attendants. "But," says Coudray, "I noticed with alarm how the tall figure tottered, and the patient was once more lowered into his seat." He fancied that he saw a paper lying on the floor and asked, "Why have they let Schiller's correspondence lie here?" A little later he said to the servant, "Raise the bedroom blinds so that more light may enter." These, says Coudray—and Dr Müller confirms the statement—were Goethe's last articulate words. It will have been noticed by the reader that Weissenborn's statement is different. I am not, for my own part, deeply concerned to ascertain whether his latest request was for the light which was fast disappearing from his dying eyes or for the comfort of his daughter's hand; and I should be sorry to add one more topic of historical inquiry to that important class which includes the question as to whether King Charles I. knelt or lay prone to receive the headsman's stroke, and the question as to the precise words in which Wellington called upon the Guards to make the final charge at Waterloo. It is certain, at all events, that the rest was silence. For a while Goethe's finger traced letters, first in the air, and then, as his hand sank lower, on the down quilt which lay across his knees. His breathing became feebler from minute to minute, and at half-past eleven, leaning towards the left side of the armchair, he gently yielded up his spirit. The face retained an expression of majestic calm. It was like the setting of the sun in his own picture, "Ja, auch im Scheiden gross."

Our impression of Goethe in his elder years is derived in great measure from the conversations reported by Eckermann, and we are most fortunate in possessing that delightful treasury of wisdom and knowledge. But in addition to the conversations with Eckermann, and those, less familiar perhaps to English readers, with Chancellor von Müller, there exists a multitude of scattered memorials of a like kind, and it was a happy thought of Biedermann to bring together all existing records of Goethe's conversations, and to publish them in their chronological sequence. The eight volumes of this collection form, as the editor alleges, virtually a new work of Goethe's; but they are something more than this, for they present us with a series of portraits of Goethe taken from almost every possible point of view; they exhibit in turn, and in the happiest way, the many and various facets of that marvellous mind.

Every visitor to Weimar was of course anxious to get a sight of Jupiter Olympicus, and if possible to hold speech with the immortal. Goethe bore the afflictions which attend celebrity with a graceful fortitude, or rather in the spirit of Wordsworth's happy warrior, who—

"Turns his necessity to glorious gain."

There may have been a time in middle life when he secluded himself, was somewhat difficult of access, or protected himself from distraction by a frigid courtesy. Rumours lived in Weimar of the terrors to which a visitor might be exposed who rashly crossed the "Salve" at his threshold, and it was even said that he sometimes,

when in an ill-humour, gave a silent audience to the unhappy lion-hunter; he shook his mane but would not roar. One admirer describes Goethe's glance when he entered the room as that of a boa-constrictor at sight of a deer. Another from the New World thought the great man's face was that of a student of natural science expecting some Transatlantic phenomenon. When Karl von Holtei called in 1827, and brought forth his best prepared sentences, Goethe at first let him speak, while from time to time he sniffed at the corner of his scented pocket-handkerchief. The thirsty traveller, as he admits, struck the rock at first with little dexterity, and no water gushed forth. Heine had lain awake, as he tells us in his humorous way, many winter nights thinking what magnificent and profound things he should say to Goethe when they met; and as soon as he was in the presence he remarked that the plums on the road between Jena and Weimar had a very fine taste. Goethe could employ to good effect the German "So," which is an admirable armour of defence, whether used with an interrogative or an affirmative intonation; and his "H'm! h'm!" was not always encouraging to conversation. If we do not find ourselves successful in an interview with an Eminency or Excellency we are apt to salve our wounded vanity by laying the blame on the unsympathetic egoist, who has failed to give us the sweets of self-content.

But during his elder years it rarely happened that a visitor left the Goethe house without a feeling not only of reverence but of regard or affection for its master. Goethe had turned his necessity to gain; if he was an

Olympian he was also in the finest sense of the word, humane. The happiest man, he told the young musician Lobe, is he who possesses to the widest extent the power of taking a sympathetic interest in the occupations and concerns of other men, and probably no one ever possessed this power more fully than Goethe himself. If his visitor were not a person of distinction still there were the common joys and sorrows of humanity as a basis of sympathy, and perhaps some modest special gift which he might discover and, as far as opportunity permitted, might foster. Goethe's grandchildren, and his delight in them, had reopened some of the springs of affection within him. Little Wolfgang usually breakfasted at an early hour with the old man, and was always happy when beside him. If, after breakfast, he grew too noisy, Goethe would gently direct that he should be removed, but Wolf's promises or perhaps tears easily gained a remission of the sentence. Soon the uproar would recommence, disturbing the worker at his desk, or as he paced the room dictating to his amanuensis, and Goethe would be compelled to exile "den kleinen Menschen"; but often Wolf's sobs could be heard outside the door, and upon renewed promises to be quiet he would be readmitted. Sometimes before work had begun the boy would climb into his grandfather's lap or on his shoulder, and would be welcomed with caressing words as his "kleines Kaferchen." In the winter which preceded his death Goethe, although his work-room was cumbered with books and scientific apparatus, fitted up a table in the window for "Wölfchen," in order

that the boy might pursue his studies under his own eyes.[1]

Among the favourite playfellows of Wolfgang and Walther were three little girls named Melos. There was constant coming and going between the two houses. When the little people overhead made too great a racket, Goethe would send them, in petition for truce, a box of choice Frankfort bonbons, designed as prizes for a less noisy game. Often he would stand in the garden, wearing his long grey house-coat, his hands behind his back, and look on at the children's play. "If our balls flew higher or our hoops made a finer curve," wrote one of the troop, afterwards the wife of the poet Freiligrath, "the grandsons would receive a mild rebuke—'Ah, the girls put you to shame! the girls do it better!' . . . Once when Goethe was changing his coat and we were by, I busied myself in giving him assistance, and received the compliment—'It is a long time since such pretty hands have helped me.'"

If Goethe were not truly amiable his temper might have been tried a little by an incident of Saturday, October 11th, 1828. Herr Wiggers and his wife were about to place their two sons, aged respectively seventeen and twelve, in a great educational institution, and, accompanied by the boys, they stopped at Weimar on the way. The writings of Goethe were held in high honour in the Wiggers family, and the father without delay sought for himself the honour of an interview. Goethe readily consented to see the visitor, and learning on his arrival that Frau Wiggers was not far off, he

[1] Dr Muller, "Goethe's letzte literarische Thatigkeit," &c., p. 4, note.

begged her husband to bring the lady to his house. The happy husband flew with the message; and when the elders laid their heads together, it seemed to them a grievous thing that young Julius and Moritz should not also have the privilege of looking upon the great poet. Accordingly when Goethe, arrayed in black, with the silver star upon his breast, stepped into the room in which he received his guests, it was to find himself invaded by the entire Wiggers household. With the friendliest air he led the lady to a sofa and seated himself beside her, while the others formed a semicircle in front. He questioned rather than communicated his own thoughts, and had soon learnt the mother's anxiety with respect to the severe discipline to which her boys would be subjected at school. "A mother," said Goethe, "who in the fulness of love is wont to look on her child as an unit in the house must needs feel anxious in surrendering that child to an institution where it can be but an insignificant fragment of the whole." Before the party withdrew he begged the eldest son not to forget the Goethe house if he should visit Weimar again; then, with a summons to his grandson Wolf to accompany them to the door, he bade farewell. But hardly had they reached their inn when little Wolfgang arrived as the bearer from his grandfather of a small box containing a bronze medal impressed with the poet's likeness; it was a joyous moment, and a kind message and one of Goethe's visiting-cards filled up the measure of the good folk's happiness.

It was necessary for Goethe still in some measure

to protect himself. When a young author brought his manuscript verses and declared—not quite sincerely —that he would consider Goethe's verdict as final and decisive of his future career, the great poet, who had still work of his own to accomplish, must needs in all kindness explain that his old age, with its limited powers, made it impossible for him to do real justice in such a case, and that he was obliged to decline the responsibility. He had to guard himself also against surprise or sudden emotion, and, as he said to Victor Cousin, even abstain from many things that interested him, in order to maintain his equilibrium. It may have been also that in endeavouring to resist or conceal the infirmities of age he acquired at times a certain stiffness. So at least it appeared to the Viennese dramatist Grillparzer, who visited Goethe in 1826. On a second interview what had seemed like the stiffness of a minister of state wore off, and Goethe had, in Grillparzer's eyes, the aspect "half of a king and half of a father." A visitor who possessed some special faculty or some special knowledge was most welcome of all to Goethe. It was not required or expected that he should be known to fame. "Original talent," said Goethe, "that is water for my mill." And such a person, who perhaps having been alarmed by the tales and fables of Weimar, had entered the reception-room with tremors or embarrassment, was forthwith set at ease, and presently, to his surprise and delight, found himself instructing his host, while, under a keen and eager cross-examination, he learnt new meanings and discovered hidden

relations in the facts at his command. In the spring of 1820 the young musician, J. Christian Lobe, desiring an introduction to Zelter, called on Goethe. What strength and courage the old man infused into the young aspirant may be read in Lobe's account of the interview. How much Goethe learnt and how much he taught! How quickly he caught Lobe up when the latter described Zelter's music as old-fashioned! How "old-fashioned"? Explain and be precise; good! —there is the piano; what you have stated must stand the test of an experiment. Goethe strongly urged upon his young acquaintance the advantage of making careful notes of the performances in the theatre at Berlin; all details should be classified, and each entered under its proper rubric: "Write, for example, under 'Theatre' as special questions: the piece? poet? actors? reception by the public? impression made on myself? and, as you have told me that you travel with a couple of companions, impression made on these? &c., &c." It was Goethe's aim that nothing should escape the young man's observation, that he should see at once broadly and minutely, and that everything should find its exact place in his mind. When a few months later Lobe returned from Berlin to Weimar, he was able in a very creditable manner to meet Goethe's fire of cross-examination, and to satisfy, as far as the occasion permitted, Goethe's insatiable curiosity about things of the mind. And once again, nothing must remain in the vague which can be made definite. Spontini's music has a plastic quality. Plastic? What exactly

does that mean when used with reference to music? Explain, explain!

A traveller among the palms and temples was perhaps a rarer apparition in Weimar seventy years ago than he would be to-day. Gustav Parthey arrived in 1827 with an introduction from Zelter, and found Goethe all eagerness to hear what he had to tell. "I tried in my answers," he writes, "to approximate to the clear precision of the questions." He had spent two months in Malta before setting out on his travels to Constantinople, Egypt, and up the Nile as far as Wady-Halfa and Dongola. Parthey imagined that Malta might in some measure be taken for granted; but no: "We will for the present remain at Malta." This island of carbonaceous limestone between Sicily and Africa must have a peculiar character of its own. And before the peculiarities of Malta had been exhausted it was time to say good-bye. "We have so much to talk about your Eastern travels," said Goethe, "that I beg you will dine with me every day during your stay among us." The desultory questions put by his son at dinner about mosques at Constantinople and pyramids at Memphis did not divert Goethe from his regular method of progression; the dinner lingered on from two to six o'clock, and they had reached Philæ when it was time to go. Goethe commissioned the traveller as he departed to be the bearer of hearty greetings to his friend Knebel, whom he would find "Quite a young man of eighty-three."

In the autumn of the same year, 1827, the servant presented Goethe with a card bearing on it the name of

Wilhelm Zahn, "architect and painter." Zahn was young and unknown. He had heard alarming stories of Goethe's cold and arrogant bearing to strangers. One distinguished applicant for admission to the Goethe house had never received an acknowledgment of his letter. Another had ventured in, and then had timidly slipped into the courtyard to seek some attendant spirit favourably inclined. Two boys, the poet's grandsons, were there at noisy play. Suddenly a window was thrown up, and the much-desired face became visible. With eyes aflame and a leonine roar he cried, "You lubbers, will you keep quiet?" and the window came down with a bang. The boys *were* quiet, and the stranger fled in terror.[1] Such tales were not encouraging to Zahn, architect and painter, even though he had begged the servant in announcing him to add the words, "arrived from Italy." If Goethe had been inclined to moroseness, however, these words would have charmed him into good-humour. Zahn was conducted into the reception-room, and in a few moments there entered a veritable Olympic Jove, with the great forehead and two great brown eyes of indescribable lustre. "So you have been in Italy?" "Three years, your Excellency." "And have perhaps visited the excavations in the neighbourhood of Naples?" "That was the special object of my travel. I made myself at home in an antique house at Pompeii, and during two years all the excavations

[1] Freiligrath's wife stated that she, as a little girl, was constantly in and out of Goethe's study with Wolfgang, and never once heard a harsh word from the old man.

were under my eyes." "Delighted—glad to hear it," exclaimed Goethe, who had a way of dropping unnecessary pronouns. He drew his chair nearer and continued. "Have often advised the Academies of Berlin and Vienna to send young artists to study the antique paintings of the subterranean buildings; so much the better if you have done it on your own account. Yes, yes, the antique must remain the model for every artist. But let us not forget the best thing. Have perhaps some drawings in your trunk?" "I drew the finest of the wall-paintings almost immediately on their discovery, and tried to reproduce the colours. Perhaps your Excellency would care to see some of them?" "O, surely, surely, gladly and thankfully. Come again to dinner; dine at two o'clock. You will find some lovers of art. Have the greatest desire to examine your pictures. *Auf wiedersehen*, my young friend."

Beside Goethe, his daughter-in-law, and her sister Ulrike, the new guest found at table the Chancellor von Müller, the architect Coudray, Vogel, Goethe's physician, and Eckermann listening to the words of the master as to the utterances of an oracle. The talk was of Italy, and Fraulein Ulrike, amid the general praises of the glories of Rome, could not repress a little militant Protestantism directed against the Pope and all his works. Goethe, smiling, handed her a toothpick with the words, "Take this, my dear, and wreak your vengeance!" The pictures—Achilles and Briseis, Leda, the marriage of Pasithea, Jupiter enthroned, and the rest—were duly exhibited; when

suddenly the Grand Duke, in hunting costume and meerschaum in hand, entered unannounced. The situation was explained, and Zahn was invited to dine next day with his Royal Highness, but Goethe interposed. "No, Zahn is mine for dinner." And so it was permitted to be. Ten days passed away rapidly. "Goethe," says Zahn, "was inexhaustible in questions, and knew how to win from me what was best and most secret, so that I often regarded myself with astonishment. In those precious hours he sank deep in golden memories of a golden life, and allowed me to look into his great and noble heart. That heart was indeed as great as his intellect. He knew not the shadow of envy, but embraced with warm good-will the whole of human kind, and he had helped hundreds of persons with word and deed, but always quietly and secretly."

French and English visitors were received with a warm welcome by Goethe. Among the former were the sculptor David, Jean-Jacques Ampère, and Ampère's philosophic teacher, Cousin. Goethe spoke perhaps more freely of the contemporary movement in French literature to his Polish visitor, Count A. E. von Kosmian, than to any of these:—

"'Victor Hugo,' said Goethe, 'possesses remarkable gifts; without doubt he has renewed and quickened French poetry, but one cannot help fearing that if not he himself, yet his pupils and followers may go too far in the course which they have ventured to pursue. The French nation is the nation of extremes; it knows moderation in nothing. Endowed with great moral and physical strength, the French people might lift the world, if they could only find the centre, but they never seem to know that if one would lift great weights, one must discover the middle point. It is the only

people on earth in whose history we can find the night of St Bartholomew and the Feast of Reason, the despotism of Louis XIV. and the orgies of the *sansculottes*, and almost in the same year the capture of Moscow and the capitulation of Paris. Accordingly we cannot but fear that in literature also, after the despotism of Boileau, licentiousness and repudiation of all law may follow.'

"'I, too,' said I, 'share this fear, but I cannot deny that the literary forms which were once in vogue cannot serve as models for to-day. We read the tragedies of the French dramatic masters with constant pleasure, but when represented on the stage they fail to interest the present public. If Racine were to rise again, he would himself now avoid the faults which we find in his works.'

"'Believe me,' replied Goethe, 'we might well desire a new Racine with the faults of his elder namesake. The masterpieces of the French drama remain masterpieces for ever. The representation of them interested me deeply in my early years, when at Frankfort; then it was that I first thought of writing plays. The present school may do much for literature, but never as much as the earlier school has done.'"

Goethe's feeling towards English visitors to Weimar was happily expressed in a conversation with Eckermann of March 12, 1828. The young Englishman's confidence and sense of power pleased Goethe; but he was not without a portion of the feeling so widespread on the Continent that as a nation we are not entirely free from the vice of hypocrisy.[1] Between 1815 and 1830 Goethe added to his collection of portraits painted by Schmeller those of fourteen English acquaintances, among them one of Crabb Robinson, a head in crayons, which the sitter described as "frightfully ugly and very like." Goethe was by no means indifferent as to the reception of his works in our country. Crabb Robinson tells us how the poet was mortified at the poor account

[1] "Nirgendwo giebt es soviel Heuchler und Scheinheilige wie in England; zu Shakespeare's Zeit mag das doch wohl anders gewesen sein."—Goethe to Forster, Oct. 17, 1829.

which he gave him of Lord Leveson Gower's translation of "Faust." "On my mentioning that Lord Leveson Gower had not ventured to translate the *Prologue in Heaven*, he seemed surprised. 'How so? that is quite unobjectionable. The idea is in Job.' He did not perceive that that was the aggravation, not the excuse." A few weeks after the conversation with Robinson, Goethe was smiling with Friedrich Förster over his lordship's rendering of Gretchen's song, "There was a King in Thule." When in the translation the king comes to die—

> "He called for his confessor,
> Left all to his successor"—

probably, as Förster ingeniously suggested, because the rhymes came pat. Goethe, when the lines were quoted, laughed heartily. "'Called for his confessor,'" he cried. "We must direct the noble lord's attention to the fact that the King of Thule reigned before the Flood. At that early date confessors were unknown." The speakers went on to cite other amusing mistranslations of Goethe's poems in both English and French, and to notice the "nice derangement of epitaphs" in certain ill-printed German texts and songs arranged for music. On one occasion an Englishman expressed his surprise that the father in the ballad of the "Erl-King" should have grieved so excessively for the boy, considering the fact that he had been blessed with so numerous a family. On the remark that nothing was mentioned on this subject in the ballad, he recited with lips which hardly parted the words that proved the correctness of his assertion :—

"Dem Vater grauset, er reitet geschwind,
Er halt in den Armen das *achtzehnte* Kind"—

He held in his arms his eighteenth child—a number which even in Great Britain, with its rapidly increasing population, must exceed the average.

It was inevitable that the editor of "Goethes Gespräche," wide-read and diligent though he be, should overlook some of the scattered material for his collection. In an Appendix to the last volume much might be done to fill up the gaps. Among visitors from our country to Weimar who held speech with Goethe, he has failed to notice R. P. Gillies—the same Gillies to whom Wordsworth addressed a fine sonnet directed against despondency in youth. The year of Gillies' continental tour was, I think, 1821. Goethe in figure, contour of features, mode of speech and demeanour, reminded him in an indefinable way of John Kemble, but of Kemble as he might be should he live to be old. "As the door opened from the farther end of the reception-room, and his Excellency's tall, gaunt form, wrapped in a long, blue surtout, which hung loosely on him, slowly advanced, he had veritably the air and aspect of a *revenant*. His was not an appearance but an *apparition*." At this time Goethe was recovering from a serious illness; yet Gillies could perceive that the fire and energy of youth had not wholly died out from his face. In profound silence he advanced; like other ghosts he seemed to wait to be spoken to. The talk, when it started, was of Sir Brooke Boothby, whom Goethe had known well, and who had obtained a commission in the Duke of

Weimar's cavalry, in order that he might have the privilege of appearing at court in boots instead of silk stockings; of Walter Scott, of Byron, of the influence of "Faust" and "Wilhelm Meister" on English literature. Gillies withdrew not altogether pleased with Goethe's reserve and taciturn humour, but convinced that he was inaccessible to flattery and "cared not a straw about praise."[1]

Another wanderer from England to Weimar, whose conversation with Goethe has escaped Biedermann's research, was the eminent physician, Dr Granville. The name Granville, it will be remembered, had been taken by Augustus Bozzi in accordance with his mother's dying wish; mingled blood of Milan and Cornwall ran in Granville's veins. In 1827, when forty-four years of age, he made a journey to St Petersburg, and halted *en route* at Weimar, in order to obtain, if possible, an interview with "the patriarch of German literature."[2] Ottilie's assistance having been obtained, an appointment for the interview was made. "He advanced towards me," Granville writes, "with the countenance of one who seems not to go through the ceremony of a first greeting *à contre cœur*. . . . . His person was erect and denoted not the advance of age. His open and well-arched eyebrows, which gave effect to the undimmed lustre of the most brilliant eye I have ever beheld, his fresh look and mild expression of countenance at once captivated my atten-

[1] "Memoirs of a Literary Veteran." By R. P. Gillies, vol. iii. p. 16.

[2] The record of this visit is given in Granville's "St Petersburg: A Journal of Travels," &c. (Colburn, 1828).

tion." He was free alike from frivolity and haughty reserve. "I found him in his conversation ready rather than fluent; following, rather than leading; unaffected, yet gentlemanly; earnest, yet entertaining; and manifesting no desire to display how much he deserved the high reputation which not only Germany but Europe in general had simultaneously acknowledged to be his due." He spoke disparagingly of Lord Leveson Gower's translation of "Faust," and commended a rendering of his "Tasso" into English by Des Voeux.[1] The conversation then passed on to the subject of education, and especially to that of instruction in a foreign language. "Throughout the interview," writes Granville, "which lasted upwards of an hour, Goethe manifested great eagerness after general information, particularly respecting England and her numerous institutions; and also on the subject of St Petersburg, which he looked upon as a city that was fast rising to the rank of the first capital on the Continent." When bidding good-bye Goethe presented his visitor with a small morocco case containing two bronze medals, each bearing a bust of himself in relief. Granville ascribes the pleasant character of the meeting partly to the fact that he had gone through the correct forms for obtaining an interview, and had not taken the venerable poet by surprise.

Yet another visitor of Goethe's was William R. Swifte, whose death took place near Dublin not very long since. He has told his early adventures in a little volume

[1] Granville spells the name as Goethe pronounced it, Devaux. I learn from the English Goethe Society's papers that Goethe had Des Voeux' portrait painted by Schmeller.

—I cannot describe it as one of much value—entitled, if I remember aright, "Wilhelm's Wanderings." He also was one of those who bore away from Weimar a Goethe medal, and his album contained some lines of verse in Goethe's handwriting which I remember to have read and noted as already in print. Mr Swifte, like most Irish country gentlemen, was a spirited rider; and the Goethe medal, lost in some flying leap, lies, or was supposed by him to lie, if my memory serves me right, in some ditch of the county Kildare.

COLERIDGE AS A POET.

IT would need Coleridge the critic to discover the secrets of the genius of Coleridge the poet. To solve intellectual puzzles in verse, to condense a diffused body of doctrine, to interpret what is called a poet's criticism of life is after all not difficult; but to find expressions in the language of thought corresponding to pure melody and imaginative loveliness is a finer exercise of wit. In one of his pieces of blank verse Coleridge has described a vision of the graceful white-armed Isabel reflected in the placid waters of a lonely stream: let but a blossom of willow-herb or a fox-glove bell be tossed upon the pool and the charm is broken—

> "All that phantom-world so fair
> Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
> And each mis-shape the other."

The description might stand for that of Coleridge's own poetry personified, with its visionary beauty, and its harmony of exquisite colours; and what shall be said of the critic who flings his heavy stone of formula and scatters the loveliness?

There is a quality of Coleridge's work as a poet which has obtained little attention from the critics, and yet which submits itself to criticism without injury to the beauty of the whole. The critics tell us of the romantic strangeness of his work like that of "a lady from a far

countree," its wealth of fantastic incident, its dream-like inconsequence, its cloud-like and rainbow-like splendours; and the critics have a reason for what they say. But they hardly recognise enough the fine humanity in Coleridge's poetry. He has been admirably compared by Mr Swinburne to a footless bird of paradise. Another great poet, Mr Swinburne's friend, Dante Rossetti, has a far different comparison, though here also to a bird, in his sonnet on Coleridge, and the lines are valuable, at least, as containing a fragment of sound criticism.

