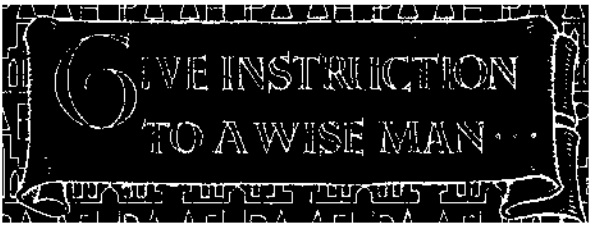
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