"His Soul fared forth (as from the deep home grove
The father-songster plies the hour-long quest),
To feed his soul-brood hungering in the nest;
But his warm Heart, the mother-bird, above
Their callow fledgling progeny still hove
With tented roof of wings and fostering breast
Till the Soul fed the soul-brood. Richly blest
From Heaven their growth, whose food was Human Love."

"I conceive the leading point about Coleridge's work," wrote Dante Rossetti, "is its human love;" and yet Rossetti least of all men could be insensible to its romantic beauty, or the incantation of its verse. If we would express the whole truth about Coleridge as a poet, we must find some mode of reconciling the conception of him as the footless bird of paradise with our knowledge of his affluent and sweet humanity.

To understand and to feel his poetry aright we must think of him, not as for ever floating on golden and emerald plumes somewhere above Mount Abora and feeding on the honey-dew, but also as nestling in that cottage at Clevedon or at Nether Stowey with a wife and child, loving the Somerset hills and coombs,

rich in friendships, and deeply interested in the great public events of his own time. It was a fortunate time, if to be compelled to think, to hope, and to fear in early manhood be fortunate; a time when the great name for honour or detestation in English politics was that of William Pitt; when the French Revolution was not a thing to be studied in documents, but an enormous phenomenon in process of actual development, a neighbouring Vesuvius, glorious or terrible, in active eruption; when the chief rival political teachers of England were the doctrinaire Godwin with his haughty abstractions of reason, and Edmund Burke who inspired the historical British habit of thinking with the perfervid passion of the Celt; when Hartley's system of physical psychology had all the force derived from its presenting a novel view of human nature apparently in harmony at once with science and with religion; when in literature the return to nature and the sentimental reaction from the dryness and formality of the earlier part of the century were represented by Cowper and Burns, and when with the return to nature there came the discovery of the supernatural and the romantic; when Macpherson's Ossian, if discredited by scholarship, was still an influence; when the genius of Chatterton had aided in the revival of an imaginative mediævalism, and when Mrs Radcliffe thrilled the nerves of our fair foremothers with her tales of the forest and mountain, the lonely lake, the ruined castle, the vault, the secret passage, the cowled monk, the torturer of the Inquisition, the high-souled chieftain of banditti, and the gliding apparitions of the dead. We smile at the stage-heroes,

stage-villains, and tarnished stage-properties, but they interested a simple generation which had not learnt to sympathise with the trials, difficulties, and dangers of fervid young clergymen struggling amid the shallows of biblical criticism.

Such was the time; and the place was no less faithfully mirrored in Coleridge's verse. The landscape poetry of England gains not a little in interest when we can recognise its truthfulness to the local character and spirit of the several districts which it depicts. We hardly do justice to Cowper's descriptive fidelity until we have grown familiar with the low-lying country watered by the Ouse; nor to that of Crabbe, until we have become acquainted with the coast scenery of Suffolk, its sullen ocean, its sandy levels, its commons wild and bleak, its scanty herbage, and the saline vegetation of its fens. The genius of the English Lake District through all its moods, from the nestling beauty of the cottage, owning "its own small pasture, almost its own sky," to the visionary glory of the mountain-heights at sunrise or in wreathing mists or under the midnight stars, is expressed in the poetry of Wordsworth. But if we would find a poetical rendering of the landscape of the Quantocks, with its unambitious loveliness of coomb and cliff, the exquisite delicacy of its green dells, each possessing a murmuring and living stream, and again those fine bursts of prospect, including the Severn and the Bristol Channel, visible from its smooth green heights, we must turn to the Nether Stowey poems of Coleridge. For Coleridge the peculiar charm of the district lay in its two-fold beauty—the

beauty of those nooks made for silent repose or secluded meditation, and the larger and freer beauty of wide-spreading woods and pastures beheld in one and the same moment with the glory of the sea. The elevation of the Quantock hills, reaching at most twelve hundred feet, is never such as to disconnect the climber from the humanity which reposes or toils below. There are hills of snow and even hills of heather which seem to lead us to the gate of heaven; the smooth airy ridge of the Quantocks is not framed for ecstasy or awe, but it enlarges our sense of the cheerful beauty of the earth.[1] In April, 1798, when England was alarmed by the report of an intended French invasion, Coleridge wrote his *Fears in Solitude*, and the opening and closing lines of the poem present us with this two-fold beauty of the Quantock district:—

> "A green and silent spot amid the hills,
> A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
> No singing skylark ever poised himself.
> The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
> Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
> All golden with the never-bloomless furze,
> Which now blooms most profusely; but the dell,
> Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
> As vernal cornfield, or the unripe flax,
> When, through its half-transparent stalks at eve,
> The level sunshine glimmers with green light."

In this silent dell among the hills the poet meditates on the great events of the time, and in truth grows over-rhetorical and over-didactic in the utterance of his fears

[1] I may refer the reader to an interesting little volume, "The Quantocks and their Associations," by the Rev. W. L. Nichols (Bath: printed for private circulation, 1878), to which I owe the identification of some of the localities described by Coleridge.

and hopes. And when heart and brain are weary he turns homeward to wind his way by the green sheep-track up the height of Danesbarrow, when suddenly he pauses upon the brow, startled, yet pleased by the prospect below :—

> "This burst of prospect, here the shadowy main,
> Dim tinted, there the mighty majesty
> Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
> And elmy fields, seems like society—
> Conversing with the mind, and giving it
> A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!"

And the heart of all this beauty is the cottage which shelters the beings whom he loves :—

> "And now beloved Stowey! I behold
> Thy church-tower, and methinks, the four huge elms
> Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend.
> And close behind them, hidden from my view,
> Is my own lowly cottage, where my babe,
> And my babe's mother dwell in peace."

It is the same contrast, characteristic of the Quantock scenery, between the coomb or dell and the landscape as seen from the heights, which reappears in that poem, the title of which is itself a poem, *The Lime-tree Bower my Prison.* A delightful prison for the limbs, but none for the thoughts and wishes which follow his friends to that spot now known as Wordsworth's Glen, then called "The Mare's Pool," about a quarter of a mile from Alfoxden :—

> "The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
> And only speckled by the midday sun;
> Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
> Flings arching like a bridge;"

and where within the breathing of the little waterfall the hart's-tongue ferns—

> "Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
> Of the blue slate-stone."

But presently the wanderers, as he imagines them, are on the hill-top edge, and view—

> "The many-steepled tract magnificent
> Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
> With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
> The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two isles
> Of purple shadow!"

Assuredly the writer of these lines, who was a traveller at times through cloudland, and who could create from his imagination such visions as those of *Kubla Khan*, had also his foot on English grass and heather, and writing, to use Wordsworth's phrase, with his eye upon the object, was able to add a page of rare fidelity to the descriptive poetry of our country.

Old Parkinson, in recounting the virtues of the hart's-tongue fern, tells us that divers commend the distilled water thereof to be taken against the passions of the heart; but the ferns of Wordsworth's Glen—and the fact has not been noticed—exerted a malign influence over Coleridge. My readers will remember the unhappy "Drip, drip, drip, drip," in the cavern scene of *Osorio*, and the sorry jest of Sheridan, to whom Coleridge had sent his manuscript—"In short," said he, "it was all dripping:"

> "A jutting clay-stone
> Drips on the long lank weed that grows beneath:
> And the weed nods and drips."

The cavern in which Osorio murders Ferdinand is in Granada, among the Alpujarras; but we have only to glance at *The Lime-tree Bower my Prison*, to make sure that the ferns are those of Somerset, for here too we find "the dark green file of long lank weeds" that "nod and drip beneath the dripping edge of the blue clay-stone." Dioscorides, who saith that the hart's-tongue water is a preservative against the stings of serpents, as regards this instance at least did vainly teach.

The character of the Quantock landscape is interpreted in Coleridge's poetry, but what of the inhabitants of the district—cottagers of Stowey, toilers in the fields and shepherds of the hills? Where are they? Nowhere in any of his poems. He lived with his own thoughts and fancies in dell or on upland, his affections twined themselves around the beloved inmates of his cottage and certain cherished friends; he was deeply interested in great national questions of the day, but neither now nor at any other time did he exercise his imagination with the joys and sorrows of the humble men and women among whom his lot was cast. We must turn to Wordsworth's poems of this period if we would find any imaginative record of the life of the inhabitants of the district; it is there we read of the Holford peasant mourning for the last of his dwindled flock, of the wronged and distracted mother bearing her infant on her breast, of the old huntsman Simon Lee and his pathetic gratitude, of Martha Ray and the mysterious hillock of moss beside the solitary thorn-tree, of the idiot boy and his moonlight adventures.

Coleridge's domestic life was not fortunate or wisely managed, but at Clevedon, for some time after his early marriage, he was as happy as a lover. Every one who knows his early verse remembers the frequent references to the beloved Sara, which are provoking in their lack of real characterisation. With the most exquisite feeling for womanhood in its general features, he seems to have been incapable of drawing strongly the features of any individual woman. His nearest approach to the creation of a heroine is perhaps in his Illyrian queen, Zapolya. Even Christabel is a figure somewhat too faintly drawn, a figure expressing indeed the beauty, innocence, and gentleness of maidenhood, but without any of the traits of a distinctive personality. All his other imaginings of women are exquisite abstractions, framed of purely feminine elements, but representing Woman rather than being themselves veritable women. His comment on Pope's line, "Most women have no characters at all," is an unconscious apology for his own practice. Shakespeare, he says, who knew man and woman much better than Pope, saw that it was the perfection of woman to be characterless. This, which is conspicuously untrue of the creator of the two Portias, Rosalind, Viola, Isabel, Hermione, Juliet, Imogen, is absolutely true of Coleridge himself, and of what he saw or thought he saw in woman. He can no more paint a variety of female portraits than can Stothard. The delicacy of design and occasionally the exquisite execution almost, but not quite, prevent us from feeling a certain monotony in Stothard's charming pictures of maidenhood, in which no line is ever in-

troduced which is not purely feminine, but in which also a type is presented rather than a person; and so it is with the poet who has justly praised the art of Stothard. We can collect no portrait of Sara Coleridge from her husband's verse, but we get a delightful picture of the happiness of early wedded life from such a poem as that which describes husband and wife seated together in the twilight beside their jasmine-covered cottage at Clevedon, while they watch the darkening clouds and the evening star as it shines forth :—

> "How exquisite the scents
> Snatch'd from yon bean-field! and the world so hush'd!
> The stilly murmur of the distant sea
> Tells us of silence."

We seem to know the baby Hartley through his father's poetry better than we know his "pensive Sara." Coleridge indeed has said nothing of his son in verse so admirable as what he said in a letter which describes Hartley as "a strange, strange boy, exquisitely wild, an utter visionary, like the moon among thin clouds he moves in a circle of his own making. He alone is a light of his own. Of all human beings I never saw one so utterly naked of self." Nor has he written of Hartley in verse anything so happy in characterisation or so pathetic in its power of prophecy as Wordsworth's lines addressed to the fairy-like boy at the age of six. But his father has recorded in a sonnet his hopes and fears while hastening to his wife from a distance on hearing of the infant's birth; and in another well-known sonnet has told of the momentary

sadness that seized him when he first gazed into the face of his child, a sadness that passed away in the rapture of a father's and a husband's love. Nor will any reader of Coleridge forget his midnight companionship with the cradled and sleeping infant as related in *Frost at Midnight*, all tenderest paternal hopes and wishes hovering over the cot and mingling with the gentle breathings of the sleeper. We are told that the pensive Sara had a just ground of complaint against Samuel for the late hours that he kept, the Bard pacing up and down the room composing poetry when he and she ought to be sleeping the sleep of the just.[1] Wordsworth looking back upon his past life thought with remorse of the many occasions on which in consequence of yielding to his immoderate passion for walking, he had kept the family dinner waiting. But as we can forgive Wordsworth his domestic crime for the sake of a *Leech Gatherer* or a *Michael*, so *Frost at Midnight* may atone for many a darkling reverie of Coleridge in that Stowey cottage where solitude and silence were not always to be had in the workaday hours. In another of the Nether Stowey poems, while Coleridge recalls the "skirmish and capricious passagings" of the nightingales, his fatherly thoughts turn to his boy, just now beginning to "mar all things with his imitative lisp," and he imagines how the little one would hearken to the nightingale's song with baby hand held up:

> "And I deem it wise
> To make him Nature's playmate. He knows well

[1] Mrs Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends," i. 239.

> The evening star ; and once, when he awoke
> In most distressful mood (some inward pain
> Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream !)
> I hurried with him to our orchard-plot,
> And he beheld the moon, and, hush'd at once,
> Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently,
> While his fair eyes, that swam with undropped tears,
> Did glitter in the yellow moon-beam ! "

" Well," adds the poet apologetically, " it is a father's tale." Let us not mar the tale by cynical conjecture as to how the mother, his serious Sara, may have regarded this mode of treating an infant's " inward pain." Let us rather think of what Rossetti dwells on, the human love in Coleridge's poetry, and think also of the pathos of these paternal cares and fears and hopes when viewed in connection with Hartley's gentle yet not blameless future life.

Although in his poetry Coleridge never deals, as Wordsworth does, with the characters and lives of the men and women among whom he dwelt, his verse no less than his prose informs us how deeply moved he was by the general concerns of the nation and by the public events of his time. His earliest volume of poems had given utterance, sometimes in turbid rhetoric, to his democratic ardour and that desire to simplify life which was one of the better characteristics of the revolutionary temper. The young ass which he hails as " Brother " (with all the emphasis of capital letters), if transported to the dell of peace and mild equality on the banks of the Susquehanna, would frisk as gleesome as a kitten, and his Bray of Joy would be more musically sweet to his poet than warbled melodies—

"That soothe to rest
The tumult of some Scoundrel Monarch's breast!"[1]

Earl Stanhope, the "Friend of the Human Race," is great and glorious because he has redeemed himself from "that leprous stain Nobility," and refuses to sit with the rest complotting against Gallic Liberty—

"Who from the Almighty's bosom leapt
With whirlwind arm, fierce Minister of Love."

The sainted form of Freedom mourns over the errors of Burke (styled elsewhere by Coleridge the Hercules Furens of politics) whose crime it was, not indeed to be corrupted by the bribes of tyranny, but to be bewildered by the disturbance of his own nobler faculties, by "stormy pity" and "proud precipitance of soul." The name of Iscariot, a convenient term of reproach then as now, is reserved for the statesman whose name was formed by letters four, him who kissed his country with the apostate's lips—

"Staining most foul a godlike father's name."

Yet his abhorrence of Pitt's policy could not wholly alienate Coleridge's affections from the land of his birth. The declaration of war against France put a strain upon his loyalty, and he felt as Tom Poole and many other excellent men felt, that he could not wish for success in arms to the Powers leagued against what seemed to be the hope of the whole human race. But even when he opposed or stood aloof from the action of the English nation, he did this, as he believed, out of a care for the highest interests of the country. In the ode which

[1] Altered in the edition of 1797 to "The aching of pale Fashion's vacant breast."

apostrophises Albion as "doomed to fall, enslaved and vile" (to be significantly altered in a later text to "not yet enslaved, not wholly vile"), occurs that exquisite address to his sea-encircled native land—the Somerset landscape appearing once again, but now in the ideal light of imaginative vision—of which the last lines haunt the memories of all lovers of poetry who are lovers of England, almost with the charm of some of Shakespeare's patriotic words :—

> "And Ocean mid his uproar wild
> Speaks safety to his island-child."

In the *Fears in Solitude*, while Coleridge still declaims against the sins of England, and protests against the mad idolatry of national wrong-doing, which in claiming the appellation of patriotism insults that great name, he yet utters himself before the close with all the filial loyalty of a true son of England, and he declares in a noble strain of eloquence how the foundations of his patriotism have been laid in the domestic affections, in friendship, in the strength of natural love, in the spiritual influences derived from the beauty of external nature, and in whatever other ground there may be for joys and hopes that ennoble the heart.

> "There lives nor form nor feeling in my Soul
> Unborrow'd from my country! O divine
> And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
> And most magnificent temple, in the which
> I walk with awe."

Such patriotism as this can only be uprooted together with the very foundations of our moral being.

Now in these two things—first, his alienation from

the policy of England and attachment to principles of broader import than the traditional; and secondly, his loyalty to England founded on deep and abiding affections—lay much of Coleridge's future way of thinking and feeling. He broke with tradition in the vulgar sense of the word; he broke with tradition in theology, philosophy, politics; yet he did so in a spirit more truly loyal to the past than was the common orthodoxy in theology or philosophy, or the common Toryism in politics. One of the chief moral and intellectual effects of the French Revolution was that it threw ardent young minds abroad upon a search for first principles. "In tranquil moods and peaceable times," Coleridge writes, "we are quite practical. Facts only and cool common sense are then in fashion. But let the winds of passion swell, and straightway men begin to generalise; to connect by remotest analogies; to express the most universal positions of reason in the most glowing figures of fancy; in short, to feel particular truths and mere facts as poor, cold, narrow, and incommensurate with their feelings."[1] The passion for truth-seeking and the desire to find rest in primary principles were, through all his changes of opinion, characteristic of Coleridge from first to last, and if these had not their origin in, they derived a confirming impulse from, his early revolutionary excitement. As a critic of literature he lights up the subjects of which he treats, because he is not willing to pronounce dogmatic judgments as if from a magisterial chair, but rather seeks after and finds the inner springs of life in each work of art, and so

[1] Coleridge's "Lay Sermons," p. 16, third edition.

puts us on the track which the artist followed in the act of creation. As a thinker on politics he begins by comparing the several systems of political justice and tracing the origin of government to what he holds to be its true foundation in expediency and prudence. When he would write of the National Church he must first ascertain the "idea" of the Church as the clerisy of the nation, comprehending not the ministers of religion alone, but also the learned of all denominations. His writings on theology have been pointed to as aiding at once the development of the High-Church school of thought and the rationalistic movement; for in fact he could not think on behalf of a mere party. "Even with regard to Christianity itself," he says, "like certain plants, I creep towards the light, even though it draw me away from the more nourishing warmth. Yea, I should do so, even if the light had made its way through a rent in the wall of the Temple." If anything imparts unity to his married life, now soaring high or diving deep, now trailing in the dust with broken wing, it is this, that alike in the glory of his youth and the dawn of his genius, in the infirmity and conscious self-degradation of his manhood, and amid the lassitude and languor of his latest days, he was always one who loved the light and grew towards it.

But he grew towards the light with his affections as well as with his intellect. A movement merely critical and destructive could not satisfy his spirit. Even in his most ardent revolutionary days he expected his Utopia not from the downfall of thrones and churches, but from a reformation of life, a reformation for which in its com-

mencement he supposed a little group of chosen individuals, placed under advantageous circumstances in the New World, was competent, a reformation social and religious, which should not rend but draw closer all the bonds of natural love. The Pantisocratic scheme was religious, founded on the worship of God; it was also founded on the fidelity of wedded love and the idea of the family. It abolished private property in the little community, but in every country where property prevails, property, Coleridge held, must be the grand basis of the government. "To the intense interest and impassioned zeal," wrote Coleridge in later life, "which called forth and strained every faculty of my intellect for the organisation and defence of this scheme, I owe much of whatever I at present possess, my clearest insight into the nature of individual man, and my most comprehensive views of his social relations." For young men whom the excitement connected with the French Revolution had interested deeply in the first principles of social order there was a philosophy ready-made, immense in its pretensions, seeming at a first view most elevated in its moral purpose, and apparently as precise and well-assured as the demonstrations of geometry. It was that which afterwards spell-bound the intellect of Shelley, and which is largely responsible for the errors of his life—the philosophy set out in full in the volumes of Godwin's "Political Justice." It spoke much of reason and universal benevolence, while cutting at the roots of all the humbler natural affections. Even patriotism was for it a prejudice; the ties of kindred, of gratitude, of wedded union, were the shackles of the slave. Coleridge

was already prepared to accept some of Godwin's opinions, for his honoured teacher Hartley had convinced him of the truth of the doctrine of necessity, a corner stone of Godwin's philosophy. Like Godwin, he had dreamed of the perfectibility of man and the omnipotence of truth. Like Godwin, he was filled with ardent hopes for society, hopes inspired by the sudden uprising of the spirit of liberty in France. Yet in the addresses which he delivered in Bristol in February 1795, when he was little more than twenty-two years of age, he bids his hearers beware of "that proud philosophy which affects to inculcate philanthropy while it denounces every home-born feeling by which it is produced and nurtured." And a year later, replying to a certain Caius Gracchus, who had rebuked *The Watchman* in the pages of the *Bristol Gazette*, Coleridge writes: "I do consider Mr Godwin's principles as vicious, and his book as a pandar to sensuality. Once I thought otherwise; nay, even addressed a complimentary sonnet to the author in the *Morning Chronicle*, of which I confess, with much moral and poetical contrition, that the lines and the subject were equally bad."[1] In *The Friend*, no passages, perhaps, are more valuable than those in which the writer analyses the essential character of Jacobinism in politics, a system which denies all rightful origin to government, except so far as it is derivable from principles contained in the reason of man, and at the same time denies all truth and distinct meaning to the words

[1] It was probably while his mind was at work on the Bristol addresses that his opinion of Godwin underwent a change, for the sonnet appeared in January 1795, the addresses were delivered in February.

right and duty, by affirming that the human mind consists of nothing but manifold modifications of passive sensation. Coleridge could with truth declare that at no period of his life had he been a convert to the Jacobinical system.

In the spring of 1798 appeared in *The Morning Post* the noble poem in which Coleridge renounces his sympathy with revolutionary France, known to us now as *France, an Ode*, but which originally was entitled *The Recantation.* This ode, which Shelley thought the finest in the English language, is remarkable not only as an expression of its author's political feeling, but on account of the logic of passion and imagination with which the theme is evolved. In Coleridge's first volume of verse he had styled a considerable number of the pieces "Effusions," in defiance of Churchill's line—

"Effusion on effusion pour away."

These so-called effusions include even a number of sonnets, for he felt that his poems in that form seldom possessed the unity of thought which is indispensable in a true sonnet. Before the second edition appeared Charles Lamb implored him for heaven's sake to call them sonnets and not effusions, and from that edition the word of offence is banished. But it really served to describe not unaptly some of Coleridge's early pieces in blank verse, written apparently without that previous conception of the whole and that strict evolution which we should expect in a work of art. The poet, in these effusions, places himself in some environment of beauty, submits his mind to the suggestions of the time and place, falls as it were of free will into a reverie, in

which the thoughts and images meander stream-like at their own pleasure, or rather as if the power of volition were suspended and the current must needs follow the line of least resistance; then, as if by good luck, comes the culmination or some soft subsidence, and the poem ceases. In the earlier odes—that on the *Departing Year* and the *Monody on the Death of Chatterton*—there is indeed an evolution, but it proceeds sometimes by those fits and starts which were supposed to prove in writers of the ode a kind of Pindaric excitement. The poet is less of the artist here than the enthusiast. "Enthusiast"—it was a name rejected by the youthful Coleridge as a thinker on politics and applied by him as a term of reproach to the disciples of Godwin, but it describes well enough his conception of the poet. And it clearly enough marks the distance that had been traversed from the Restoration days, when a poet desired before all else to be a "wit," and from the age of Anne, when the poet was both a "wit," and a "man of sense." When Coleridge pictures the youthful Chatterton roaming the woods near the Severn with wild unequal steps,

> "In Inspiration's eager hour,
> When most the big soul feels the maddening power,"

he conceives him not as the artist or the wit but as the enthusiast, and this is the conception generally present in Coleridge's earlier verse. The sequences of thought and feeling in these earlier poems are often either of the meditative-meandering or the spasmodic-passionate kind. Now, however, in his *France* he produced a poem strongly concatenated in thought and emotion,

and from the first line to the last faultless in its evolution. Here freedom in artistic handling is at one with obedience to artistic law. Mr Theodore Watts, in his article on Poetry in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," has called attention to what he describes as its fluidity of metrical movement. "The more billowy the metrical waves," he says, "the better suited they are to render the emotions expressed by the ode;" and he points out how in the opening stanza of the *France* the first metrical wave, after it has gently fallen at the end of the first quatrain, "leaps up again on the double rhymes and goes bounding on, billow after billow, to the end of the stanza." The mastery of a prolonged period in lyrical poetry is rare even with great writers; we find it in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*; we find it in Coleridge's *France*; and the sense of power which accompanies it lifts these poems into quite another class than that which includes the tesselated odes of Gray. The idea of liberty presented in Coleridge's *France* is one which he sorrowfully admits cannot be found in any human society, which indeed cannot possibly be realised under any form of human government. Yet it is true, he maintains, for the individual man so far as he is pure and inflamed with the love and adoration of God in nature. The close of the poem in its recoil from society to the individual soul resembles the close of his earlier ode on the *Departing Year*. It seems not improbable that when Shelley wrote his great *Ode to Liberty*, a song inspired by the highest hopes for society, he had before his mind Coleridge's words of despair, for freedom as conceived by Shelley—and it

is freedom for a people, not merely for an individual, of which he sings—comes not alone but accompanied by justice and love and wisdom, the memory of what has been and the hope for what will be.

The ode *France* is dated February 1798. The spring and early summer of that year were a season of radiant beauty. Coleridge had been relieved from anxiety about his worldly ways and means by the generosity of the Wedgwoods. Young Hazlitt eagerly accepted his invitation to Nether Stowey, and on the afternoon of his arrival Coleridge took him over to Alfoxden. Wordsworth was not at home, but his sister Dorothy received Coleridge and his friend for the night, and gave them free access to her brother's manuscripts.[1] Next morning, seated on the trunk of an old ash-tree in Alfoxden Park, Coleridge read aloud in his musical voice some of Wordsworth's Somerset poems, and on his walk homewards he lamented, says Hazlitt, that his fellow poet was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that in some of his poems there was a something corporeal, *a matter-of-factness*, a clinging to the palpable. Hazlitt remained three weeks at Nether Stowey, often spending his afternoons in discourse with Coleridge in the arbour of bark built by Tom Poole; and before they parted he accompanied Coleridge on an excursion

[1] Some readers of Coleridge's words describing Dorothy—"In every motion her innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw her would say, 'Guilt was a thing impossible with her'"—may have been puzzled by the last words. He is here quoting from his own description of Teresa in *Remorse*, and this passage seems to prove that the first scene of *Remorse*, which does not appear in *Osorio*, must nevertheless have been written in 1797.

to Lynton and the Valley of Rocks. A like excursion to the north coast of Devon had been made in the late autumn by Coleridge in company with Wordsworth and his sister, which earlier visit to Lynton is connected with a memorable event in the history of English poetry.

It was on a November afternoon of 1797 that this earlier tramp began.[1] "The evening dark and cloudy," writes Miss Wordsworth; "we went eight miles, William and Coleridge employing themselves in laying the plan of a ballad, to be published with some pieces of William's." This ballad was the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, with which originated the conjoint volume published in the autumn of the following year. Two classes of poems, it will be remembered, were to appear in this volume of "Lyrical Ballads," "in the one the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural, and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. . . For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life," and these were to be interpreted and illuminated by a meditative and feeling mind, and by the light of imagination. Such is Coleridge's well-known account of the origin of the "Lyrical Ballads;" and it indicates exactly wherein lies the importance of the publication of that little volume

[1] In Wordsworth's Fenwick note to *We are Seven*, as printed by Professor Knight and elsewhere, the tour is dated "in the spring of the year 1798." In the "Memoirs of Wordsworth," by Christopher Wordsworth, vol. i. p. 107, the same note is printed, and the words are "in the autumn of 1797." There seems to be no doubt that the tour actually took place in November 1797.

in the history of our literature. A few words will serve to make this clear.

In the literature of the time there were two powerful tendencies, each of which was liable to excess when it operated alone, each of which needed to work in harmony with the other, and to take something into itself from the other. A little before the death of Johnson English poetry had almost reached the lowest ebb. It has often been said that its revival was due to the excitement and enthusiasm caused by the Revolution in France; but this is certainly untrue. In 1785 appeared Cowper's poem, *The Task*. Two years previously the most remarkable of Crabbe's earlier group of poems, *The Village*, had been published. In 1786 the Kilmarnock edition of the poems of Burns was issued. Thus our poetry had sprung into sudden and splendid life before that memorable year the centenary of which has recently been celebrated in Paris. And by what means did English poetry renew its life and regain its vigour? By a return to nature. Burns sang direct out of his own warm heart and out of the joys and sorrows of his fellows. The daisy in the furrow, the mouse in the stubble-field, the dying ewe in the ditch, the rustic patriarch among his children and servants, the humours of Scotch drink, the humours of Scotch ecclesiastical parties, and the passions of his own wayward heart supplied him with the themes of his song. Cowper turned from the wire-drawn abstractions in verse which had done duty as poetry and looked around him in his walks about Olney, or filled his senses and spirit with the domestic pleasures of Mary Unwin's home, and uttered

in verse the feelings aroused in him by his garden, his walk in the crisp December morning, his evening fireside, his newspaper and easy chair. And Crabbe resolved to set down for once the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the life of the peasant or the rough fisher on our eastern coasts. He was sick of the ideality of Sweet Auburns and of Corydons complaining of their amorous pains, "the only pains, alas, they never feel." He aimed at being what in our present critical phraseology we term a realist or naturalist.

> "I praise the cot,
> As truth will paint it and as bards will not."

He was unable to select from a crowd of details, for everything should be recorded. But with this tendency there coexisted another which was also strong. It was the tendency towards romance, which gave their popularity to the *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, which appears in the modern-antiques of Chatterton, and in connection with a sentiment supposed to be that of primitive poetry in Macpherson's *Ossian*. The Gothic revival which in our own century became learned and antiquarian was then sentimental and imaginative. As Crabbe may serve to represent the extreme of naturalism in art, so "Monk" Lewis may serve to represent the other extreme, the extravagance of the romantic tendency. His *Castle Spectre*, a play brimful of supernatural horrors, was produced in the year in which Coleridge and Wordsworth met at Nether Stowey, and it had a run of sixty nights. The "Tales of Wonder" were published three years after the "Lyrical Ballads." In "The Monk," published in 1796, Ambrosio, tempted by an

evil spirit, and guilty of monstrous crimes, is tried and tortured by the Inquisition, and is at length dashed headlong from an airy height by Lucifer. Raymond is haunted at night by the spectre of the bleeding nun: "She lifted up her veil slowly. What a sight presented itself to my startled eyes! I beheld before me an animated corse." The gross marvel and mystery amassed in "The Monk" would suffice for a library of our modern tales of horror.

Here then were two movements in our literature, each operating apart from the other and each prone to excess—naturalism, tending to a hard, dry, literal manner, unilluminated by the light of imagination; romance, tending to become a coarse revel in material horrors. English poetry needed first that romance should be saved and ennobled by the presence and the power of truth, and, secondly, that naturalism, without losing any of its fidelity to fact, should be saved and ennobled by the presence and the power of imagination. And this was precisely what Coleridge and Wordsworth contributed to English poetry in their joint volume of "Lyrical Ballads," which in consequence may justly be described as marking if not making an epoch in the history of our literature.

Relying largely, as he did in his poems which deal with the supernatural, on the effect produced by their psychological truth, Coleridge could afford to subdue the supernatural, and refine it to the utmost. His regard for truth even in the description of minute physical phenomena, though in the midst of a world of wonders, is illustrated by the alteration of the line in the *Ancient*

Mariner, "The furrow followed free" to "The furrow streamed off free," because when on board a ship he perceived that as seen from the deck, though not from the shore, the wake appears like a brook flowing off from the stern. More important than truth physical he felt truth psychological to be. And attaining this, he did not need, as Monk Lewis did, to drag into his verse all the horrors of the churchyard and the nether pit of Hell. None of us can tell what was that sight of shame or anguish revealed to Christabel when the Lady Geraldine unbound her girdle and dropped the robe to her feet. We can imagine how exact in his description of the dreadful object Lewis would have been. And it seems certain that in the manuscript a line existed in this passage of *Christabel* which never was permitted to appear in the published text:—

> "Behold her bosom and half her side,
> Hideous, deformed, and pale of hue,
> A sight to dream of, not to tell."

The words "hideous, deformed, and pale of hue" are known to us through a quotation made from memory in the pages of Hunt's *Examiner*, and Coleridge preferred to leave a line without its rhyme rather than retain words which define a horror better shadowed in mystery. Again, in the *Ancient Mariner* where the spectre-bark approaches the doomed ship, and the forms of Death and Life-in-Death are visible playing at dice for the mariner and his companions, a verse full of charnel abominations occurs in the original text which was afterwards judiciously omitted. Coleridge felt that these hideous incidents of the grave only detracted

from the finer horror of the voluptuous beauty of his White Devil, the night-mare Life-in-Death :—

> "Her lips were red, her looks were free,
> Her locks were yellow as gold,
> Her skin was as white as leprosy."

She it was, this Life-in-Death, who with her numbing spell haunted Coleridge himself in after days.

It is remarkable that a poem which impresses us so much as an imaginative unity, the work of one who had a genius for the finer kind of supernatural invention, should in great part have been a compilation from several brains and books. Young Cruikshank, a neighbour of Coleridge at Nether Stowey, had dreamed of a skeleton ship worked by a skeleton crew, and this was the starting-point of the whole. It has been suggested that the blessed spirits who bring the ship to harbour came from one of the epistles of St Paulinus of Nola, the friend of St Ambrose. The crime of the Old Navigator (as Coleridge loved to call him) was Wordsworth's suggestion derived from Shelvocke's "Voyage round the World." Shelvocke describes the insupportable cold of the South Atlantic Ocean, and the perpetual squalls of sleet and snow. They had not seen since they passed the straits of Le Maire a single living creature save one disconsolate black albatross, which accompanied them for several days, as if it had lost itself, till the second captain in one of his melancholy fits shot the bird, imagining from its colour that it was of evil omen, and not doubting that they would have a fair wind if it were destroyed. Wordsworth can hardly have omitted to mention the ominous colour

of the albatross, but in Coleridge's poem it becomes the friend and companion of the mariners, and we must imagine it a white-plumed majestic creature. The device of animating the bodies of the dead crew with a troop of seraphs, whether the suggestion is due to St Paulinus or to Wordsworth, is so conceived and executed as to illustrate admirably Coleridge's power of evoking beauty out of horror. Nor are his strange creatures of the sea those hideous worms which a vulgar dealer in the supernatural might have invented. Seen in a great calm by the light of the moon these creatures of God are beautiful in the joy of their life :—

> "Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
> They coil'd and swam ; and every track
> Was a flash of golden fire."

And it is through a sudden welling-forth of sympathy with their happiness, and a sudden sense of their beauty, that the spell which binds the afflicted mariner is snapped. That one self-centred in crude egoism should be purified and converted through a new sympathy with suffering and sorrow is a common piece of morality ; this purification through sympathy with joy is a piece of finer and higher doctrine.

Mrs Barbauld once told Coleridge that she admired the *Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it—it was improbable and it had no moral. As for the probability, said Coleridge (and the good Mrs Barbauld might perhaps have observed a twinkle in the noticeable man's large grey eyes), that might admit some question ; but as to the want of moral, he told her that

in his judgment the poem had too much; the only or chief fault, if he might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. The mariner is punished for shooting an albatross; the curse passes away when he blesses the watersnakes. Coleridge might have called his critic's attention to the fact that the professed moral is serviceable at least as an artistic device. The beautiful stanza beginning,

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small,"

sets forth this professed moral. Its real effect is admirably described by Mrs Oliphant, when she says that the soothing words "bring our feet back to the common soil with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet" after the imaginative strain with which we follow the tale of the voyage through strange seas. If any reader require a moral he can find it elsewhere; he can find it in that passage which tells how a sense of the incomparable beauty and the rapturous life of the world quickens and redeems the withered soul of the mariner. "How do you know," asks William Blake, "but every bird that cuts the airy way is an immense world of delight closed by your senses five?" It is the opening of our senses and our hearts to the miracle of beauty and of life everywhere surrounding us that (if we must have a moral) is the highest spiritual effect wrought by the poem.

We shall not dispute with the excellent Mrs Barbauld as to the improbability of the narrative. Have we not submitted to the spell of the mariner's eye, which

compels us to listen like a child and suspends our incredulity? The bride, red as a rose, and the nodding minstrelsy pass before us, but the gaiety of the village festival makes us only the more sensible of the solitude of the narrator "alone on the wide, wide sea," and of that subsequent solitude, and yet at the same time need of sympathy, created in him by an intense and unique experience, which even here and now isolates him, yet mysteriously connects him with his fellows. The majesty and beauty with which some of the old and common facts of nature are described, as only an eye-witness could describe them, vouch for the truth of the stranger incidents. In regions far from the stir of human life there is yet a constant action going on, and the actors are not alone the Polar Spirit and the spectres of the skeleton hulk, and the troop of blessed angels, but the sea and the sun and the moon and the stars of heaven. How majestically the sunrise at sea is expressed:—

> "Nor dim nor red, like God's own head
> The glorious sun uprist."

It is like the solemn apparition of one of the chief actors in this strange drama of crime, and agony, and expiation, and in the new sense of wonder with which we witness that oldest spectacle of the heavens we can well believe in other miracles. How exquisite is the description of the journeying moon, what magic in the simplest words:—

> "The moving moon went up the sky,
> And nowhere did abide;
> Softly she was going up
> With a star or two beside."

These regents of the upper air are not dead balls of matter, but living powers, and "everywhere," says Coleridge in the gloss which he added to his poem, "the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country, and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival."

In *Christabel* the human and the supernatural elements interpenetrate each other more completely and more subtly than in the *Ancient Mariner*. The presence of higher than mortal powers for evil and for good is everywhere felt, yet nowhere is it thrust forward. We can reconstruct a story almost the same in which the incidents shall proceed in accordance with the acknowledged laws of the world; we can imagine an innocent girl coming under the influence of a woman older than herself, of beautiful person and powerful intellect, but of depraved character, who shall disclose to her some bosom-sin under conditions which render indispensable for a time an inviolable secrecy; to shield the maiden from harm she shall possess, besides her own purity of heart, the pious memory of her dead mother. Thus by merely lowering the key all the action of the poem might be transposed from the supernatural to the natural. Even the malign influence of Geraldine's look askance could readily be translated into its moral significance—the fascinating power of evil over a virginal soul, the mere knowledge of vice seeming to imply a horrible community with it during, at least, one dreadful moment before the instinctive recoil from sin has

had time and force to come into operation. Coleridge's story is far other than this; but thus we may interpret the moral and psychological truth on which Coleridge's story is founded. The poem is not a piece of didactic morality, nor such a spiritual allegory as one of its critics, Mr Cotterill, has fancied; it is an imaginative romance pervaded throughout by the supernatural; and yet it is founded in spiritual truth, and, as Christopher North has said, while we read it, we are all the while in our own real and living world, and in the heart of its best and most delightful affections.

The first part of *Christabel* was written at Nether Stowey; and it is perhaps worth remarking that in Dorothy Wordsworth's diary, in which we can trace the origin of some of her brother's poems, we also find touches which are manifestly connected with this romance of her friend. In her frequent walks with Coleridge in the neighbourhood of Alfoxden observations of nature were made, and little incidents were noticed and talked of, which became a common possession for the memories and imaginations of both.

> "There is not wind enough to twirl
> The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
> That dances as often as dance it can,
> Hanging so light, and hanging so high
> On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky."

That impish leaf of the oak against which the witch lady leaned was seen near Nether Stowey on March 7, 1798. "One only leaf upon the top of a tree," writes Dorothy Wordsworth, "the sole remaining leaf, danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind."

> "The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
> It covers, but not hides the sky.
> The moon is behind, and at the full;
> And yet she looks both small and dull."

So the poem. And Dorothy Wordsworth, noticing also the apparent diminution of the moon behind a fleecy cloud: "When we left home the moon, immensely large, the sky scattered over with clouds. These soon closed in, contracting the dimensions of the moon, without concealing her." And it may be that the baron's mastiff which howls at intervals in answer to the clock was ennobled by Coleridge from "the manufacturer's dog" near Alfoxden, that "makes a strange, uncouth howl, which it continues many minutes after there is no noise near it but that of the brook. It howls at the murmur of the village stream."

Although in *Christabel* we are aware of the ghostly presence of the maiden's mother, we never see the phantom; we only know that the witch lady tries to wave her off, and that she comforts her daughter with sweet visions as she lies dreaming in the arms of her foe. But Coleridge has elsewhere created a visible ghost, a ghost which appears under the strangest circumstances, a ghost itself so strange that Coleridge may be said to have invented a new spiritual fear. It is indeed the first of the many ghosts that have appeared upon our earth, much more ancient than the old man of Endor, for it is the spirit of the first human being who left the mystery of life on our globe for the mystery of death. Here again in *The Wanderings of Cain* loveliness and terror are allied. The boy Enos, son of

the first murderer, beautiful in his innocence and encinctured with leaves for his only garments, plucks by moonlight the fruits not of the happy garden but of the wilderness. There is a majesty in the mighty limbs of Cain and in the intolerable grief which wastes his frame like fire. Behind the pair lie the cavern-like recesses of the forest; before them, the desert sands, white in the moonshine, with one rock casting its shadow on the sands. And here in the shadow of the rock lurks the piteous ghost of Abel, the shape as of a young man, apparelled in unclean garments, his skin as white as the moonlit sands, and his voice sweet but thin and querulous, "like that of a feeble slave in misery who weeps and laments." And why should not he weep, who having served during his life the God of the living has now become the sad servant of that other and strange God, the God of the dead? Moonlight—the wilderness —the solitary rock with its shadow—and these three figures of the innocent boy, the first fratricide, and this forlorn ghost with his sweet querulous voice and his dreadful secret—what a strange, and, Mrs Barbauld might add, improbable invention! Unquestionably, if we might have our choice of a ghost to haunt us, we should say give us one of those comfortable domestic larvæ who rattle chains and draw the midnight curtain, and save us from the sight of such a ghost as this lamentable youth of the moon-illumined desert and from the cadence of his sweet and plaintive voice.

The poems of the Nether Stowey period are in the main Coleridge's poems of joy; those written after his thirtieth year are, with few exceptions, poems born of

sorrow. Two visionary figures seem to mediate between the earlier and later groups, two visionary figures that are seldom absent for a long time from his verse—those of Love and Hope. But the imagery changes mournfully as the years go by. In an early poem he recalls the cloudless day of boyhood—

> "When by my native brook I wont to rove,
> While Hope with kisses nursed the Infant Love."

In a poem of his elder years he pictures the same pair, but how differently!

> "Hope keeping Love, Love Hope alive,
> Like babes bewildered in the snow,
> That cling and huddle from the cold
> In hollow tree or ruined fold."

And yet more sadly in another poem:—

> "Thee, O genial Hope,
> Love's elder sister! thee did I behold,
> Drest as a bridesmaid, but all pale and cold,
> With roseless cheek, all pale and cold and dim
> Lie lifeless at my feet,"

and when Love enters and would revive her pale sister with a kiss,

> "Alas! 'twas but a chilling breath
> Woke just enough of life in death
> To make Hope die anew."

Mr Traill, in his biography of Coleridge, speaks of the years from 1800 to 1804 as the turning-point, moral and physical, of his career. According to his own statement the habit of drinking laudanum, taken at first to sop the Cerberus of physical pain, had become fixed about 1803. But we know that the dream-poem of

Kubla Khan came into being while Coleridge was under the influence of an anodyne, and the date of its creation is the summer of 1797. As De Quincey records in succession the pleasures and the pains of opium, so Coleridge places side by side this Eastern vision of imaginative delight and *The Pains of Sleep*, in which the nightmare terrors of disease are so powerfully expressed. Both poems have in a high degree the special dream quality—a suspension of all power of volition ; but in the one the will is charmed into passivity by images of beauty, in the other it is overwhelmed and prostrated after a desperate struggle with visions of horror and of shame.

The sense that his higher powers were suffering ominous eclipse, the consciousness of duties neglected, the knowledge that friends were falling away in consequence of his inability to respond to their love, the blank of domestic happiness, even his deep regard for Sara Hutchinson, which made him more painfully aware of all that his life had missed, united to produce those moods and long seasons of depression under which he lay inactive. No one had felt more exquisitely than he the visitations of joy, as of a swift light breeze blowing from some Elysian meadow :—

> "A new joy,
> Lovely as light, sudden as summer gust,
> And gladsome as the first-born of the spring,
> Beckons me on, or follows from behind,
> Playmate, or guide !"

Now such visitations were rare indeed ; and in their place Coleridge had grown acquainted with the dull, un-

changing cloud of depression which hung upon him for long periods like a pall. All the dull misery of such a hopeless mood is exposed to view in the great ode *Dejection*. Other poems of other authors express a passion of grief, which this does not; when sorrow has us in its grip we are conscious at least of the life within us by virtue of the very pain which we endure. No other poem so truthfully renders the leaden mood of helpless and hopeless prostration, too dull to be named despair:—

> "A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,
> A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
> Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
> In word, or sigh, or tear."

Whatever comfort he was capable of in such forlorn weakness came to Coleridge through human love. The ode, addressed in its later text to a "Lady," who, we are assured by Professor Knight, was Wordsworth's sister-in-law, Sara Hutchinson, had been originally addressed to Wordsworth himself. And it is the generous thought that his friend at least had been true to the duties and the glories of his high calling as poet, that brings some lightening of the cloud of misery.

> "O William, friend of my devoutest choice,
> O raised from anxious dread and busy care
> By the immenseness of the good and fair
> Which thou seest everywhere,
> Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice."[1]

When Wordsworth and his family, escaping from Dove Cottage, Grasmere, which had grown too small

[1] In the earliest printed text "Edmund" appears instead of "William," and from later texts of the poem these lines are omitted.

for their needs, were settled through Sir George Beaumont's kindness in the farm-house at Coleorton in the winter of 1806-7, Coleridge with his son Hartley visited them. It was one of the saddest periods in Coleridge's homeless life; but among these faithful friends he received all the tender ministering of love. One evening Wordsworth read aloud for him a portion of *The Prelude* and Coleridge, roused by the ennobling excitement, composed on that night the loftiest and the most pathetic of his poems in blank verse. The lines which compare the pain of life and love awakening in his heart after its long syncope to the suffering experienced by the drowned when they begin to breathe again, must be in the memory of every reader of Coleridge. But certain lines which precede these as the poem was originally written remained for long unknown; they were for the first time printed from the manuscript by Professor Knight, and they tell much of the strength and the weakness of the writer's heart. Dear shall be the "Orphic song" to which he had listened, exclaims Coleridge:—

> "Dear shall it be to every human heart,
> To me how more than dearest! me on whom
> Comfort from thee and utterance of thy love
> Came with such heights and depths of harmony,
> Such sense of wings uplifting, that its might
> Scatter'd and quelled me, till my thoughts became
> A bodily tumult; and thy faithful hopes
> Thy hopes of me, dear friend! by me unfelt!
> Were troublous to me, almost as a voice
> Familiar once, and more than musical;
> As a dear woman's voice to one cast forth,
> A wanderer with a worn-out heart forlorn,
> 'Mid strangers pining with untended wounds."

Among the sorrows which resulted from his neglect of duties, not the least was the loss of love. "To be beloved," he says, "is all I need," and it is true that he more than men of hardier and more self-sufficing nature found repose in affection.

> "O for some dear-abiding place of Love,
> O'er which my spirit, like the mother dove,
> Might brood with warming wings."

So he writes in a poem of leave-taking, and the lines may have suggested to Rossetti the thought of his sonnet to Coleridge quoted in the opening of this article. It was not easy for Coleridge's friends to continue to love a man who met all their solicitude and tenderness with silence and seeming indifference. Yet part of his misery arose from the fact that while unable to give evidence of his affection, as he lay inactive, "deeper than ever plummet sounded," he had nevertheless a constant craving for sympathy. He was sensible that his friends, though deeply concerned on his behalf, could not give him the love that he required, and such kindness as theirs counterfeiting absent love is described by him in one of his poems as "the pang more sharp than all."

Yet to the last there were occasional beamings forth of the spirit of delight and poetry even in those elder days when his body did him grievous wrong, and when his mind, though it had recovered much of its intellectual power, had not recovered its early illumination of hope and joy. One of these out-wellings of poetry, among the latest and loveliest, is to be found in the lines which accompany the delicate engraving of the garden of Boccaccio, after Stothard, in *The Keepsake* for

1829. "The love, the joyance, and the gallantry" of the Florentine pleasance as seen in Stothard's design conquer the numbness of his dreary mood, and bring back for an hour all his lost youth, all the glory of his early manhood.

Coleridge wrote for his own epitaph those lines in which he speaks of himself as one who

> "Many a year with toilful breath
> Found death in life."

I like better to remember him in connection with that memorial poem adapted from the Italian of Chiabrera, where Coleridge names himself Satyrane the idoloclast —idoloclast, because he hated the objects of vain worship of his own day; Satyrane, because, like the sylvan protector of Spenser's Una, he had a "wild-wood fancy and impetuous zeal." In this *Tombless Epitaph* he tells of his years of weary days, and of the sickness that besieged him "even to the gates and inlets of his life." Yet he declares that he maintained the citadel unconquered, that he was "strong to follow the delightful Muse:"—

> "Not a rill
> There issues from the fount of Hippocrene
> But he had traced it upward to its source,
> Through open glade, dark glen and secret dell,
> Knew the gay wild flowers on its banks, and culled
> Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,
> Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,
> The haunt obscure of old Philosophy,
> He bade with lifted torch its starry walls
> Sparkle, as erst they sparkled to the flame
> Of odorous lamps tended by Saint and Sage.
> O framed for calmer times and nobler hearts!
> O studious Poet, eloquent for truth!

> Philosopher, contemning wealth and death,
> Yet docile, childlike, full of Life and Love."

Not merely then a "footless bird of Paradise," but "childlike, full of life and love." With this word I may fitly close.

EDMOND SCHERER.

THE death of Edmond Scherer, which took place on Saturday, March 16th, 1889, deprived French literature, not indeed of a great thinker, not perhaps even of a critic of the highest order, but of a perfectly sincere seeker for the truth in matters religious, political, and literary, and a writer whose curiosity about ideas was always liberal and serious. He has been spoken of as if he were Sainte-Beuve's successor in French criticism; but Sainte-Beuve has had no successor. It was not merely that Scherer had not, as Matthew Arnold put it, Sainte-Beuve's elasticity and cheerfulness, Sainte-Beuve's gaiety and radiancy; he lacked Sainte-Beuve's vast erudition and his mastery of literary detail. His studies are nourished with ideas, but each of them has not the air of being the work of a writer who for the time being had made himself a specialist in that particular province, and the marvel of Sainte-Beuve's *causeries* is this—that he handles a thousand topics and shows himself to be a specialist, almost infallible in his accuracy, with reference to each. Scherer, says Matthew Arnold, had the same open-mindedness as Sainte-Beuve. Yes, open-minded to ideas he was, and his training as a student of philosophy gave him access to certain regions of thought which Sainte-Beuve hardly ventured to approach.

But he had not in the same degree as Sainte-Beuve that open-heartedness to all varieties of literary pleasures, which is the indispensable condition of a generous equity in literary judgment.

He had indeed as a critic more in common with Matthew Arnold than with Sainte-Beuve. But behind the critic in Matthew Arnold lay the poet, and though M. Colani has assured us that there was the material for a poet in Scherer, this poet hardly once comes forward even to peer wistfully through the prison-bars of abstract ideas. Nor had he Matthew Arnold's gift of light irony, Matthew Arnold's happy malice of the pen, nor his fortunate or unfortunate knack of inventing catch-words, which served to give currency to his ideas. He resembled Arnold in the moral rigour, which was something deeper in each than literary culture—a moral rigour derived, in the one instance, from the impress of the noble character of the master of Rugby, in the other—that of a Parisian by birth—from the influences of Protestant Geneva. He resembled Arnold also in the fact that his intellectual life was felt by him to be that of a wanderer between two worlds,

> "One dead,
> The other powerless to be born."

He tried to think for himself, and to some extent succeeded; but he sadly yet resignedly acknowledges that most of his thinking was done for him by the spirit of the age; that he could not resist the strong pressure of the time; that he found himself compelled in honesty to walk in ways of thought difficult and dangerous,

ways which in the end might open upon some destructive precipice.

The volume entitled "Mélanges d'Histoire Religieuse" (1864) marks the season of transition from his earlier period — that of the Professor of Exegesis at the Genevan École Évangélique, to his later period, that of the critic of a Parisian journal. He had ceased by this time to hope for the attainment of any absolute truth by means either of theology or philosophy. The thinker who chases absolute truth, he says, is a man who would leap away from his own shadow. The discovery of the relative character of truths is, he declares, the capital fact in the history of contemporary thought. Hegelianism had had its day; it was the conjuror's goblet, under which the conjuror finds what he himself has put there, and nothing more. The authority of the Churches and of the Bible had crumbled away under the disintegrating touch of criticism. "I have occupied myself for long," he writes in his introduction, "with these subjects [religious history and philosophy]; I have taken an active part in the discussions which so deeply interest the public of our day; I have known in turn the sweet and bitter fruits of knowledge, the charm of enfranchisement, and the sadness which great ruins inspire. I am far from believing that I have either opened or closed the cycle of those researches to which I have devoted myself, but it seems to me that I have almost finished the task which has fallen to me. . . . What strikes me most in reviewing the way which I have traversed, is to see how the general movement

overmasters the individual initiative. What is our personal thought, our personal effort in comparison with that secret logic which proposes problems, each in its turn, and resolves them with a sovereign authority?" Belief in moral freedom, belief in the duality of soul and body, these also, he admits, must be regarded as of no more than relative significance, beliefs deep-seated in the heart of humanity, yet which express only the individual point of view. Because we make admissions such as these, are we, he asks, to be denounced as sceptics? The sceptic, indeed, has a right to exist as well as the dogmatist. But the real sceptic here is he who is indifferent to the truth, or he who, not regarding the truth in all seriousness, makes no strict demand for evidence. "I am resigned beforehand," writes Scherer, "to every truth, and to every consequence of every truth. Is this the attitude of the sceptic? The genuine sceptic is the partisan, he whose resting-place is already found as to every question, he who has taken up a position once for all, and who no longer dreams of defending it; the man who looks to the social, moral, or religious utility of ideas rather than to their conformity with facts. Let us be assured that what has least of seriousness in our frivolous society, what is least healthy and least sincere, is precisely that dogmatism which claims for itself so readily the monopoly of sincerity and seriousness."

Let us turn from Scherer the student of religion and philosophy to Scherer the critic of literature. Here too he is characterised by those moral qualities which ally themselves with qualities purely intellectual; the

conscience of the intellect is ever awake within him; seriousness and sincerity are still the notes of his work. It was because he believed that these qualities were present in the critical work of Matthew Arnold that Scherer was in a peculiar degree drawn and attached to it. In his third volume of "Études" he had contrasted the prose written in France with that of German and English authors, and had enjoyed a national satisfaction which was not in this instance national vanity. In England, he says, we seek in vain for a school of accomplished prose writers such as those who form the glory of French letters: "On n'y écrit pas excellemment." At this moment (1865) he adds, there is not across the Channel a single author whom we can read for the pleasure of style and "la joie du goût." At a later date he discovered at least one such author, and I shall not wrong Scherer's French by attempting to translate into a medium which he held inferior the passage in which he points out the special excellence of Matthew Arnold's writing as contrasted with that of Carlyle and Ruskin. "M. Arnold est un charmant écrivain. Il a la clarté limpide et la bonne grâce. On ne le prend jamais en flagrant délit d'attitude prise, de tour ambitieux. C'est un repos d'ouvrir ses livres lorsqu'on vient de lire ceux des grands maniéristes dont s'enorgueillit si à tort la littérature de nos voisins: Carlyle au jargon conscient, voulu, calculé; Ruskin et ses affectations de profondeur, sa laborieuse recherche d'expression, toutes ses poses étudiées d'un charlatanisme qu'on regrette de voir allié parfois à un mérite réel, et qui

constituent un péché contre le vrai sérieux et le grand goût."[1] Matthew Arnold, says Scherer elsewhere, had probably as many ideas in his head as Carlyle, and as much poetry in his soul as Ruskin, but he did not on that account consider himself obliged to speak like a mystagogue. Perhaps, preoccupied with ideas, as he so often was, Scherer, in writing these sentences, did not perceive that Carlyle often employed language for other purposes than the expression of thought, and that such admirable epic or dramatic effects as those which he produces in many pages of his "French Revolution" could have been produced by no other means than those actually employed. At another moment Scherer expressed his opinion that Carlyle was an artist more than a prophet, and that his grand and oracular manner, his passions, his tempests of pity or objurgation, form part of his manner as a painter. Non, perhaps, did the French critic perceive that dainty kind of affectation in which Matthew Arnold sometimes indulged, the affectation of affectation, followed by a bright smile at his own assumed airs. Still less can he have perceived Arnold's gravest failing—the want of seriousness which is implied in undertaking critical work for which he was in no way adequately prepared. It needed a touch of levity or of rare self-confidence to enable one to attempt the criticism of the Hebrew writings with so slender an equipment of scholarship as that of the author of "Literature and Dogma."

Scherer is serious and sincere, but his criticism has some deficiency of warmth and colour. It makes us

[1] "Etudes," vii. 5.

think, says M. Bérard-Varagnac, of a Protestant meeting-house—" elle a gardé je ne sais quel accent et quel arrière-goût genevois." M. Colani, himself a theologian and a minister of religion, who saw much of Scherer at Geneva, speaks of that separation of the *idea* from the *image*, which long years of philosophic study inevitably bring with them. " We may be engravers," he writes, applying his words to Scherer as well as to himself, " but we shall never be colourists. Unknown to ourselves we are for ever operating with algebraic expressions, and when we think we have described a person or an object, it always happens that we have set down his formula." [1] Hence, as some one has observed, a certain want of amenity in Scherer when he becomes controversial. It is not a living man whom he criticises, but an idea or a system, and no reserves or compromising refinements are claimed by an idea. M. Bérard-Varagnac characterises happily much of Scherer's work when he speaks of " la trame forte et serrée, un peu incolore, de ses écrits ; " contrasting this strong but somewhat colourless texture with that other criticism, if so it may be called, " tout éblouissante et tonnante de fusées et de flammes de Bengale, qui éclatait, comme des feux d'artifice, dans les feuilletons et dans les livres de M. Paul de Saint-Victor." No contrast, indeed, could be more striking than that between the style of Scherer and that of the author of " Hommes et Dieux." In criticising " Les Deux Masques," Scherer recognises the amazing virtuosity of Paul de Saint-Victor in his handling of the

[1] Quoted by M. Bérard-Varagnac: "Portraits littéraires," p. 257.

instrument of language; but he fears that with him the word may at times take the place of the idea—"we think of one of those Eastern weapons, where the chasings on the blade and the jewels of the sheath make us a little forgetful of the masculine uses of the sword." In Scherer's own writing we are constantly in the presence of ideas, and his style has a sober and manly grace; but it rarely becomes radiant with that intellectual beauty where light in its exquisiteness produces on our feelings almost the effect of colour.

Matthew Arnold did not, perhaps, introduce Scherer in the happiest way to English readers when he chose for detailed notice his studies on Milton and on Goethe. An early residence in our country and his marriage with an English lady gave him advantages not often possessed by foreigners in dealing with our literature. His articles on Milton, Wordsworth, George Eliot, Lord Beaconsfield, Mill, Carlyle, and other English writers would in themselves form an interesting volume. But no critic has the same independence of judgment and sureness of eye in dealing with a foreign literature which he has in dealing with the literature of his native land. What shall we think of a writer who could translate the exquisite lines of Wordsworth

> "She lived unknown, and few could know
> When Lucy ceased to be."

by the words, "Inconnue pendant sa vie, bien peu ont su quand Lucy *a terminé son existence*"? It is the translation of a dialectician rather than of a poet. Yet Scherer can say a happy thing about each of the English authors whom he studies, expressing, if not a complete truth, at least an important fragment of the

truth. Carlyle, he tells us, though not a philosopher, is "un accoucheur d'esprits." The talent of Lord Beaconsfield is "tout en façade sur la rue." Mr Gladstone, in his writings on Homer and on Holy Scripture, is "a survivor from the age of scholasticism; he belongs to those epochs of human thought when the force of intellect applied itself to data furnished by tradition; when they dissertated *ad infinitum* on texts the value of which they did not know how to discuss; when the finest subtlety existed side by side with a superstitious respect for authority." Lord Tennyson, as a lyric poet, is the author of pieces "unequalled in any language, some of an infinite *morbidezza*, others of a penetrating pathos, others, again, vibrating like the horn of a knight of romance; and he wants but one thing, the supreme gift, the stroke of wing which raises Ganymede to the empyrean, and throws him trembling at the feet of Jupiter." George Eliot is "the most important literary personality which has appeared since the death of Goethe." Wordsworth "comes after Milton, decidedly below him, yet is the first who comes after him." Scherer's admiration of Wordsworth, however, does not make him unjust to Shelley. Half of Shelley's work, indeed, is "gâtée par d'insupportables tendances humanitaires;" but he remains a poet of the first order: "he was freer than Wordsworth, his thought was more speculative, he touched higher questions, he expressed deeper troubles, more actual needs of contemporary humanity; and all this in a poetical language of wider musical range, of profounder resonance, of a nobler imaginative power, of a melody absolutely prodigious,

penetrating, and subtle; here the long and solemn murmur of the wind in the pine-forest, there the song, liquid and pearl-pure, of the lark ascending in a sunbeam." Such an outbreak of enthusiasm is rare in Scherer, the soberest of critics.

But in general a foreign critic can say little that is at once new to us and true with reference to the inner power and more intimate meanings of our own literature. Scherer is at his best when he either discusses some literary principle of general application, or studies some great epoch or important writer in the literature of his own country. Admirable, for example, is his analysis of the characteristics of the eighteenth century in a review of the volume by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, "La Femme au dix-huitième siècle." That age was named by Mark Pattison, who knew it well, the *sæculum rationalisticum*; yet one of its most striking peculiarities is that it was, so to speak, personified in its women: "La femme, au dix-huitième siècle, est le principe qui gouverne, la raison qui dirige, la voix qui commande. Elle est la cause universelle et fatale, l'origine des événements, la source des choses." Though the French *bourgeoisie* had increased in riches, society was still essentially aristocratic, and the misfortune of the French aristocracy was that it had always existed as "a dignity without functions." Life for the aristocrat was reduced to mere relations of elegance and pleasure. Hence the French *salon*, with its graces of conversation: hence also a devouring ennui. "Ce mal incurable de l'ennui, le dix-huitième siècle le porte partout. C'est là son fond j'allais dire

son principe. C'est par là que s'expliquent ses agitations, ses dégoûts, ses tristesses cachées, l'audace de ses vices." To Scherer the eighteenth century in France presents itself as an age more brilliant than delicate, voluptuous without passion, having a void at its heart which constantly gaped wider. On the other hand, it was charming; it had external grace and elegance, an exquisite accomplishment in the art of living. If it was not creative in architecture, painting, sculpture, and poetry, it could at least decorate. If it did not seek the beautiful, it found *le joli*. "Its character is not great; but still it has a character; it puts its mark on all that it produced—buildings, pictures, furniture." And in the paintings of Greuze, Watteau, Fragonard, Chardin, we can perceive a certain frankness under the affectation, a certain originality in the mannerism, and a real vitality at the heart of this conventional art. Moreover, as the years drew on towards the Revolution, society became animated with the liveliest intellectual curiosity. It was in the highest degree mobile. There was an universal taste for letters, and in letters for new and adventurous things.

"Les dames ont de gros in-quartos sur leur toilettes (c'est le format reçu). Rien ne les rebute. Elles lisent *l'Histoire philosophique* de Raynal, les *Stuarts* de Hume, *l'Esprit des Lois* de Montesquieu. Mais c'est des sciences surtout qu'elles s'éprennent. . . . Courez après ces charmantes jeunes femmes, elles vont au Jardin des Plantes pour voir fabriquer la thériaque; chez l'abbé Mical, pour entendre parler un automate; chez Rouelle pour assister à la volatilisation du diamant; chez Réveillon pour y embrasser Pilâtre de Rozier, avant une ascension. Ce matin, elles ont rendu une visite au grand cierge serpentaire, qui ne porte de fleurs que tous les cinquante ans; elle iront cette après-midi à des expériences sur l'air inflammable ou sur l'électricité. Il n'est

pas jusqu'à la médecine, jusqu'à l'anatomie, qui n'aient des attraits pour ces curiosités déchaînées ; la comtesse de Voisenon médicamente ses amis ; la comtesse de Coigny n'a que dix-huit ans et elle dissèque !"

And then came what Scherer terms the crisis, or rather the conversion, of the eighteenth century, Nature and simplicity and sensibility were preached by Rousseau, and idyls were dreamed and tears rained in gentle showers. Elegant shepherdesses and charming dairy maids took the place of the graceful students of philosophy. It was the period of symbolical emblems, burning hearts, altars, doves. "Madame de Blot bore on her breast a miniature representing the church where her brother was buried. Beauty formerly was piquant, now it aspired to be tender and touching. . . . Every woman was ambitious to love as Julie loved. Every mother educated her son like Émile." And under all the affectations, and the fashion of sensibility, there was again something genuine — a real passion of humanity, an intense pity for the sorrows and sufferings of men, and an enthusiasm for generous ideas, for toleration, justice, equality. The heroes of the age, "sont les hommes utiles, les agriculteurs, les bienfaiteurs des peuples. Il embrasse dans ses réformes toutes les nations. Il s'élève à la notion de la solidarité humaine. Il se compose un âge d'or où les théories du philosophe se mêlent aux rêveries du songe-creux. . . . L'utopie, l'utopie à la fois rationelle comme la géométrie et aveugle comme l'enthousiasme : toute la révolution française est déjà là." Not quite all the French Revolution, for when Utopia was realised, the pedants and dreamers found

themselves side by side with the bandits and assassins who always lurk in the shade to seize upon each new Utopia and convert it to their own vile uses.

The melancholy of the literature which followed the Revolution is traced by Scherer to Rousseau as its parent, or, if one may so speak, its founder. But though "René" appeared in 1802 and "Obermann" in 1804, the influence of Rousseau, as the father of modern melancholy, did not produce its full fruits until twenty years later. Edgar Quinet has described in his autobiography the condition of letters in France after the fall of the Empire, the moral exhaustion which followed the shock of great events, the spiritual sterility, the apparent void all around him in his years of opening manhood, a void in religion, in poetry, in philosophy. Lamartine gave poetical expression to this melancholy of the Restoration period, deriving, as it did, something from the melancholy of René, which is that of passion, and the melancholy of Obermann, which is that of reflection and wasted desires. Lamartine's is the contemplative melancholy: "Strictly speaking, he has uttered in song only one thing—disenchantment. . . . Lamartine was not a painter, he had neither design nor colour—but he was a musician, a sovereign master of melodious *motives*. In reading him we rather experience sensations than recognise ideas. We seem to have drunk some magical philter, so that the outlines of real things mingle in confusion, and our personality seems to be on the point of dissolving and losing itself in the infinite like a sound, or returning to the bosom of nature as one of the primitive elements."

Scherer's high estimate of Lamartine as a lyrical poet is far nearer the truth than the popular estimate of the present day, when the great singer of the Restoration is forgotten and M. Zola is read. All the more because he valued Lamartine's poetical work at its true worth, Scherer mourned over the intellectual and moral decline betrayed in his later writings, when he subordinated thought to effects of style, and especially to "the most puerile of all, antithesis," when he broke with good sense and self-respect; when he came so near charlatanism that he may be said to have touched it.

Victor Cousin, the illustrious autocrat of philosophy, a great figure from 1828 onwards, has but a moderate portion of Scherer's admiration and esteem. Two thousand listeners thronged to hear his eloquent discourses on philosophy. They were impressed by the enthusiasm with which that brilliant philosophic actor played his part. He ruled his audience with his air of profound conviction, and a range of knowledge that seemed as well ascertained as it was universal, with his resonant voice, his gestures, his generous phrases. They did not perceive, says Scherer, the consummate skill which lay concealed under the surprises of his inspiration, nor at how small a cost of real originality he made his philosophic display. "M. Cousin was before all else an artist; thought was with him a *rôle*; he conceived philosophic instruction as an effective piece of parade, as a drama to be put on the stage. . . . Two departments of study were for him as sealed books—the natural sciences and historical criticism. Unfortunately it is precisely these studies

which are laying the foundations of modern science." With an appearance of extraordinary power in organising ideas, he really succeeded only in the philosophic joiner's art of eclecticism. But "a philosophic system is not a piece of marquetry, formed from bits made to match; it is rather the development of a living and creative idea. Eclecticism is the negation of philosophy, as it is of science." This pseudo-philosophy, however, was imposed, during Cousin's reign, upon all young minds in that spirit of autocratic authority which formed part of his character. Hence the modern French school—it was in 1867 that Scherer wrote—the school of "declamatory spiritualism," on which the critic pronounces judgment in a word of excessive severity: "grandes prétentions, formules creuses, stérilité absolue."

Scherer's study on Tocqueville, a much more modest, and a much more sincere writer than Cousin, illustrates happily the critic's method—one which he only occasionally adopts—of reducing a living person to the formula which expresses his essential difference. Tocqueville, he tells us, is "a talent in the service of a character; with him everything else is subservient to the conscience." He sees in the world not a problem to study but a task to accomplish. He is a fully-formed will, devoured by activity, eager for clearness and certitude, incapable of doubt. "Let the curious look on life as a spectacle, the epicurean view it as a festival, the pessimist as a piece of irony; for him it is 'a serious business with which we are entrusted, and which we must conduct and bring to a close in

a way that shall do us honour.' " As a result of his constant preoccupation with duty, there is something of overstrain in Tocqueville's character; he is insensible to the humorous aspect of things; he takes in a tragic spirit the failures of men to reach the prescribed standard, when sometimes it were better if he had smiled. He is a Liberal in politics, because duty is a matter for the individual conscience, and Liberalism consists essentially in respect for the individual. His style as a writer is determined by his character; its admirable qualities are of a moral kind: energy, sincerity, virility. The masculine virtues of Tocqueville raised him, as a publicist, above the lower sphere of politics, and made him sensible of the dangers to which our contemporary civilisation is exposed. He sees the man in the citizen, and finds in conduct the substance and the vital principle of society. Our age, says Scherer, has no political writer to compare with him; posterity will place his bust at the feet of the statue of Montesquieu.

The Romantic movement of which Victor Hugo was the leader, is viewed by Scherer not merely as a reaction from the tastes and ideals of the eighteenth century, but also as a direct and inevitable consequence of the rationalism of that century, which overthrew the authority of the classical literature of France, and left a space for the fresh play of imagination and passion. That classical literature of the age of Louis XIV. was itself what Scherer styles a tertiary literature; it was a French imitation of the Latin imitation of Greek authors; it was indeed national, but, as it were, in spite of its own

intentions; it saved itself from servility by its involuntary anachronisms. The Romantic movement of 1830 proclaimed its independence of tradition, but, as Scherer observes, in fact it only changed its models; "Shakespeare and Byron in place of Racine and Boileau, and, as usually happens in such cases, the singularities of the model copied as its beauties;" the nodosities of the oak, to use Burke's well-known words, sometimes reproduced, without its strength, and the contortions of the Sybil without her inspiration. It was the misfortune of Romanticism, says Scherer, to resolve at whatever cost to be novel, powerful, naive; but this is not to be attained by force of a predetermination, and never did a poet reach originality, in the higher sense of the word, by proposing to himself to be original.

Throughout the eight volumes of his "Études" Scherer has nowhere attempted an estimate of the genius and the work of Victor Hugo. A short obituary notice of Hugo doubtless expresses only a small fragment of the critic's complete mind. He comments upon the singular fact that with an imagination of such stupendous power, Hugo should also have possessed in large measure the gift of *esprit—esprit* of a peculiar kind, more strong than delicate, a sort of herculean gaiety, a vein of amusing extravagance: "mais je me trompe, car on se trompe toujours avec lui, et il échappe à toutes les définitions: ce géant a fait des chansons, et, dans ces chansons, il en est de gracieuses et de délicates." Add to all else, add to the magic of his genius and the power of his work, the fact that Victor Hugo had generous ideas, and noble personal qualities, patriotism, humanity, faith.

Scherer had himself found his early faith, and especially an optimistic faith, difficult, if not impossible, to retain; he had lost his early illusions about the progress of society, but "glory," he says finely, "will never fall to the sceptics; the people love those alone who share the certitudes and the illusions which form an essential part of their life."

Of Hugo's greatest contemporary in the creative literature of imagination Scherer speaks without those reserves which the old age and the accumulated glory of Hugo may not improbably have imposed upon the critic. "Massive and materialistic" are the epithets by which he characterises the genius of Balzac, a genius devoid of warmth and delicacy. His chief work has been to enlarge and elevate "the novel of character"—of character considered, not as that merely which is born with a man, but also as the product of education and environment, and representing as such a general condition of society. He has failed in depicting tender and passionate feelings; he is only moderately successful in dialogue; he is guilty of an abuse of description; he has a morbid taste for social corruptions; his style is laboured and colourless; but he has represented, if not the whole, assuredly a huge fragment of French civilisation of the nineteenth century. And he possessed in an extraordinary degree the genuine power of evocation. "His persons remain in our memory as if they had actually lived. We have seen them, we have conversed with them, we can summon them by their names. And these imaginary beings are of a number

almost incredible; the novelist's creation is as vast as a world." Scherer is compelled at last to admit that Balzac had not only the force, but the fecundity of genius.

With the younger school of romantic writers, and with those who cultivated what has been called the style of decadence, Scherer has little sympathy, and at times in dealing with them his critical intelligence deserts him almost completely. He describes Théophile Gautier as the writer, of all who ever lived, most remote from an elevated conception of art as well as from a virile use of the pen. Towards Baudelaire the critic shows himself implacably hostile. His only merit, according to Scherer, is that he has the courage, not of his opinions, for Baudelaire is without ideas, but of his vices. When men have exhausted and worn out the merely sensuous delight in beauty then the sensual pleasure in deformity begins. When the terrible can no longer thrill our satiated nerves we turn for a new sensation to whatever is disgusting. Decomposition engenders a yet more fetid decomposition, until at last there remains something which cannot be described or named in human speech. *Voilà Baudelaire.* He was neither an artist nor a poet. Believing himself to be very strong because he was very corrupt, he was at bottom a Philistine pure and simple. The moral indignation of the Genevan professor mingles here with the passion of the literary critic, offended by the artistic vices of the style of decadence. And the nickname of Philistine, a Philistine, that is, turned topsy-turvy applied to one who honours the proprieties by an out-

rageous attempt to shock them, is prettily conceived. But Baudelaire, notwithstanding the critic's violence, and notwithstanding what M. Paul Bourget terms his "truculent paradoxes," remains a poet. We recall to mind that majestic sonnet *La Vie Antérieure* or *Les Aveugles*, with its power of cruel pathos, and can then turn to sane uses what is just in Scherer's unmeasured invective.

At the present moment, when the strife between the classicists and romanticists is a thing of the past, the actual contest is between two schools which Scherer names the *Virgilians* and *Mosaic-makers*. For the one school poetry is a language that expresses a meaning, for the other it is an art that produces a sensation: "The first—the Virgilians—speak because they have something to say, and they say it as a man does who is impelled to speech by a thought and a feeling, with grace of style, seeking fulness of sound as well as of sense, loving amplitude of utterance and completeness of idea, *di parlar largo fiume*. The others make poetry an affair of technique. Form has for them an independent value. They pursue rare turns, of expression, rich rhymes, difficulties subdued. Virtuosi, as they are, they aim at giving evidence of their virtuosity." It need hardly be said that Scherer, while not insensible to some services rendered to poetry by the school of the *Mosaïstes*, ranges himself without hesitation on the side of the *Virgiliens*. What volume of verse now-a-days, he asks, makes us think? What book quickens the beating of our heart? We are reminded of some words of Matthew Arnold in his address, as President of

the Wordsworth Society. Matthew Arnold there indicates as an invaluable merit of Wordsworth this in particular, that *he had something to say.* "Perhaps one prizes this merit the more as one grows old, and has less time left for trifling. Goethe got so sick of the fuss about form and technical details, without due care for adequate contents, that he said if he were younger he should take pleasure in setting the so-called art of the new school of poets at naught, and in trusting for his whole effect to his having something important to say." Not that Goethe, or Arnold, or Scherer, undervalued form and the workmanship of verse, but that even in the interest of form it is needful that a higher and finer kind of beauty should be born from art than that which is attained by skilful juggling with phrases and ingenious manipulation of rhymes.

On the other hand, Scherer was not insensible to the danger incurred by poetry when the abstractions of thought usurp the place of the visionary power of imagination, and his fear was that the predominance of scientific habits of thought at the present day would leave no room for the higher forms of art. The spirit of research, analysis, criticism cannot develop itself without diminishing the province and the power of inspiration. He valued as highly as did Sainte-Beuve the exquisite poetry to be found in the earlier volumes of that tender and thoughtful Virgilian, M. Sully Prudhomme. But he received with certain reserves the later volume, "La Justice," in which the poet, calling to his aid the resources of modern science, makes an inquisition into ultimate moral problems.

We feel, he says, that the writer is preoccupied with the precision of his thought and not with rendering it in a perfect form. Victor Hugo, indeed, in his wonderful piece, *le Satyre*, had attempted with a happier result "la poésie scientifique." His cosmogony, it is true, is somewhat vague; his style is marred by extravagances, by puerilities; but as compared with the pages of M. Sully Prudhomme, what astonishing plasticity of language! "Quel tempérament il y a là-dessous! De quel pied solide il crève le bleu de l'éther, celui-là, quand par hasard il s'y aventure! C'est absurde, mais c'est splendide. C'est du Rubens." And then comes the critic's final reserve and touch of doubt with respect to Victor Hugo also, a touch of doubt felt often by the readers of Victor Hugo who do not wholly lose their balance: "L'ennuyeux de tout cela, c'est qu'on est forcé de se demander si, plus sensé, Victor Hugo serait un aussi grand poète et si, en définitive, ce n'est pas lui qui a choisi la bonne part." Who has ever thought of putting such a question as this in reading Dante or Shakespeare or Goethe? And does not such a touch of doubt help us to assign its true place to that stupendous genius which invented *le Satyre*?

The works of the modern school of realistic fiction are examined by Scherer each on its own merits. Flaubert he admits at least to the suburbs of his good pleasure; Zola, "an illiterate writer trying to degrade literature to his own level," he absolutely rejects. It is an error, he maintains, to speak of idealism and realism as if they were mutually exclusive in art; rather they

are the two poles between which art lives and moves. The real is that which exists outside the artist and apart from him; the ideal is that which the mind of the artist discovers as the interpretation of the object or adds to the object. Both the real and the ideal are essential to all true art, and it is natural and right that there should be two schools of artists, one of which approaches nearer to this pole of art, and the other which approaches nearer to that. In his review of Flaubert's "L'Éducation sentimentale," which ought rather, he says, to have been named "Les Bonnes fortunes de M. Frédéric," Scherer points out the two capital risks incurred by the realistic novelist. First, there is the danger of want of unity or *ensemble.* A series of photographic pictures is not a work of art. In "Madame Bovary," indeed, the acts of the drama are in living connection each with the other, and lead naturally and inevitably to the denouement. It is not so with "L'Éducation sentimentale;" "l'ouvrage n'est pas composé." We might describe it as a collection of medallions, each interesting in itself, but still a collection, not like a single living and breathing statue or portrait. Secondly, the artist who is a realist may make a choice of subjects which are indeed capable of artistic imitation, but which do not interest us when we see them so reproduced. Scherer anticipates the possible retort upon his criticism that he condemns Flaubert's choice of subjects as a moralist. "I am no more of a prude," he says, "than other folk. I confess even that I look on morality as not concerned in the question. I have never understood what is meant by a dangerous

book, for every book may be in turn dangerous or wholesome according to the reader's disposition. But as a matter of decency, that is to say of taste, that is to say of art, M. Flaubert himself knows well that everything cannot be shown, that everything cannot be said." And in the same spirit in which he called Baudelaire a Philistine, Scherer adds, "You fancy that you give a proof of strength in braving the conventions of life and the decencies of language, and you only prove your own impotence. You flatter yourself that in this way you are raised above the *bourgeois*, and you do not see that nothing is more *bourgeois* than this kind of cynicism. You, moreover, enter a narrow passage from which there is no issue. These high-spiced dainties soon leave an appetite for others still more highly seasoned. Diseased passions, vile curiosities call for new gratifications, and he who has undertaken to supply their requirements is condemned to descend ever lower and lower." "Veils," says Scherer happily, "are made to be lifted, but woe to him who lifts them, for the veil itself is part of the divinity." Such ideal beauty as that of an undraped Greek goddess is indeed the loveliest of veils. And Scherer does not deny that one charm of beauty is possessed in a high degree by Flaubert's least happy creation—the author knows how to write. Now modern novels fall into two classes—those which are written and those which are not written; and unhappily not one novel in ten is *written*. "The fact is," Scherer exclaims, "I would give all Balzac and all Alexandre Dumas for a single page of exquisite French." Such exquisite French the fastidious critic finds in Flaubert, French

written with clearness and precision of style; no plastered colour, no pile of insignificant details, but words that can be seen through and descriptions that really describe.

Valuing at so high a rate a page of perfect prose, Scherer naturally pays homage to the most charming of prose writers, M. Renan. "Oh! la merveilleuse souplesse!" he cries, "l'ondoyante nature!" A style at once of the finest subtlety and the most exquisite simplicity: "une phrase d'allure naturelle, ni périodique ni hachée, sans convenu ni rhétorique, sans manière ni banalité, ne connaissant d'autre parure que le bonheur de l'expression, n'empruntant d'imprévu qu'à la nouveauté de la pensée, au tour spirituel qu'elle revêt, ou, çà et là, à quelque échappée d'imagination." Contrary to what is true of most other writers, the form with M. Renan is the real substance; he is essentially an artist, and ideas are only the instruments of his art. But to seize this Proteus, says Scherer, is impossible, *formas se vertit in omnes.* He is in turn enamoured of the ideal, and assured that the ideal is an illusion. He passes without halt or stumbling from Epictetus to Epicurus. He has his elevated religious theory, a kind of intellectualised mysticism, when he speaks of God and the soul, of immortality and duty. And then he brings forth his impious magician's alembic, in which all these ideas are sublimated and evaporated. "Science is reduced to research, religion to the religious sentiment, the ideal to a mirage, duty to a strategic device of nature, God to the category of the divine, and the life to come to our part in the eternal work of evolution."

Essentially M. Renan, as he appears to Scherer, is not a believer or a combatant, but an interested spectator of life; a spectator "seated in his stall, glass in hand, judging the actors, now moved by them and now amused." At moments he has the air of being deeply and passionately concerned in the action going forward on the stage, and he has some faint desires to undertake a part in the great drama. "But no: he soon returns to his true vocation, that of a looker-on, and to his business of applauding the fine passages and enjoying a delightful evening. And, indeed, what critic more enlightened or more amiably disposed could the author of the piece desire?" Renan's early articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, written when he was about thirty-five, his studies of Channing, M. de Sacy, Cousin, Augustin Thierry, Lamennais, are ranked higher by Scherer than his later or more elaborate works. The charm, he says, has grown feebler with repetition; we have too many *nuances*; the challenging of popular prejudices has lost some of its piquancy: the voluntary self-contradictions, designed, as M. Renan declares, to exhibit the several aspects of truth, now run some risk of appearing as a mere sport of the intellect.

Of none of his contemporaries did Scherer speak more justly or more generously than of Sainte-Beuve, and he was never tired of returning to one whom he regarded as the last of the great race of men of letters. "I expressed the idea," he writes, "when Sainte-Beuve died, that something came to an end together with his life. This something was literature in the old sense of the word, the pre-occupation of the mind with what is

beautiful and elevated, or delicate and refined, the search for truth in thought and balance in expression; in a word, all that has hitherto been called literary taste and the art of writing." More than once he describes Sainte-Beuve as a nineteenth-century kinsman of Montaigne—a Montaigne with a vaster range of knowledge, more love of art, an accumulated experience, and all the difference which the centuries can make between two men. A Montaigne, indeed, with a difference, but with as much likeness as the descendant can have to his ancestor—the same moderated wisdom, the same happy equilibrium, the same sceptical curiosity, the same supple intelligence, the same distrust of theories and phrases, the same freedom from great passions and enthusiasms. We do not think of elevated greatness in connection with Sainte-Beuve; "and yet," says Scherer, "he had in him something great, something royal—namely, equity." Scherer quotes with approval a passage from one of Doudan's letters, which characterises Sainte-Beuve so happily, that I cannot pass it by.

"No one has been his equal in the union of gifts of intellect and of character which rarely coexist in one and the same person: the toil of a Benedictine monk with the penetrating imagination of a finely-strung woman; boldness in saying everything while preserving at the same time all the *nuances* of equity; a taste for exactness and a passion for truth, together with a feeling for the ideal in the criticism of great writers; a marvellous erudition in all departments of literature, and sometimes the skimming flight of a bird over the surface of things; . . . an understanding for all the subtleties and all the lofty ardours of the piety of Port-Royal, and on his death-bed a readiness to say of the priest:—

'Cet esclave est venu,
Il a montré son ordre et n'a rien obtenu.'"

Port-Royal, indeed, lay far behind and far away from Sainte-Beuve in his elder years. He, like Scherer, if at any time he had hoped for absolute truth, if at any time he had dreamed of some ardent moral deliverance from the perplexities of life, came in the end to accept as sufficient for the needs of each day, the day's portion of relative truth, truth touched now at this point, and again at that other and different point. "Pascal," writes Scherer, "resolves problems, but he resolves them by simplifying their terms, and by eliminating part of the facts. There is a time of life, I am aware, when we love to lay hold of questions thus on their absolute side, to decide them once for all by some sublime act of will. Later, we learn to suspect this simplicity as a cheat; we have come to feel all that there is of insensible demonstration in simple contact with what is real; we are eager to know the universe in all its plenitude, in all its complexity, and then we are disposed to pardon much to a writer, who, like M. Sainte-Beuve, shows himself simple, sincere, and who, in his pages, reproduces something of the infinite variety as well as something of the imperturbable *sang-froid* of nature."

Equity—a great, a sovereign thing; it was his conscious gain in this as years advanced that more than consoled Scherer for the disenchantments and the increasing isolation of old age. I have tried in this article, by showing the critic's mind in relation to many eminent literary predecessors and contemporaries, and by offering to the reader a variety of characteristic passages chosen from the eight volumes of his

"Études," to make Scherer his own exponent and interpreter. And now, at the close, I must quote freely from the remarkable preface to the last of these volumes, in which the author expressed his mind more completely than anywhere else, and gave to the world what he calls a kind of literary and philosophic testament. The preface is dated June 1, 1885, and in that month Scherer had just left behind his seventieth birthday. Growing old has been described in a poem of Matthew Arnold's—a poem written, we must believe, when he was very young—as not merely a loss of bloom and strength, but also as a miserable decay of thought and emotion, until the man becomes at last the hollow phantom of himself. It was not thus that Scherer at seventy felt towards old age. "A delicious thing, old age," he exclaims, "old age approaching or already come!" But I will not rob the charm from this lyric *de senectute* by a translation into English:—

"Délicieuse chose que la vieillesse, la vieillesse approchant ou même déjà venue! avec la santé, bien entendu, cette condition première, ce substratum de toute jouissance, et avec les facultés assez intactes pour vous épargner les preuves de la décadence. Les passions sont calmées, mais les sentiments peuvent être vifs encore; le talent, s'il y a eu talent, a gagné en acquis, en savoir-faire, ce qu'il a perdu en verve; le temps, qui a dissipé les enivrements de la jeunesse, nous a donné en compensation l'étrange joie du désabusement. On a appris à ses dépens, mais on a appris, et, cette vie qui échappe, on la ressaisit par l'expérience; on se possède, et en se possédant on domine ce qu'il nous reste de destinée à accomplir."

If, then, in our elder years we lose the audacity and decisiveness of youth, its happy, prompt, instinctive way, we have some compensating gains—the capacity

for wise doubt, the habit of suspending our judgment, the courage, if there be a need, to acknowledge our ignorance. We can wait; we have no passion now for rash generalisations. Nor are we disposed to judge our fellows absolutely; we do not see men as if each one was fashioned all of a piece, entirely good or entirely bad, worth everything or worth nothing. We can make distinctions, which implies that we can spare time to reflect and to analyse: "Avec l'absolu c'est plus tôt fait; le vulgaire se plaît à l'absolu, c'est la forme naturelle de la pensée inculte." We now enjoy the rapier play of Voltaire's wit, his incorruptible good sense, and we see at the same time his pitiful character, wholly devoid of the sentiment of self-respect. We do not doubt, any more than did M. Thiers, that Napoleon conducted a campaign with his genius, but we are willing to acknowledge, with M. Thiers, that he conducted politics with his passions, and we add that his incomparable force of intellect coexisted with the ignoble soul of a criminal. And Goethe—Scherer has always had his grave reserves with respect to Goethe—"c'est Goethe qui a écrit 'Faust,' l'œuvre unique, tissue de sarcasme et de pathétique, et c'est Goethe qui a écrit cette œuvre prétentieuse et mal venue des 'Wanderjahre.'" We now acknowledge that the whole truth has at least two different aspects; we are no longer prone to admire "comme une bête." We find something of intellectual apathy or sloth in the hasty and exaggerated judgments which are given *en bloc*, and which refuse to make the due distinctions.

Nor in old age can we be content to pay ourselves with words. "Progress! progress!" cry the fresh young voices of our nineteenth century; but this notion of an unlimited advance towards perfection is borrowed from the sciences and industrial arts; and in reality applies only to the accumulation of knowledge, and to a certain, external, material improvement of society. Every day more of suffering is averted, more pleasures are made accessible to the great body of our fellows, and this indeed is something considerable, something essential. "The error begins in supposing that what is true of the practical and positive order is equally true of the moral order, in supposing that society advances in moral uprightness, in equity, in moderation, in modesty, in refinement of feeling, by some inevitable evolution and automatic development." And again what shall we say of another word which passes for current coin, for unalloyed gold—the word "humanity"? What is it but a name for one of those abstractions which are created to satisfy the incurable mystical needs of the soul? We have a family, friends, a city, a country, but all these are not enough; we must needs idealise the entire *genus homo*. "I cannot sufficiently admire," cries Scherer, "the power of abstraction of those persons, who in the wide overflow of their sympathies, forget all that is hideous, mean and stupid, nor will pay any regard to what is vicious, vile, atrocious. . . . As for myself, the human species amuses me and interests me, but in its totality it inspires me neither with veneration nor tenderness; I decline solidarity."

The "discomfiture of the absolute," the discovery of the relative character of things, is regarded by Scherer as the great event in modern thought. And the discomfiture of the absolute, as he says, is at least favourable to indulgence. "To understand is to excuse, it is almost to become an accomplice." The instinct of indignation is indeed one of those instincts which protect the dignity of human life; but we do not lose it when it has been wisely tempered. The finest fruit of instruction, the best proof of nobility of soul, is it not sympathy with all the aspirations of men towards light and happiness? But even this sympathy is the purer if it also be tempered by experience. We see the wanderings, the errors, the sins, the sorrows of men, their ineffectual strivings towards an unattainable ideal; and if we love them, our love is mingled with a poignant pity.

Such, in brief, is Scherer's philosophic testament. Not that he regards himself as a philosopher who has reached illuminated heights above his fellows. Far from that. "My aim has been as much to amuse as to instruct, and when I look back over my life, it seems to me in all sincerity that I have had a certain passion for seeing things as they really are at bottom, that this passion has led me into many adventures, and that my pen as I held it between my fingers, has been for me an instrument of experiment and research. Which fact, however, is not inconsistent with this other, that while working for myself, I have had a confused sense of working at the same time towards a common result, towards some impersonal achieve-

ment, towards some end which I cannot clearly discern."

Assuredly we, his debtors, will gratefully acknowledge that the faithful striving of his life has not been for himself alone.

LITERARY CRITICISM IN FRANCE.[1]

WHEN the Curators of the Taylorian Institution honoured me with an invitation to lecture on some subject connected with the study of modern literature, I glanced back over my recent reading, and I found that a large part, perhaps an undue proportion of it, had consisted of French literary history and French literary criticism. The recent death of that eminent critic, M. Scherer, had led me to make a survey of his writings. I had found in M. Brunetière an instructor vigorous and severe in matters of literature; one who allies modern thought with classical tradition. I had beguiled some hours, not more pleasantly than profitably, with M. Jules Lemaitre's bright if slender studies of contemporary writers, in which the play of ideas is contrived with all the skill and grace of a decorative art. I had followed M. Paul Bourget, as many of us have done, through his more laborious analyses in which he investigates, by means of typical representatives in literature, the moral life of our time. And I had in some measure possessed myself of the legacy of thought left to us by two young writers, ardent students, interested in the philosophical aspects of literature, whose premature loss French letters must deplore, M. Guyau, the author of several volumes on

[1] Read as the Taylorian Lecture, Oxford, November 20th, 1889.

questions of morals and æsthetics, and M. Hennequin, whose attempt to draw the outlines of a system of scientific criticism has at least the merit of bold ingenuity. It seemed to me that I had fresh in my mind matter which must be of interest to all who care for literature, and that I should not do ill if I were to try to gather up some of my impressions on recent literary criticism, and especially on methods or proposed methods of criticism in France.

Nearly a generation has passed since a distinguished son of Oxford, Mr Matthew Arnold, declared that the chief need of our time—and especially the need of our own country—was a truer and more enlightened criticism. He did not speak merely of literature; he meant that we needed a fresh current of ideas about life in its various provinces. But he included the province of literature, the importance of which, and especially of poetry, no man estimated more highly than did Mr Arnold. And as the essential prelude to a better criticism, he made his gallant, and far from unsuccessful, effort to disturb our national self-complacency, to make us feel that Philistia is not a land which is very far off; he made the experiment, which he regarded as in the best sense patriotic, to rearrange for our uses the tune of *Rule Britannia* in a minor key. His contribution to our self-knowledge was a valuable one, if wisely used. The elegant lamentations of the prophet over his people in captivity to the Philistines were more than elegant, they were inspired by a fine ideal of intellectual freedom, and were animated by a courageous hope that the ideal might

be, in part at least, attained. Disciples, however, too often parody the master, and I am not sure that success in any other affectation is more cheaply won than in the affectation of depreciating one's kinsfolk and one's home. There is a Jaques-like melancholy arising from the sundry contemplation of one's intellectual travel, which disinclines its possessor for simple household tasks. Our British inaccessibility to ideas, our wilfulness of temper, our caprices of intellect, our insular narrowness, the provinciality of our thought, the brutality of our journals, the banality of our popular teachers, our incapacity to govern, or at least to be gracious in governing—these are themes on which it has become easy to dilate:

> "Most can raise the flowers now,
> For all have got the seed."

And with the aid of a happy eclecticism which chooses for comparison the bright abroad with the dark or dull at home, and reserves all its amiable partiality and dainty enthusiasm for our neighbours, it really has not been difficult to acquire a new and superior kind of complacency, the complacency of national self-depreciation.

As regards the criticism of literature, Mr Arnold did good service in directing our eyes to France, and when we spoke of French literary criticism any time in the fifties and sixties of this century, we meant first of all Sainte-Beuve. Here Mr Arnold was surely right, nor did he depart from the balance and measure which he so highly valued when, in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," he described Sainte-Beuve as an unrivalled guide

to bring us to a knowledge of the French genius and literature—"perfect, so far as a poor mortal critic can be perfect, in knowledge of his subject, in tact, in tone." We are all pupils of Sainte-Beuve. But to what Mr Arnold has said of Sainte-Beuve, I should like to add this: that while the great critic was French in his tact, French in his art of finely insinuating opinions, in his seeming *bonhomie*, and at the same time in the delicate malice of his pen, French above all in his sense of the intimate relations of literature with social life, his method as a critic was not the dominant method of France; it was hardly characteristic of the French intellect; it was his own method, and it had been in great measure our English method.[1]

For, while possessing extraordinary mobility within certain limits seldom overpassed, the French intellect, as compared with that of England, is pre-eminently systematic, and to attain system, or method, or order in its ideas, it is often content to view things in an abstract or generalising way, or even to admit things which present a difficulty to the systematiser. At the highest this order is a manifestation of reason, and when it imposes itself upon our minds, it brings with it that sense of freedom which accompanies the recognition of a law. But when by evading difficulties a pseudo-order is established, and when this is found, as it inevitably will be found in the course of time, to be a tyranny, then the spirit of system becomes really an element of disorder, provoking the spirit of anarchy,

[1] Mr Arnold's *éloge* does not apply to the earlier writings of Sainte-Beuve, which were wanting in critical balance, and often in critical disinterestedness.

and, as M. Nisard has called it, the spirit of chimera. In a nation where the tendency towards centralisation is strong, and a central authority has been constituted, an order of ideas, which is probably in part true, in part false, will be imposed by that authority, and as years go by this will become traditional. So it was in France. The Academy was precisely such a central authority in matters intellectual, and from its origin it asserted a claim to be a tribunal in literary criticism. It imposed a doctrine, and created a tradition. But even among writers who revolted from the traditional or Academical manner in criticism, the spirit of system was often present, for the spirit of system is characteristic of the intellect of France. An idea, a dogma was enounced, and the facts were selected or compelled to square with the idea; an age was reduced to some formula which was supposed to express the spirit of that age, and the writers of the time were attenuated into proofs of a theory.

Now Sainte-Beuve's method as a critic was as far as possible removed from this abstract and doctrinaire method. He loved ideas, but he feared the tyranny of an idea. He was on his guard against the spirit of system. Upon his seal was engraved the English word "Truth," and the root of everything in his criticism, as Mr Arnold said of him, is his simple-hearted devotion to truth. Mr Arnold might have added that his method for the discovery of truth is the method characteristic of the best English minds, that of living and working in the closest relation with facts, and incessantly revising his opinions so that they

may be in accord with facts. It will be in the memory of readers of Sainte-Beuve that in 1862, in the articles on Chateaubriand, afterwards included in the third volume of "Nouveaux Lundis," he turned aside to give an exposition of his own critical method. He had been reproached with the fact that he had no theory. "Those who deal most favourably with me have been pleased to say that I am a sufficiently good judge, but a judge who is without a code." And while admitting that there existed no "code Sainte-Beuve," went on to maintain that he had a method, formed by practice, and to explain what that method was. It was that for which afterwards, when reviewing a work by M. Deschanel, he accepted the name of naturalistic criticism. He tells us how we are inevitably carried from the book under our view to the entire work of the author, and so to the author himself; how we should study the author as forming one of a group with the other members of his household, and in particular that it is wise to look for his talent in the mother, and, if there be sisters, in one or more of the sisters; how we should seek for him in "le premier milieu," the group of friends and contemporaries who surrounded him at the moment when his genius first became full-fledged; how again we should choose for special observation the moment when he begins to decay, or decline, or deviate from his true line of advance under the influences of the world; for such a moment comes, says Sainte-Beuve, to almost every man; how we should approach our author through his admirers and through his enemies; and how, as the result of all

these processes of study, sometimes the right word emerges, which claims, beyond all power of resistance, to be a definition of the author's peculiar talent; such an one is a "rhetorician," such an one an "improvisator of genius." Chateaubriand himself, the subject of Sainte-Beuve's *causerie*, is "an Epicurean with the imagination of a Catholic." But, adds Sainte-Beuve, let us wait for this characteristic name, let us not hasten to give it.

This method of Sainte-Beuve, this inductive or naturalistic method, which advances cautiously from details to principles, and which is ever on its guard against the idols that deceive the mind, did not, as he says, quite satisfy even his admirers among his own countrymen. They termed his criticism a negative criticism, without a code of principles; they demanded a theory. But it is a method which accords well with our English habits of thought; and the fact is perhaps worth noting that while Mr Arnold was engaged in indicating, for our use, the vices and the foibles of English criticism as compared with that of France, Sainte-Beuve was thinking of a great English philosopher as the best preparatory master for those who would acquire a sure judgment in literature. "To be in literary history and criticism a disciple of Bacon," he wrote, "seems to me the need of our time." Bacon laid his foundations on a solid groundwork of facts, but it was his whole purpose to rise from these to general truths. And Sainte-Beuve looked forward to a time when as the result of countless observations, a science might come into existence which should be able to

arrange into their various species or families the varieties of human intellect and character, so that the dominant quality of a mind being ascertained we might be able to infer from this a group of subordinate qualities. But even in his anticipations of a science of criticism Sainte-Beuve would not permit the spirit of system to tyrannise over him. Such a science, he says, can never be quite of the same kind as botany or zoology; man has "what is called *freedom of will*," which at all events presupposes a great complexity in possible combinations. And even if at some remote period, this science of human minds should be organised, it will always be so delicate and mobile, says Sainte-Beuve, that "it will exist only for those who have a natural calling for it, and a true gift for observation; it will always be an *art* requiring a skilful artist, as medicine requires medical tact in those who practise it." There are numberless obscure phenomena to be dealt with in the criticism of literature, and they are the phenomena of life, in perpetual process of change; there are *nuances* to be caught, which, in the words of one who has tried to observe and record them, are "more fugitive than the play of light on the waters." Saint-Beuve felt that to keep a living mind in contact with life must for the present be the chief effort of criticism, to touch here some vital point, and again some other point there. In that remarkable volume, "Le Roman Expérimental," in which M. Zola deals with his fellow authors not so much in the manner of a judge as in that of a truculent gendarme, he lays violent hold on Sainte-Beuve, claiming him as essentially a critic of his own so-called

experimental school; not, indeed, that Sainte-Beuve's was one of those superior minds which comprehend their age, for was he not rather repelled than subdued by the genius of Balzac, and did he not fail to perceive that the romantic movement of 1830 was no more than the cry for deliverance from dogma and tradition of an age on its way to the naturalism of M. Zola himself? Still, says M. Zola, in certain pages Sainte-Beuve formulated with a tranquil daring the experimental method "which we put in practice." And it is true that there are points of contact between Sainte-Beuve's criticism, with its careful study of the author's *milieu*, and the doctrines proclaimed by M. Zola. But what a contrast between the spirits of the two men; what a contrast in the application to life even of the ideas which they possessed in common! M. Zola, whose mind is over-ridden, if ever a mind was, by the spirit of system; whose work, misnamed realistic, is in the main a monstrous idealising of humanity under the types of the man-brute and the woman-brute; and Sainte-Beuve, who in his method would fain be the disciple of our English Bacon; Sainte-Beuve, ever alert and mobile, ever fitting his mind to the niceneesses of fact, or tentatively grouping his facts in the hope that he may ascertain their law; Sainte-Beuve, whom, if the word "realism" be forced upon us, as it seems to be at the present time, we may name a genuine realist in the inductive study of the temperaments of all sorts and conditions of men.

Of M. Scherer I spoke a few days after his death in the pages of the *Fortnightly Review*, and I shall only say here that he resembled Sainte-Beuve at least in this,

that he too feared the tyranny of the spirit of system. In his earlier years, indeed, he had aspired as a philosophical thinker and a theologian to the possession of a body of absolute beliefs; but he found, or thought he found, that all which he had supposed to be fixed was moving, was altering its shape and position. He saw or thought he saw, a sinking of the soil on which he had built his house as if to last for ever, a gaining of the tide upon the solid land; he recognised, as so many have had to recognise in this century of moral difficulty, the processes of the evolution, or at least the vicissitude, of beliefs. He ceased to hope for truth absolute, but it was not as one disillusioned and disenchanted that he took refuge in the relative. He felt that his appointed task of truth-seeking had grown more serious and more full of promise. It seemed to him that there was something childish in the play of building up elaborate erections of dogma, ingenious toy-houses, to be tumbled down presently by the trailing skirts of Time. The business of a man was rather, as he conceived it, to live by the truth of to-day, trusting that it would develop into the completer truth of to-morrow, to contribute something of sound knowledge and well-considered opinion to the common fund, to work with all other honest minds towards some common result, though what that result may be, none of us as yet can be aware. He thought that he could perceive a logic in the general movement of the human mind, and he was content, for his own part, to contribute a fragment of truth here and a fragment there which might be taken up in the vast inductions of that mighty logician, the *Zeit Geist.*

A critic of such a temper as this can hardly set up absolute standards by which to judge, he can hardly make any one age the final test of another, and condemn the classic because it is not romantic, or the romantic because it is not classic. Yet he is far from being a sceptic either in matters of faith or matters of literary conviction; he may possess very clear and strong opinions, and indeed it becomes his duty to give a decided expression to his own view of truth, even if it be but a partial view, for how otherwise can he assist in the general movement of thought? The discomfiture of the absolute, as Scherer has said, is an aid to tolerance, is even favourable to indulgence, but it need not and should not paralyse the judgment, or hopelessly perplex the literary conscience. And Scherer himself was indeed at times more inclined to severity than to indulgence; behind the man, who was the nominal subject of his criticism, he saw the idea, and with an idea it is not necessary to observe the punctilio of fine manners. He must at the same time make his own idea precise, must argue out his own thesis. Yet he feels all the while that his own idea, his own thesis, has only a relative value, and that his criticism is at best something tentative. Scherer's conviction that all our truths are only relative, and that none the less they are of the utmost importance to us, gives in great measure its special character, at once tentative and full of decision, to his criticism.

But Scherer came on his father's side from a Swiss family, and the Parisian critic had been formed in the school of Protestant Geneva; Sainte-Beuve's mother

was of English origin, and his reading as a boy was largely in our English books. These are facts which may fairly be noted by one who accepts Sainte-Beuve's principles of literary investigation. The critical methods characteristic of the French intellect as contrasted with the English intellect are not the methods which guide and govern the work of these writers. Their work lacks the large ordonnance, the ruling logic, the *vues d'ensemble* in which the French mind, inheritor of Latin tradition, delights. Without a moment's resistance we yield ourselves to such guides, because the processes of their minds agree with those to which we are accustomed, only they are conducted by them with an ease and grace which with us are rare. But perhaps we gain more, or at least something more distinctive, from contact with intellects of a type which differs essentially from the English type, minds more speculative than ours, more apt in bringing masses of concrete fact under the rule and regimen of ideas. These characteristics of the French intellect are exhibited in a very impressive way by two well-known histories of literature, which, as regards methods and principles of criticism, stand as far apart from each other as it is possible to conceive—Nisard's "History of French Literature," and the much more celebrated "History of English Literature" by Taine. The one is of the elder school of criticism, dogmatic and traditional; the other is of the newer school, and claims to be considered scientific. Both are works over which ideas preside—or perhaps we might say dominate with an excessive authority. A mind

of the English type could hardly have produced either of the two.

The name of M. Désiré Nisard seems to carry us far into the past. It is more than half a century since he made his masked attack on the Romantic school, then in its fervid youth, in his "Latin Poets of the Decadence," and put forth his famous manifesto against *la littérature facile.* It was in 1840 that the first two volumes of his "History of French Literature" appeared: but twenty years passed before that work was completed; and it is little more than twelve months since M. Nisard gave to the Public his "Souvenirs et Notes biographiques," volumes followed, perhaps unfortunately for his fame, by the "Ægri Somnia" of the present year. Such a life of devotion to letters is rare, and the unity of his career was no less remarkable than its length. For sixty years M. Nisard was a guardian of the dignity of French letters, a guardian of the purity of the French language, a maintainer of the traditions of learning and thought, an inflexible judge in matters of intellect and taste. The aggressive sallies of his earlier years were only part of the system of defence which at a later time he conducted with greater reserve from within the stronghold of his own ideas. When the first volumes of his "History of French Literature" were written, M. Nisard's doctrine and method were fully formed, and when, twenty years later, he finished his task, it seemed never to have been interrupted; and though the author was of Voltaire's opinion that he who does not know how to correct, does not know how to write, there was nothing to alter in essentials of the former part of the work. It is a work

which cannot be popular, for its method is opposed to that which at present has the mastery, and its style has a magisterial, almost a monumental, concision, which is not to the liking of the crowd of torpid readers. It is, says a contemporary critic, a feature in common between two writers, in other respects so unlike, M. Nisard and M. Renan, that neither can be enjoyed by the common mass of readers, because "they are equally concerned, though in different ways, with the effort to be sober and simple, to efface colours that are over lively, and never to depart, in the temperate expression of their thought, from that scrupulous precision and exquisite *netteté* which Vauvenargues has named *le vernis des maîtres.*" But though it cannot live the noisy life of a popular book, M. Nisard's "History" remains, and does its work, a work all the more valuable because it resists in many ways the currents of opinion and taste in our age.

What, then, is M. Nisard's method? It is as far as possible removed from the method of Sainte-Beuve, as far as possible removed from what I may call the English method of criticism. A piece of literature—a poem, a novel, a play—carries Sainte-Beuve to the other works of the author, whether they be of the same kind or not, and thence to the author himself, to the little group of persons with whom he lived and acted, and to the general society of which he formed a member. M. Nisard views the work apart from its author and apart from his other works, if those other works be of a different literary species. He compares this book or that with other books of the same *genre*, or rather with the type of the *genre*, which by a process of abstraction, he

has formed in his own mind; he brings it into comparison with his ideal of the peculiar genius of the nation, his ideal of the genius of France, if the book be French; he tests its language by his ideal of the genius of the French language; finally, he compares it with his ideal of the genius of humanity as embodied in the best literature of the world, to whatever country or age that literature may belong. Criticism, as conceived by M. Nisard, confronts each work of literature with a threefold idea—that of the nation, that of the language, that of humanity: "elle note ce qui s'en rapproche; voilà le bon: ce qui s'en éloigne; voilà le mauvais." The aim of such criticism, according to M. Nisard's own definition, is "to regulate our intellectual pleasures, to free literature from the tyranny of the notion that *there is no disputing about tastes*, to constitute an exact science, intent rather on guiding than gratifying the mind."

Surely a noble aim—to free us from the tyranny of intellectual anarchy. We all tacitly acknowledge that there is a hierarchy of intellectual pleasures, and it is M Nisard's purpose to call upon these individual preferences and aversions to come forward and justify themselves or stand condemned in the light of human reason. The historian of French literature has somewhere contrasted two remarkable figures of the Renaissance and Reformation — Montaigne and Calvin; Montaigne, a representative of the spirit of curiosity then abroad, and, notwithstanding his sceptical tendency, a lover of the truth; Calvin, a representative of theological system and rigour, a wielder of the logic of the abstract idea.

We may describe Sainte-Beuve as a nineteenth-century descendant of Montaigne, with the accumulated erudition and the heightened sensibility of this latter time. M. Nisard carries into the province of literature something of Calvin's spirit of system, and we can hardly help admiring the fine intolerance of his orthodoxy as he condemns some heretic who disbelieves or doubts the authority of the great classical age of French letters. He would have criticism proceed rather by exclusions than by admissions, and has no patience with the "facile and accommodating admirations of eclecticism;" he sees a sign of decadence in the ambition peculiar to our time which pretends to reunite in French literary art all the excellencies and all the liberties of foreign literatures.[1] It is easy to indulge a diluted sympathy with everything; it is harder, but better, to distinguish the evil from the good, and to stand an armed champion of reason, order, beauty.

The genius of France, according to M. Nisard, is more inclined to discipline than to liberty; it regards the former—discipline—as the more fruitful in admirable results. An eminent writer in France is "the organ of all, rather than a privileged person who has thoughts belonging to himself alone, which he imposes on his fellows by an extraordinary right." And hence, French literature, avoiding, when at its best, all individual caprice, all license of sensibility or imagination, is, as it were, the living realisation of the government of the human faculties by reason. It is not so with the literature of the North; there the equilibrium of the faculties

[1] "Hist. de la Littérature française," i. 13.

is disturbed, there liberty often prevails over discipline, there reverie or subtlety often usurps the place of reason. It is not so with the literatures of the South; there passion often prevails over reason, and the language of metaphor takes the place of the language of intelligence. But human reason did not come to maturity in France until the great age of classical literature, the age of Molière and Racine and La Fontaine, of Bossuet and Pascal, of La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld. Then first in French literature humanity became completely conscious of itself, then, first, man was conceived as man in all the plenitude of his powers, then, first, human nature was adequately represented and rendered in literary art. And since that great age, if we strike the balance of gains and losses we shall find perhaps that the gains are exceeded by the losses. In the eighteenth century, which claimed to be the age of reason, the *sæculum rationalisticum*, the authority of reason in fact declined, and the spirit of Utopia, the chimerical spirit, exemplified by Rousseau, obtained the mastery. As to our own century, the magisterial words of condemnation uttered by M. Nisard half a century ago have perhaps gained in significance since the day on which his "Latin Poets of the Decadence" appeared. We have, as he says, analyses infinitely subtle of certain moral situations; delicate investigations of the states, often morbid states, of individual souls; but where is the great art that deals with man as man in those larger powers and passions which vary little from generation to generation? The difficulties of our social problems, the mass of talents for which, in our old world, scope can hardly be found, the

consequent restlessness of spirit, the lack of religious discipline, the malady of doubt, the political passions of the time, a boundless freedom of desires, ambitions, sensations, and almost no proportion between power and desire, a refinement of intelligence which multiplies our wants—these were enumerated long since by M. Nisard as causes unfavourable to the growth of a great nineteenth-century literature; and though the word *pessimism* was not in fashion in 1834, the anxious physician of his age foresaw the modern malady.

No wonder that such a critic was not popular with young and ardent spirits in the first fervours of the Romantic movement. But M. Nisard's work, as I have said, remains, and partly by virtue of the fact that he maintained the great tradition of French letters. In the literature of the age of Louis XIV., where M. Taine sees only or chiefly the literature of a court and courtiers, he saw the genius of humanity embodied and expressed by the special genius of the French nation. His view was determined by a deeper and a truer insight than that of M. Taine or of the romantic critics of an earlier date. The revolt of the Romantic school itself testifies to the strength in France of the classical tradition, and no critic of French literature can be a sure guide who does not recognise the force and value of that tradition. We, who have had no one age supremely great, who have had the double tradition of the age of Queen Elizabeth and the age of Queen Anne, this embodying the truths of discipline and that the truths of liberty, can find in our literary history no one stream of tendency "strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full," at all correspond-

ing to that derived in French literary history from the age of Louis XIV. We may feel sure that however the fashions of literature may change, the best mind of France must always, from time to time, make a return upon the wonderful group of writers, poets, thinkers, orators, epigrammatists, of the seventeenth century, and find in them undying masters of thought, of art, of literary style. And this is what the idealist school of critics, represented by M. Nisard, have rightly understood, and what the historical school, represented by M. Taine, has failed to perceive. At the present moment we may rejoice to see so eminent a critic as M. Brunetière taking vigorous part in the much-needed return upon the masters of the great tradition. He comes to them in no servile spirit to pay blind homage. Without accepting the ingenious paradox that every classic was in his own day a romantic, he perceives that these revered masters were in fact innovators, and encountered no little opposition from their contemporaries; they enlarged the bounds of art; and one who now dares to enlarge the bounds and break the barriers may be in the truest sense the disciple of Racine and of Molière. He perceives that the immortal part of such a writer as Racine is not his reproduction of the tone and manners of the Court. If Assuérus, in "Esther," speaks in the mode of Louis XIV., or Bérénice has a likeness to Marie de Mancini, this, as M. Brunetière says, is precisely what is feeble in Racine, this is the part of his work which has felt the effects of time, the part which is dead. The enduring part of his work is that which, if French of the seventeenth century is

something more than French, the part which is human, and which in 1889 has precisely the same value that it had in the fortunate days when his masterpieces appeared for the first time on the stage.[1]

M. Brunetière, from whose review of a study of Racine by M. Deschanel I have cited some words, is, like Nisard, a critic who values principles, who himself possesses a literary doctrine, and who certainly does not squander his gift of admiration in various and facile sympathies. He has been described as a less amiable, less elegant, less delicate Nisard; and it is true that he has not Nisard's fineness of touch nor his concinnity of style; but M. Brunetière suffers less than Nisard from the rigour of system, and he is far more than Nisard in sympathy with contemporary ideas. He is a combative thinker, with a logic supported by solid erudition and reinforced by a resolute temper which does not shrink from the severities of controversy. Yet to a certain extent M. Brunetière has been a conciliator, attempting, as he has done, to distinguish what is true and fruitful in that movement of the present day which has claimed the title of "naturalism," and to ally this with the truths of that other art discredited or extolled under the name of "idealistic." He recognises the power of environing circumstances, the "milieu," in forming the characters of men and determining their action; but, as becomes one who does honour to the great art of the seventeenth century, the art of Corneille and Racine, he recognises also that (to use Sainte-Beuve's hesitating phrase) there is in man that which they call freedom of

[1] F. Brunetière, "Histoire et Littérature," ii. 9.

will: "Man hath all which nature hath, but more," wrote Matthew Arnold in a memorable sonnet, in which perhaps he had that far more admirable poem of Goethe, *Das Göttliche*, in his mind:—

> "Man, and man only,
> Achieves the impossible,
> He can distinguish,
> Elect and direct."

In an article on M. Paul Bourget's remarkable novel "Le Disciple," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of July 1st, M. Brunetière, in the interest of art and of sound criticism no less than in the interest of morality and social life, sets himself to oppose what he terms the great error of the last hundred years, the sophism which reduces man to a part of nature. In art, in science, in morals, argues M. Brunetière, man is human in proportion as he separates himself from nature.

"It is *natural*," he writes, "that the law of the stronger and the more skilful should prevail in the animal world; but this, precisely, is not *human*. . . . To live in the present, as if it had no existence, as if it were merely the continuation of the past and the preparation for the future—this is *human*, and there is nothing less *natural*. By justice and by pity to compensate for the inequalities which nature, imperfectly subdued, still allows to subsist among men—this is *human*, and there is nothing less *natural*. Far from loosening, to draw closer the ties of marriage and the family, without which society can no more progress than life can organise itself without a cell—this is *human*, and there is nothing less *natural*. Without attempting to destroy the passions, to teach them moderation, and, if need be, to place them under restraint—this is *human*, and there is nothing less *natural*. And finally, on the ruins of the base and superstitious worship of force, to establish, if we can, the sovereignty of justice—this is *human*, and this, above all, is an effort which is not *natural*."

I have quoted this passage from M. Brunetière be-

cause, as we are all aware, there is a school of literary criticism, brought into existence by the same tendencies of the present time which have given birth to what M. Zola somewhat absurdly names "the experimental novel," a school of criticism, led by an eminent French thinker, which reduces to a minimum the independence and originating force of the artist, and is pleased to exhibit him in a group with his contemporaries as the natural and inevitable product of ancestry and ambient circumstances. Since the publication of M. Taine's "History of English Literature" some twenty-five years ago, all students of literature and art have been more or less under the spell of that triple charm—the race, the *milieu*, and the moment, and every critic has found it needful to get the magic formula by heart. A new dogmatism, which in the name of science holds all dogma in scorn, has set forth its *credo;* and the spirit of system, that passion for intellectual ordonnance, characteristic of the French mind, has once again manifested itself in a powerful manner. M. Taine's great work is one which at first overmasters the reader with its clear and broad design, its comprehensive logic, its scientific claims, its multitude of facts arranged under their proper rubrics; it seems for a little while to put a new organon for the study of literature into our hands; and the rest of our time, I fear, is spent in making ever larger and larger reservation. The truth is, as Scherer noticed, that professing to proceed by the way of induction, M. Taine is constantly deductive in his method. "He begins by giving us a formula, and then draws from that formula the consequences and conclu-

sions which, as he believes, are included in it." The works of this writer or of that are studied not for their own sakes, but in order that they may furnish proofs of the thesis of the scientific critic. "His crowd of descriptions, his accumulation of details"—I quote the words, eminently just, of Scherer—"his piled-up phrases are so many arguments urged upon the reader. We perceive the dialectic even under the imagery. I never read M. Taine without thinking of those gigantic steam hammers, which strike with noisy and redoubled blows, which make a thousand sparks fly, and under whose incessant shock the steel is beaten out and shaped. Everything here gives us the idea of power, the sense of force; but we have to add that one is stunned by so much noise, and that, after all, a style which has the solidity and the brilliancy of metal has also sometimes its hardness and heaviness."

Two debts we certainly owe to M. Taine, and we acknowledge them with gratitude; first, he has helped us to feel the close kinship between the literature of each epoch and the various other manifestations of the mind of the time; and secondly, he has helped to moderate the passion for pronouncing judgments of good and evil founded on the narrow æsthetics of the taste of our own day. We have all learnt from M. Taine the art of bringing significant facts from the details of social manners, government, laws, fashions of speech, even fashions of dress, into comparison with contemporaneous facts of literature. He has made it easier for us to ascertain, at least in its larger features, what is called the spirit of an age. And this is much.

But there are two things which as they express themselves in literature he has failed to enable us to comprehend—the individual genius of an artist, that unique power of seeing, feeling, imagining, what he and he alone possesses; and again, the universal mind of humanity, that which is not bounded by an epoch nor contained by a race, but which lives alike in the pillars of the Parthenon and in the vault of the Gothic cathedral, which equally inspires the noblest scenes of Sophocles and of Shakespeare, which makes beautiful the tale of Achilles' wrath and that of the fall of the Scottish Douglas. Of what is local and temporary in art M. Taine speaks with extraordinary energy. Of what is abiding and universal he has less to say. Each author whom he studies is presented to us as the creature of the circumstances of his time, or at the highest as a representative of his tribe and people. The critic does not possess that delicate tact which would enable him to discover the individuality of each writer; it suits his thesis rather to view the individual as one member of a group. Nor does he possess that higher philosophical power which would enable him to see in each great work of art the laws of the universal mind of man.

M. Taine has served us also, I have said, by moderating our zeal for a narrow kind of judicial criticism, which pronounces a work of art to be good or bad as it approaches or departs from some standard set up by the taste or fashion of our own day. He started indeed from a false position—that criticism was to attempt no more than to note the characteristics of the various

works of literature and art, and to look for their causes. It was, he said, to be a sort of botany applied not to plants, but to the works of men. Botany does not pronounce the rose superior to the lily, nor should criticism attempt to establish a hierarchy in art; enough, if it records characteristics and ascertains their causes. But it will be remembered that M. Taine quickly abandoned his false position. In his lectures on "The Ideal in Art" he showed himself as ready to absolve or condemn as any disciple of the old æsthetic, and as I remember putting it in a review of M. Taine's volume which appeared soon after its publication, he said in unmistakable language, "Despise pre-Raphaelite art, it is ascetic," "Despise the English school of painting, it is literary;" "Admire above all else Renaissance art; it shows you what painting ought to show, straight limbs, well-developed muscles, and a healthy skin."

M. Taine, in fact, did not cease to be a judicial critic; but he endeavoured to base his judgments on principles of a different kind from those accepted by the older school of judicial critics. He endeavoured to find what we may call an objective standard of literary and artistic merit, one which should be independent of the variations of individual caprice and current habits of thought and feeling. A great work of art, he tells us, is one in which the artist first recognises, in the object he would represent, the predominance of its central characteristic—the flesh-eating lust, for example, of the greater carnivora; and secondly, by a convergence of effects heightens in his representation the visible or felt predominance of that characteristic,

so that with a great animal painter the lion becomes indeed—as a zoologist has described the creature—a jaw mounted on four feet. So also, in representing man, the artist or author who exhibits the predominance of the master powers of our manhood ranks higher than he does who merely records a passing fashion, or even than he who interprets the mind of a single generation. A book which possesses an universal and immortal life, like the "Psalms," the "Iliad," the "Imitation," the plays of Shakespeare, attains this deserved pre-eminence by virtue of its ideal representation of what is central and predominant in man. Thus M. Taine, no less than M. Nisard, attempts to establish a hierarchy of intellectual pleasures, and he has perhaps this advantage over M. Nisard that he does not identify the human reason with the genius of the French people, nor this again with its manifestation in the literature of the age of Louis XIV. If he does not reap the gains, he does not suffer from that narrowing influence of the French tradition of which we are sometimes sensible in M. Nisard, he does not yield to that noble pride or prejudice which once drew from Sainte-Beuve the impatient exclamation—"Toujours l'esprit français et sa glorification!"

M. Brunetière, in a thoughtful article on the "Literary Movement of the Nineteenth Century," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of October 15th, has justly distinguished M. Taine as the critic who has expressed most powerfully the tendencies of that movement which has carried literature forward into new ways since the Romantic movement has ceased to be

a living force. The Romantic movement was essentially lyrical in spirit; it subordinated everything to personal sentiment, personal passion, often to personal fantasy and caprice; it cared little for the Life of the world at large; it consisted of an endless series of confessions in prose or rhyme uttered by great souls and by little; it perished because the limited matter of these confessions was speedily exhausted, and the study of outward things and of social life was found to be inexhaustibly rich in fruit. Hence the justification of that movement of our own day which has assumed the title of naturalism or realism, of which the error or misfortune has been that it has studied too exclusively and too persistently the baser side of life. M. Taine's critical writings have tended to reduce the importance of the individual, have operated together with the scientific tendencies of our time in antagonism to the lyrical, personal character of the Romantic school; they belong essentially to the same movement of mind which has found other expression in the plays of Dumas, the poems, severely impersonal, of Leconte de Lisle, the novels of Flaubert, and the works of the modern school of historians which stand in marked contrast with the lyrical narratives of Michelet and our English Carlyle. A play of Shakespeare's, a group of Victor Hugo's odes or elegies, is for M. Taine not so much the work of its individual author as the creation of the race, the *milieu*, and the moment—a document in the history and the psychology of a people. We perceive, as M. Brunetière has justly said, the close relation between his principles of criticism and the

doctrine of the impersonality of art, a doctrine drawn out to its extreme logical consequences in some of the recently published letters of Flaubert.

Scientific criticism, however, in the hands of its latest exponent comes to restore to the individual leaders of literature some of their alienated rights. M. Hennequin, while expressing his high esteem for Taine, as the writer who has done more than any other of our generation to advance the study of literature, was himself ambitious to remodel the method of Taine, to amend it in various respects, to widen its scope, and to set forth the revised method as a Novum Organum for the investigation of literature. He does not deny the influence of heredity, which Taine asserts so strongly, but the race, considered as the source of moral and intellectual characteristics, seems to him to be little better than a metaphysical figment. There is no pure, homogeneous race in existence, or at least none exists which has become a nation, none which has founded a civilized state, and produced a literature and art. Nor is it true, as M. Taine assumes, that the intellectual characteristics of a people persist unchanged from generation to generation. The action of heredity on individual character is in the highest degree variable and obscure; we may admit it as an hypothesis, but it is an unworkable hypothesis, which in the historical study of literature can only confuse, embarrass, and mislead our inquiry. In like manner, as to the *milieu*, the social environment, we may admit that its influence is real and even important; but can that influence, in which there

is nothing fixed aud constant, be made a subject of science? It is in the power of the artist to shield or withdraw himself from the influence of his environment, and to create a little *milieu* in harmony with his peculiar genius; or he may prove himself refractory and react against the social *milieu*. How else shall we account for the diversity, the antagonism of talents existing in one and the same historical period. Did not Pascal and Saint Simon come each to his full development at the same epoch and in the same country? Did not Aristophanes and Euripides? Hume and Whitfield? Shelley and Scott? William Blake and David Wilkie? Mr Herbert Spencer and Cardinal Newman? In truth, the influence of environment constantly diminishes as an art or a literature advances to maturity. Man has acquired modes of adapting circumstances to himself, and so of economising the force of his individuality; in a highly civilised community every type of mind can find the local habitation and the social group which correspond with its peculiar wants and wishes. Nor indeed is the principle of life and growth altogether that of adaptation to surrounding circumstances; life is also "a resistance and a segregation, or rather a defensive adaptation, antagonistic to the action of external forces," and as the years advance the system of defence becomes more ingenious, more complicated, and more successful. Each of the great influences, the effects of which M. Taine attempts to ascertain, doubtless exists and is operative, but the action of each is occult and variable. If M. Taine's results have an appearance of precision, this arises from

the art with which he manipulates his facts and disposes his arguments.

Such in substance is the criticism of the younger thinker on the method of his master. He recognises no fixed relation between an author and his race or his environment. On the other hand, such a fixed relation can certainly be discovered between an author or artist and the group of his disciples or admirers. He is a centre of force drawing towards him those who spiritually resemble himself. Thus a great author, instead of being the creature of circumstances, in fact creates a moral environment, a world of thoughts and feelings for all those who are attracted, and as we may say enveloped, by his genius. The history of literature is the history of the successive states of thought and feeling proceeding from eminent minds and obtaining the mastery, often in the face of much contemporary opposition, over inferior minds of a like type. With much pomp of scientific terms—some of them possibly seeming more scientific because they are barbarous from a literary point of view—M. Hennequin brings us round to the obvious truth that a powerful writer, if he is in part formed by his age, reacts on his contemporaries and impresses his individuality upon them.

The central fact with respect to the contemporary movement remains, the fact dwelt on with much force by M. Brunetière, that literature has turned away from the lyrical, the personal, or, as they call it, the subjective, to an ardent study of the external world and the life of man in society. The lyrical, the personal, has doubtless a subordinate place in literary criticism,

but the chief work of criticism is that of ascertaining, classifying, and interpreting the facts of literature. We may anticipate that criticism in the immediate future if less touched with emotion will be better informed and less wilful than it has been in the past. If it should be founded on exact knowledge, illuminated by just views, and inspired by the temper of equity we shall have some gains to set over against our losses. The subordination of self to the faithful setting forth of the entire truth of one's subject will be some compensation for the absence of the passion, the raptures, the despairs, the didactic enthusiasm of one great English critic; some compensation even for the quickening half-views and high-spirited, delightful wilfulness of another.[1]

[1] The admirable critical writings of M. Anatole France are not noticed in this article, aiming, as it does, at a study of critical methods rather than of that criticism which professes to be only a record of personal impressions. In the discussion between M. Anatole France and M. Brunetière as to the personal element in criticism, the latter writer seems to me to have maintained his position.

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.[1]

AN eminent English scholar has confessed that he knows no geography save of those countries over which he has himself travelled. And there is, in fact, no method of learning geography to compare with that of tramping across hill and plain with a knapsack on the shoulders. But to know a country aright, one must know it in relation to other lands, and the pedestrian traveller might well begin his geographical studies by inspecting a map of the globe, and by mastering, not indeed the details, but the broader outlines of that map.

In like manner no one can be said to know, in the true sense of the word, any portion of history until he has made close acquaintance with it in the original sources and authorities. Service of high value may be rendered to him by the modern historian; but the modern historian is at best a trustworthy guide describing the country; to know the country aright the traveller must breathe its air, live amongst its inhabitants, become familiar, if possible, with its every height and hollow. The historical student, if he be a true student, must address himself to the mastering of contemporary texts. "To the law and to the testimony, to the charter and to the chronicle, to the abiding records of each succeeding age, writ on the

[1] An introductory lecture to my College class.

parchment or graven on the stone—it is to these that he must go himself and must guide others."[1] But in order to conceive aright his special field of study, the student should have in his mind a broad outline map of the whole course of history, a map not crowded with petty names, but clearly setting forth the facts of prime importance. Having once possessed himself of such an outline map, he will ever after be able to place things aright, and to understand in some degree their true relations. And so he can enter on the close study of his particular province, to win from it by patient observation, research, reflection, that rich knowledge of concrete realities which nourishes the understanding, and fortifies and trains the judgment.

Such an outline map of European history the young student has ready to his hand in Mr Freeman's "General Sketch." It owns no charm of picturesque beauty, or dramatic presentment, or philosophical reflection; but it is what it professes to be—a clue to a labyrinth. The general relations of different periods and different countries to one another are traced through a vast tract of time, extending from the early history of the Aryan nations to the union of Germany in our own days; and this is achieved within the limits of some three or four hundred pages. It would be possible by brute force to hammer the contents of this little book into a boy's head in the course of a few weeks or months, and brute force could hardly be better employed. The young student of history

[1] Mr Freeman, speaking of the duties of the Professor of History, "Methods of Historical Study," pp. 16, 17.

would ever after be able to place things aright, and to understand how this thing is related to that. He might by-and-by proceed to fill in one fragment of the great map with topographical details, nor rest until he had become intimate with every feature of his chosen province.

Had I my way in the teaching of English literature I would have the student start with a "General Sketch of European Literature" somewhat resembling Mr Freeman's "General Sketch of European History" in its aim and scope and manner of treatment. Unfortunately no such book (as far as I am aware) exists, nor does one know where to turn in search of a writer competent to trace such an outline. If Hallam's "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," admirable as it is for its learning and good sense, were recast, revised, amended, and reduced from four large volumes to a single volume of three hundred pages, we should possess something which might at least serve as a stop-gap, until a better book were ready to take its place. But a large book reduced in scale is never quite the same as a small book written with a different purpose; it is not easy merely by omission or condensation to obtain breadth and simplicity of outline.

Such a "General Sketch of European Literature" I would fix once and for all, as an outline map, in the brain of the young student. It is essential that he should conceive the history of English literature as part of a larger movement. It is essential that he should know where were the head-quarters of literature in each successive period—now in Florence or

in Rome, now in Paris, now in London, now at Weimar. When Boccaccio is spoken of in connection with Chaucer, when Tasso or Ariosto is spoken of in connection with Spenser, or Boileau in connection with Dryden and Pope, or Goethe in connection with Carlyle, he ought at least to be able to place Boccaccio and Tasso and Ariosto and Boileau and Goethe aright in the general movement of European literature, and in some measure to conceive aright the relation of each to the literary movement in our own country.

The student of English literature ought, however, to know a good deal more of the entire course and progress of literature in England than he can know of the course and progress of literature in France or Spain or Italy or Germany. But it is hardly to be expected that he can know English literature from the Cædmon poems to Tennyson at first hand. He may be told that it is well for him to learn a little about many things at second hand, and therefore it is well for him to read some short and well-written "History of English Literature," from the first page to the last. If he fully understands the profound difference which there is between first-hand and second-hand knowledge such a history will do him not harm but good. In every direction we take some of our knowledge provisionally and on trust; and if we are slow to put forward as facts statements which we have not verified, and if we refuse to air notions as our own which we have derived from others, our second-hand information may be highly serviceable.

But no "History of English Literature" should

be read until the student is made to perceive and feel what knowledge at first hand indeed is by being put to work on an actual text. Whether English literature can be taught or not, I am convinced that the right method of approaching a great author, the right method of dealing with a great literary period can be taught, and that to teach this is the most important part of a professor's work. And the first lesson which must be enforced is that which enables the student to bring home to himself the vast difference between knowing *about* an author, or knowing *about* a book and knowing the author or the book.

Let us take, then, as our first unit in the study of literature one complete work in prose or verse. A complete work, not a fragment of a long poem, such as one or two books of *Paradise Lost;* not passages from some famous piece of prose, such as "Selections from Gulliver's Travels." It is well that we should choose a great work by a great author, and that author ought himself to belong to a great and fruitful period of literature. A play of Shakespeare's fulfils all the conditions which we require; let us ask on what side the teacher and his class should attack the text before them.

My answer is, They should attack it on every side; there is nothing in the play which the student ought not to try to grasp and hold. Some persons seem to fear that a close attention to textual difficulties, conjectural emendations, obsolete words, allusions to manners and customs, and suchlike will quench an interest in the higher meanings of the play. I have

not found it so. The saying "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" has its just application to the true scholar. The letter indeed without the spirit is dead; but to affect to reach the spirit while ignorant of the letter is the folly either of the dilettante or the half-witted enthusiast. "Let us not press too hard for spirit and feeling in our friends," said Serlo to Wilhelm Meister, when they were instructing their troop of actors in the mysteries of *Hamlet*; "the surest way is first coolly to instruct them in the sense and letter of the piece; if possible to open their understandings. Whoever has the talent will then of his own accord eagerly adopt the spirited feeling and manner of expression; and those who have it not will at least be prevented from acting or reciting altogether falsely. And among actors, as indeed in all cases, there is no worse arrangement than for any one to make pretensions to the spirit of a thing, while the sense and letter of it are not ready and clear to him."[1]

What we desire before all else at this stage of our progress is to form the scholarly habit of mind, which is not content with inaccuracy or slovenliness or blurred renderings. If I ask a boy to explain the lines in *King Lear*—

> "Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
> With every gale and vary of their masters,"

I put the question not because I think it of much importance that he should know how formerly the "lytle byrde called the King's Fysher" was used

[1] B. v. chap. vii. (Carlyle's translation).

as a weather-cock, it having been supposed that "his nebbe or byll wyll be alwayes dyrect or strayght against ye winde." The inner meaning of the passage is worth many king-fishers. But I ask the question because I would train the boy to pass over nothing without trying to understand it, and because the chances are that if he could pass over "halcyon beaks" without understanding it, he has passed over a hundred other things not understood or misunderstood.

The value of questions put at examinations is often erroneously estimated. It is supposed that because the subject-matter of a question is of little importance, therefore the question itself is injudicious or trivial. But every sensible examiner knows that a question seemingly trivial may sometimes serve as an excellent test, which shall ascertain whether attention has been paid to an important class of topics. When for lack of time or through some other causes, a candidate cannot be expected to give full *proof* of his knowledge, the skilful examiner desires him to exhibit the *signs* of that knowledge, signs the presence of which implies that much else is present though all cannot on the moment be shown. Whether these signs be trivial or not matters less than is commonly supposed.

I have said that the student should attack the text before him on every side. It is the business of the examiner to ascertain whether this has been done. Some of his questions will be mere tests of memory; and it is very right that the student should remember accurately what he has read, and that considerable stress should be laid on the cultivation of mere memory. But,

it will be said, this is to give encouragement to the crammer. I am no advocate of cram, but neither am I frightened by the word. A good deal of what is carelessly and ignorantly termed cram I should venture to call sound teaching *as far as it goes.* When a boy is taught the probable dates of Shakespeare's plays, he has learnt something of importance, and he has exercised at least his memory. The chances are that he will always remember that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the fairy fantasy of Shakespeare's earlier years as a dramatic craftsman, and that *The Tempest* exhibits the poet's genius in its maturity, with all the solemn splendour of his moral wisdom; and the time may come when the boy will put this piece of knowledge to a worthy use.

I am no advocate of cram; but when cram means something less than what I have indicated, it may still have its uses, if not for literature yet for life. To have acquired rapidly and accurately the knowledge of a mass of facts, and to possess the art of skilfully presenting that knowledge to others, even though it be swept out of the candidate's memory on the morning after his examination, gives evidence of considerable aptitude and power. This indeed is not to learn literature, but it is in some degree to prepare for life. No lethargic or stupid boy can take cram in this intelligent and vigorous fashion. I remember how the late Mr Forster, when Chief Secretary for Ireland, on each of two occasions when I happened to converse with him, touched on this topic, and used his own experience as evidence of the value of cram, or, to

speak more precisely, the value of the power of taking cram. "I have frequently," he said, "to answer at length a question in the House of Commons requiring for my answer a knowledge of facts which has to be rapidly acquired from others; or I have to make a speech in the preparation of which the knowledge possessed by me must receive immediate and large augmentation from the authorities to whom I refer myself; I am crammed by skilful crammers; I put to use the knowledge which I have gained, and then dismiss from my mind what has been needed only for a passing occasion. And there are numberless cases occurring throughout life, in which it is of the utmost importance to possess the capacity of thus quickly and correctly gaining acquaintance with facts to serve the needs of a day or of an hour."[1]

But an intelligent examiner will give a preference to questions which do more than test the memory. There is a class of questions which serve as a test of close and intelligent reading, and also give the candidate an opportunity of showing whether he has exercised what I may call the faculty of imaginative realisation. If I act as examiner in *King Lear*, and put the question: "Who is the speaker of the following lines and on what occasion are they spoken—

> 'He is attended by a desperate train,
> And what they may incense him to, being apt
> To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear'?"

I test no more than memory. But if I ask this

[1] I report faithfully the substance of what was said. I cannot be sure as to the precise words.

question: "On what occasion does Lear say of Cordelia—

> 'Her voice was ever soft,
> Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman'?"

I do something towards ascertaining the activity of a higher power than memory, the power, as I have termed it, of imaginative realisation. For these words are uttered by Lear at the moment when he is bending over his dead daughter, to catch the low utterance of that voice which is now silent for ever—

> "Ha!
> What is't thou sayst? Her voice was ever soft,
> Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman."

Or the candidate may be required to describe the spectacle on the stage as the curtain is falling at the close of the fifth act of the same play. He will remember of course that the bodies of Goneril and Regan have been produced:—

> "Produce the bodies be they alive or dead."

He will doubtless remember that Lear dies with Cordelia in his arms. But if he should describe the body of Edmund as being also present, he will give evidence that he has failed to imagine the close of the tragedy as it was conceived by Shakespeare. Although the play includes a double plot—the story of the house of Gloucester and the story of the house of Lear—this is not the moment to divide the solemn tragic impression. We do not think now of Edmund; he has been dealt with by the strong right hand of God's justiciary, Edgar; he has been borne off the stage before

the entrance of Lear. And as the curtain falls we see the dead Lear with his three daughters dead; the evil and the good seemingly overtaken by one common doom; but Cordelia the rejected and offcast child, slain by the passion of love which brought her from France to Britain and now restored to her father's arms, while the two unnatural sisters lie apart, each the ruin of her own monstrous passions.

I would have the student, then, approach the piece of literature which forms the subject of his study from every side, and think no pains ill-bestowed which help to bring him into close contact with it. The consideration of a textual crux in itself sharpens the wits; and if the student be alive about other and larger things than verbal difficulties, the retardation of his advance, caused by some question as to a doubtful text, will be of service to him, allowing his mind to work in some way of unconscious cerebration about the higher problems of the poem or the play, as we unconsciously take in a landscape from different points of view while picking our steps among boulders or shingle towards a mountain platform.

> "Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
> The seasons' difference,"

says the banished Duke in the forest of Arden. It is well worth considering whether Shakespeare wrote

> "Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,"

as the folio has it, or whether Theobald's emendation *but* shall be received. The student's eye ought to be as sharp at least as the eye of a tailor threading his

needle. But while delayed by this petty difficulty, he cannot help stealing glances to the right and left; and he will have lived longer, even though unconsciously, in the manly and gentle temper of the Duke who in Arden woods has discovered the sweet uses of adversity.

Let us suppose that the teacher and his pupils set themselves to master the play of *Hamlet*. It would be desirable first of all that the play should be read swiftly and attentively from beginning to end, if possible at a single sitting. A general view of the whole is necessary before attending to minutiæ; otherwise we see nothing but a succession of petty and unconnected points, and the eye runs a risk of that disease of shortsightedness, which has its outward and visible sign in the spectacles worn by the myopic scholar.[1] A broad knowledge of the action of the play and some conception of the characters will often serve us in the interpretation of details, and will give a reason and add an interest to our scrutiny of every sentence and every word. Something in the way of introduction must be said by the teacher as to the sources of the text; and if he have the opportunity he will do well not merely to talk of Folio and Quarto, but to let his pupils see and handle the facsimiles of the first and second Quartos produced by Mr Griggs, together with Mr Staunton's noble facsimile of the first Folio. The thought may strike across the

[1] It is much to be regretted that in the study of a Greek play something of this kind is not attempted.

brain of some forward youth that he need not remain always in leading-strings to an editor or a commentator; that here he can enquire and verify for himself. And thus an impulse may by happy chance be received which shall start a scholarly mind upon a career of original research.

The teacher and his pupils will now read aloud the first scene of the play. They will read it not in character, but speech by speech, each person taking the speech which happens to come to him as the reading passes round the class. Were characters assigned half the class must be silent during certain scenes, and the interest of the listeners would naturally flag. Moreover, the readers would lose the central standpoint from which all the characters are to be viewed. Horatio would know the part of Horatio well; but he would know the other *dramatis personæ* too little except as they are brought into relation with Horatio. We must try, on the contrary, to see Hamlet and Ophelia and the King from Shakespeare's central point of vision, and not rest satisfied with a series of imperfect side views of the whole.

Few persons nowadays seem to feel how powerful an instrument of culture may be found in modest, intelligent, and sympathetic reading aloud. The reciter and the elocutionist of late have done much to rob us of this which is one of the finest of the fine arts. A mongrel something which, at least with the inferior adepts, is neither good reading nor yet veritable acting, but which sets agape the half-educated with the wonder of its airs and attitudinising, its

pseudo-heroics and pseudo-pathos, has usurped the place of the true art of reading aloud, and has made the word "recitation" a terror to quiet folk who are content with intelligence and refinement. Happily in their behalf the great sense-carrier to the Empire, Mr Punch, has at length seen it right to intervene. The reading which we should desire to cultivate is intelligent reading, that is, it should express the meaning of each passage clearly; sympathetic reading, that is, it should convey the feeling delicately; musical reading, that is, it should move in accord with the melody and harmony of what is read, be it in verse or prose. "I often think," writes Sir Henry Taylor in a letter of thirty years ago, now in my hands, "how strange it is that amongst all the efforts which are made in these times to teach young people everything that is to be known, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop upon the wall, the one thing omitted is teaching them to read. At present, to be sure, it is a very rare thing to find any one who *can* teach it; but it is an art which might be propagated from the few to the many with great rapidity if a due appreciation of it were to become current. The rage for lecturing would be a more reasonable rage if that were taught in lectures which can be conveyed only by voice and utterance and not by books. A few weeks ago I was pointing out to Dr Whewell one of the most sublime and majestic passages that I know of in prose (a passage in one of Bacon's prefaces), and I asked him to read it aloud. I was astonished to find that he

read it as the town-crier might have read it. It could not be that he was insensible to the grace and beauty of the language; I believe he was no more insensible to it than I am to the beauty of a Raphael or a Perugino; but he was no more able to produce it in utterance than I am to paint a 'Saint Cecilia' or an 'Incendio del Borgo.'"

Having read the first scene of *Hamlet*, the teacher and his pupils, of our imaginary class-room, will turn back to see whether anything requires comment or explanation. Attention may be called to the fact that the chief character, Hamlet, is not thrust to the front as Richard III. is in the opening scene of the play which bears his name. *King Richard III.* was written when Shakespeare was under Marlowe's influence, and it opens like *Doctor Faustus* and the *Jew of Malta* with a great soliloquy uttered by the protagonist. In *Hamlet*, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, the environment is prepared for the hero of the play before he enters. Again, the teacher may cite the words in which Gildon records a ridiculous tradition: "This scene, I have been assured," says he, "Shakespeare wrote in a charnel-house in the midst of the night," and may make this an occasion for dwelling on the fact that though to a certain extent the scene is one of horror, yet the horror has nothing in it of the raw-head and bloody-bones description, but is throughout elevated and majestic in its mystery and sorrow. The closing speeches especially, it may be noticed, are illuminated by a spiritual beauty, with their references to the sacred season of the Saviour's birth—

> "The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
> No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
> So hallow'd and so gracious is the time,"

and are touched with the light and colour of the dawn already brightening the hill-tops—

> "But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
> Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill."

In the opening lines—

> "*Bernardo.* Who's there?
> *Francisco.* Nay, answer me; stand and unfold yourself,"

the teacher will observe whether due emphasis has been placed on the word *me* as proper to the response and challenge of the sentinel, and will correct the reader if he have laid the stress only on the word *answer*. He will note the uneasiness of the believers in the apparition in contrast with Horatio's half-jesting reply to the question, "What, is Horatio there?" "A piece of him." He will consider whether the line—

> "What, has this thing appeared again to-night?"

should be assigned, as in the Folio, to Marcellus, or, as in the Quartos, to the sceptical Horatio. The lines—

> "Such was the very armour he had on
> When he the ambitious Norway combated,"

on comparision with certain speeches of the gravedigger (Act v. 1, 135—140) will raise the difficult question of the ages of Horatio and Hamlet, but the discussion of this subject may be reserved until later. There will be many obsolete words or words with altered meanings—"rivals of my watch," "sledded Polacks," "unimproved

mettle," "prologue to the omen"—to be explained, and at least one difficult textual crux—

> "As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,"

to be examined. Nor will the teacher fail to call attention to the similarity in the metrical movement of those lines in which Horatio addresses the Ghost—

> "If thou hast any sound or use of voice,
> Speak to me," &c.,

and that of a passage very different in substance and spirit, where Silvius, in *As You Like It,* reproaches old Corin with his ignorance of true love[1]:—

> "If thou remember'st not the slightest folly
> That ever love did make thee run into,
> Thou hast not loved," &c.

In each case the force of the address is enhanced by the thrice recurring hemistich.

Occupied with such an examination, now of the larger features of the play, now of minute details, the students of *Hamlet* would steadily and patiently work their way from the first line to the last. Then a survey of the whole might be given in the form of a prelection, in which among other matters the views of the character of Hamlet, taken by Goethe and Coleridge and other eminent critics, might be considered. Nor would it be uninteresting or amiss to notice the interpretation of the tragedy by great actors, and to call attention to its qualities as an acting play which have enabled it to hold the stage during three centuries.

[1] Noticed in the Clarendon Press edition.

Let us suppose now that the student knows this one play of Shakespeare's for what it is as thoroughly as it can be known. He knows the play as it is, but he does not yet know how it came to be what it is. A mind that is alive and inquiring naturally seeks to discover the causes of things, and is sensible that things are but imperfectly known until they are known in and through their causes. How then did the play of *Hamlet* come to be what it is? Obviously the single work belongs to a group of works which proceeded from the same author and which possess certain common characteristics. The inquirer must advance from the first unit in the study of literature—a single complete work—to a larger unit, the group of works to which it belongs, and thence to the mind from which they all proceeded. And now larger aspects of beauty and deeper sources of interest begin to reveal themselves. There are lines of force which, as it were, run through *Hamlet*, but which have their beginnings elsewhere, and which do not complete themselves until we have reached *The Tempest* and *A Winter's Tale*. To trace the majestic sweep of these lines is a higher delight than to make acquaintance with any Prince of Denmark, even though we should indeed pluck out the heart of his mystery and be able to sound him from his lowest note to the top of his compass. The fruit-tree is more valuable than any of its fruits singly, and possesses a higher kind of beauty: "the blossoms, the green and the ripe fruit of an orange-tree are more beautiful to behold when on the tree, and seen as one with it, than the same growth detached and seen

successively, after their importation into another country and different clime."[1]

To know *Hamlet* aright we must therefore know Shakespeare. We pass from the study of a book to the study of an author. And here our inquiry is two-fold; we must endeavour first to perceive and comprehend the characteristics of our author's genius, and secondly to trace its development and history. This indeed is an achievement for athletes; but by a judicious method something can be done to bring home to the consciousness even of a young student a real sense of the greatness and variety of Shakespeare's powers, and to enable him to understand how those powers put forth first the bud and blossom and then the ripened fruit. He cannot be expected to be familiar with all the comedies, tragedies, histories, poems, which make up Shakespeare's wonderful gift to the world; but we can do something towards putting him in the way of knowing aright Shakespeare's total work and the mind of its creator. He cannot examine carefully seven-and-thirty separate plays; let us then select for his use two small groups —one group intended to bring him into close relation with the poet's genius when working at its highest, the other intended to exhibit the development and history of that genius. Let him read *King Henry IV.*, *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, and if he has not learnt something of the height and depth and breadth of Shakespeare's genius he will never learn to know these.

[1] Coleridge, "Aids to Reflection," Introductory Aphorisms, v.

Let him next place the dramas hitherto read in their chronological order, and add the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as an early comedy in comparison with *As You Like It; King Richard III.* as an early history in comparison with *King Henry IV.; Romeo and Juliet* as an early tragedy in comparison with *King Lear.* He has read indeed only nine plays out of thirty-seven, but if he has not acquired some sense of the growth and history of Shakespeare's powers as a dramatist he will never acquire it. Let one thing more be added, the "Sonnets," in order that his feeling for the man Shakespeare, who forever lurks behind the dramatist, may be quickened and deepened. He has indeed much yet to learn, but very little, it may be hoped, to unlearn.

In the case of Shakespeare we labour under the disadvantage of knowing comparatively little of his life. There are persons indeed to whom this seems to be no disadvantage, and the utterance sounds somewhat heroic in its superiority to facts and to the common sentiment of men when such a person thanks heaven that we can read the poems and plays without troubling ourselves with any of the gossip of biography. What were we the better for endless chatter about Anne Hathaway? I confess that I fall in very contentedly with the general feeling of my fellows to which no relic of the man Shakespeare is wholly without interest. I should like to know him as well, in all the incidents of his life, as I know Dr Johnson. "All my writings," said Goethe, "are fragments of a great confession." And so it is and so it will be with every great writer who

writes not merely out of his head in the dry light of intellect, but out of his head and heart, with intellect, imagination, passions, senses, conscience, will, all conspiring to one common result. We read the great confession in "Werther" and "Faust" and "Tasso" and "Iphigenie" and "Wilhelm Meister" and "Die Wahlverwandschaften" and the "West-östlicher Divan" with twofold intelligence and double sympathy, because we are acquainted with Goethe at Frankfurt and Strassburg and Wetzlar in the "Sturm und Drang" of his youth; with Goethe at Weimar, when the man of the world and the idealist within him—the Tasso and the Antonio—were at odds; with Goethe when, after his stormy struggles towards unbounded spiritual liberty, he found that true freedom was attainable only through a wisely limited activity; with Goethe caught in the toils of his own passions, yet with strong and deliberate hand delivering himself from those toils; with Goethe in the illuminated wisdom, the light, wide and serene, of his elder years.

There is of course gossip of biography with which no true student of literature or of life will concern himself. An accumulation of trivial accident and unorganised circumstance on which mind and character have had no play, and which has had no play on these, is not life but mere lumber and litter. Yet it sometimes happens that a seemingly trivial fact, wholly devoid of interest in itself, becomes an essential link in a chain of evidence on which depends some conclusion of weight. Dr Dryasdust is therefore a person towards whom the true student may at times feel

grateful, and of whom he will not lightly think scorn.

In order to acquire right methods in what I may call the biographical study of literature the student must set himself down to make complete acquaintance with at least one great author, whose life is far more fully known to us than is the life of Shakespeare. It will be his task to collate the author's life and his works, seeking to interpret each in and through the other; to refund now the life into the writings, and now again the writings into the life; or, if this be impossible, to consider each alternately as the text and the other as its commentary. The task is simpler and easier when the author happens to be one whose genius is not of the dramatic order. It is easier to discover Milton in *Comus* or *Samson Agonistes* than to discover Shakespeare in *Othello* or *Macbeth*. And here the student is fortunate in being able to put himself under the guidance of Professor Masson, so that while attempting to know Milton in *Comus* and *Lycidas*, in the *Sonnets* in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* in the *Areopagitica* and the *Letter on Education*, and other writings in verse and prose, one may also come to know him as the lady of his college, virginal in aspect and purity of heart, if virile in intellect and will; as the young recluse at Horton among his books or wandering in the meadows by the banks of the Colne; in London as the armed champion of liberty, domestic, civil, and religious; in the chamber of the Council of State as Latin secretary; in his house near Bunhill Fields dictating in his blindness from the

elbow-chair—the "organ-voice of England" unheard amid the noise of Restoration riot—or sitting at the door in sunny weather in his grey, coarse cloth coat, his face pale but not cadaverous, and his sightless eyes still clear, to outward view, of blemish or of spot.

Knowing Milton thus, we shall know *Samson Agonistes* more truly and fully than if we had never passed beyond the poem to its author, and we shall also know not only *what it is* but *how it came to be what it is.* In refunding the poem into the life, and interpreting the life by the poem, we have come to see and feel many things which otherwise must have escaped our notice. But let Professor Masson take my place and use the expositor's pointing-rod :—

"The story of Samson must have seemed to Milton a metaphor or allegory of much of his own life in its later stages. He also, in his veteran days, after the Restoration, was a champion at bay, a prophet warrior left alone among men of a different faith and different manners—Philistines, who exulted in the ruin of his cause, and wreaked their wrath upon him for his past services to that cause by insults, calumnies, and jeers at his misfortunes and the cause itself. He also was blind as Samson had been—groping about among the malignant conditions that had befallen him, helplessly dependent on the guiding of others, and bereft of the external consolations and means of resistance to his scorners that might have come to him through sight. He also had to live mainly in the imagery of the past. In that past, too, there were similarities in his case to that of Samson. Like Samson, substantially, he had been a Nazarite—no drinker of wine or strong drink, but one who had always been an ascetic in his dedicated service to great designs. And the chief blunder in his life, that which had gone nearest to wreck it, and had left the most marring consequences and the most painful reflections, was the very blunder of which, twice repeated, Samson had to accuse himself. Like Samson, he had married a Philistine woman—one not of his own tribe, and having no thoughts or interests in common with his own; and, like Samson, he had

suffered indignities from this wife and her relations, till he had learnt to rue the match. . . . In short, there must have rushed upon Milton, contemplating in his later life the story of the blind Samson among the Philistines, so many similarities with his own case, that there is little wonder that he then selected this subject for poetic treatment. While writing *Samson Agonistes* (*i.e.* Samson the Agonist, Athlete, or Wrestler) he must have been secretly conscious throughout that he was representing much of his own feelings and experience; and the reader of the poem who knows anything of Milton's life has this pressed upon him at every turn."

In Milton's life, as in Milton's prose writings, occur passages which are not admirable, which are indeed the reverse of admirable. The student of literature, we may presume, is a lover of beauty, and the temptation with him to shirk the ugly passages of a life is a temptation easily understood. Here he may say, as Mr Matthew Arnold has said of Shelley, here, in *Comus* and *Samson*, here in the Council Chamber sheltering Davenant from dangers incurred through his Royalist ardours, here, in company with Lawrence, listening to the lute well touched, is the Milton we desire to know, the Milton who delights. Let us, at least as long as we are able, avert our eyes from the Milton who disgusts, from the unamiable Milton, the Milton who calls his opponent "an idiot by breeding and a solicitor by presumption," the Milton who helped to embitter his daughters' lives, and remembered them as "unkind children" in his will. What is gained by forcing this disgusting Milton on our attention? We choose, if we can, to retain a charming picture of the great poet. The delightful Milton is the true Milton after all. Ah, give us back the delightful Milton!

But the lover of beauty is sometimes a lover of truth,

and in the long run he will gain not only more of truth but more of beauty and delight by cultivating the power and habit of seeing things as they are, and understanding them aright, and acquiring the temper of justice and of charity, than if he were to indulge what, to speak plainly, is a kind of fastidious egotism. A man compassed about with infirmity, yet a heroic man, is after all better worth knowing than either a phantom or a fragment of a man. And indeed unless we know the whole man we shall comprehend no fragment aright. It was not admirable in Milton that he should have darkened and saddened his young wife's bridal days. It seems at a first glance ridiculous and odious that he should have celebrated her flight from his house by rushing before the public with a pamphlet on divorce; it seems something worse than odious that he should have proposed marriage to another woman while Mary still lived, and when Miss Davis, had she accepted his proposal, must have sacrificed her reputation, and perhaps her happiness, for his sake. Was it not, then, the disgusting Milton who acted thus? No, not the disgusting Milton, but the very Milton who beheld the Lady of *Comus*, and who presents in his pamphlets on divorce noble and exalted views on this same subject of marriage. When, instead of picking and choosing certain fragments of Milton and constructing from these a charming vision to gratify our own peculiar sentiment, we come to know and understand the actual man, we can do justice, and a justice not devoid of charity, to the errors of the haughty idealist, we shall find new meanings in the Eve and the Dalila

of his poems; and if we choose to moralise, we may learn the humbling truth that human greatness and human infirmity are often near akin, and that to dwell in the empyrean, though glorious for a mortal, is not always the best preparation for sitting with grace and amiability by the fireside.

We shall now assume that our student of literature has mastered what I have termed the biographical method of study. Inquiring how this or that piece of literature came to be what it is, he perceived that it belongs to a group of works, all possessing certain characteristics in common, works all of which proceeded from one and the same mind, and he has been led to inquire into the nature of that mind and the history of its development. There are qualities possessed in common by *King Henry IV.* and *Measure for Measure* and *Lear* and *The Tempest* which cannot be found in *Sejanus* or *The Jew of Malta,* or *The Broken Heart;* signs and tokens there are which would make us cry "Shakespeare!" were we to discover one of these plays for the first time in a copy without title-page or trace of the author's name. But looking farther, our student finds certain common characteristics belonging to the plays of Shakespeare and to those of Ben Jonson and Marlowe and Ford which he cannot find in plays by Dryden, or Lee, or Rowe. It becomes evident to him that all Shakespeare's plays belong to a larger group consisting of the works of the Elizabethan age. Thus, seeking to discover how *Hamlet* or *Lear* or *The Tempest* came to be what it is, he is compelled to pass beyond

the author of those plays, to leave the biographical study of literature, and to enter on the wider field of historical study. He now needs to know more than an author, he must know a period.

In the study of an individual author the inquirer, as we have seen, first investigates the peculiar nature of the author's genius, and then endeavours to trace its development through successive stages; so here, in the historical study of literature, he will seek first to understand the leading characteristics of the age, and secondly, to follow the movement of the age, observing how it arose out of the past, how it culminated, how it prepared the way for a new epoch and then declined. To know a period aright we must know its outward body and its inward spirit; we must study it in its actions, its passions, and its thought. What were its great achievements in the material world and its daily habits of social life? What were its dominant emotions? what were its guiding ideas? And finally, is there any common element or principle which manifests itself alike in ideas, emotions, and action?

Can we, for example, perceive any central and ruling tendency in the age which Shakespeare and Bacon and Hooker and Spenser represent in literature? I have elsewhere ventured to assert that a profound interest in reality as opposed to abstractions, a rich feeling for concrete fact, was the dominant characteristic of the Elizabethan age. The greatest theological thinker of the time was not greatly concerned about the abstract dogmas of theology, but gave the full force of his

mind to laying the foundations and building up, like a wise master-builder, the fabric of the Anglican Church. The great philosopher of the Elizabethan age looked with disdain on the speculations *in vacuo*, as they appeared to him, of the elder philosophies; his own discoveries were "copied," as he says, "from a very ancient model, even the world itself." He too, like Hooker, desired to be a master-builder; he would fain "lay a foundation in the human understanding for a holy temple after the model of the world." Light indeed seemed precious to Bacon, but precious chiefly in order to the attainment of fruit. Spenser, the dreamer of fairyland, in his romantic epic professes not to justify the ways of God to man as Milton afterwards professed; he does not, like Pope, turn into verse a series of philosophical or pseudo-philosophical views concerning the nature and state of man with respect to the universe; he professes no other general intention than "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." And Shakespeare, with his company of fellow-dramatists, is profoundly interested in the characters and deeds of men and women, in their relations one with another, their joys and sorrows, their loves and hatreds, their laughter and their tears; and hence the possibility of his great dramatic creations.

The action, the emotions, and the ideas of an age may to some extent, and as a matter of convenience, be studied apart from one another; the action, in the lives of statesmen and warriors, and above all in records of the social life of the time; the emotions, in its poetry

and art; the ideas, in the writings of its theologians, philosophers, moralists, men of science. But we must also endeavour to see ideas, passions, action, in their vital relations and mutual intercourse as parts of a living organism; that is, we must study not only the anatomy but the physiology of the age. There are epochs, such as that of the French Revolution, when ideas have inflamed passions, and passions have transformed themselves into ideas, and when both ideas and passions hurry forward to obtain expression and realisation in some stupendous deed; and such epochs of flood and fire seldom pass without displacing old strata and creating a new stratum, from which flowers and fruits of kinds hitherto unknown will in due time arise.

I have said that the student will do more than study the characteristics of the period; he will watch the life of the period in the various moments of its development and its decline. If a writer belongs to an age in which a revolution in ideas is accomplishing itself, in which old dogmas are passing away, although this great fact—the dying of an old faith—may be the central characteristic of the epoch, it matters much to the individual whether he is summoned to take part in the movement at this moment or at that. He may arrive at manhood just when the weariness and profound indifference, proper to the first moment in the decay and approaching agony of an old belief, are universal. He will still continue a believer, but his belief will be no more than a piece of lifeless custom. Or he may belong to the moment of awakening doubt and critical inquiry. Or,

yet again, to the moment when the negation of a received faith has itself become the newer creed, when the old interests and passions connected with traditional beliefs are alarmed, and a combat hand to hand is being waged. Or the epoch of contemptuous jest and mockery may have arrived. Or the first presages may already have been felt of the serious faith of the future.[1]

No period of our literature lends itself more naturally to historical study, and indeed to biographical study also, than the eighteenth century. The sources of information are abundant; material as delightful as it is important lies open before the student; he is constantly in the company of eminent men and interesting women. The period is sufficiently remote from our own day to permit us to view it dispassionately; and the chief movements of the time can be clearly discerned in their origin, development, and issue. Our historian of English thought in that century, Mr Leslie Stephen, in a lecture on the study of English Literature, delivered at St Andrews, spoke with excellent judgment of acquaintance with the philosophy of an age and acquaintance with its social conditions as essential to a right knowledge of its literature. The lecturer did not quote an admirable page from the "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," which is so much to my purpose that I shall make amends for Mr Stephen's error by copying it here.

[1] I have drawn my illustration from Jouffroy's remarkable study "Comment les Dogmes finissent."

"The character of an imaginative literature is a function of many forces. It depends not only upon the current philosophy, but upon the inherited peculiarities of the race, upon its history, its climate, its social and political relations, and upon individual peculiarities of mind and temperament, which defy all attempt at explanation. Thus, in our English literature of the eighteenth century, we can see the reflection of the national character; its sturdy common sense; the intellectual shortsightedness which enables it to grasp details whilst rejecting general systems; the resulting tendency to compromise, which leads it to acquiesce in heterogeneous masses of opinions; its humour, its deep moral feeling, its prejudices, its strong animal propensities, and so forth. Or, again, the social development affects the literature. The whole tone of thought is evidently coloured by the sentiments of a nation definitely emerging from the older organisation to a modern order of society. We see the formation of an important middle-class and of an audience composed, not of solitary students or magnificent nobles, but of merchants, politicians, lawyers, and doctors, eager for amusement, delighting in infinite personal gossip, and talking over its own peculiarities with ceaseless interest in coffee-houses, clubs, and theatres. Nor, again, are the political influences unimportant. The cessation of the fierce struggles of the previous century culminating in the undisputed supremacy of a parliamentary oligarchy, led to a dying out of the vehement discussions which at other periods have occupied men's minds exclusively, and made room for that theological controversy which I have described, and which itself disappeared as the political interests revived in the last half of the century. Foreign influences, again, would have to be considered. French literature was to Dryden and Pope what Italian had been to Spenser and Milton; the influence of Bayle may be traced in the earlier criticism, as at a later period Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire profoundly affected English thought. The attempt, then, to deduce Pope from Clarke, or to connect Swift with Butler, to the neglect of the many conflicting influences would be necessarily illusory. It is not the less true that remarkable analogies may be traced between the speculative and the imaginative literature. The complex conditions to which I have referred affected both modes of thought; and sometimes we may best regard the two manifestations as springing from the same root, sometimes as directly influencing each other."[1]

[1] "History of English Thought," &c., vol. ii. p. 330.

Between the epoch of Puritan enthusiasm and the epoch of revolutionary enthusiasm lies this rich level period of common sense, when enthusiasm was discredited and yet could not long be suppressed. If we would understand its literature aright we should study the age not only in the "Rape of the Lock" and the "Essay on Man," in "The Spectator" and "Gulliver," in "Clarissa" and "Tom Jones," but in the letters of Horace Walpole, and those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the pictures of Hogarth, the sermons of Butler, the lives of Wesley and Whitfield, the operas and oratorios of Handel, the brilliant mockeries of Voltaire, and the tears and raptures of Rousseau.

Once more lifting his eyes and looking abroad, the student of English literature will perceive that there are groups of writings not arbitrarily formed and larger than can be comprehended within any age or even within the history of any nation. He will perceive a kinship between *Macbeth* and *The Orphan* and *Phèdre* and *Le Roi s'amuse* and the *Agamemnon* and the *Medea*. All these belong to the dramatic order of writings. What then is the drama? What are its laws or principles? How does it differ from the epic? What constitutes a tragedy? What are the essentials of a tragic plot? What is required in the character of a tragic hero? That is to say, the investigator who has examined a piece of literature simply in order to know what it is, and who inquiring then how it came to be what it is, has studied first the genius of an individual author and next the genius of a particular period to which that author belongs, is now compelled to take a

wider view; and seeking to know whether there be not certain principles common to all literature and derived from the general mind of humanity, he passes from the biographical and the historical to the philosophical study of literature.

That there are such general laws or principles applying to the various forms of literature, in whatever age and in whatever clime produced, is certain; but now-a-days the prevalence of the historical method, as exercised most commonly within some narrow field, has caused a natural timidity in putting forth those large inductions which the historical method itself would justify if the range of its operation were extended. It is not desirable that the professor of English literature should become a lecturer on the science of the beautiful or the theory of the fine arts. In and through his historical criticism, however, will assuredly gleam certain openings and vistas leading in the direction of that criticism which I have termed philosophical. And if English literature be connected in our college and university courses with either Greek or Latin, or French or German literature, the thoughtful student can hardly fail to be aroused by his comparative studies to consider questions which demand an answer from philosophy. Two books which I should certainly like to see in the hand of every student of literature are the "Poetic" of Aristotle and Lessing's "Laocoon."

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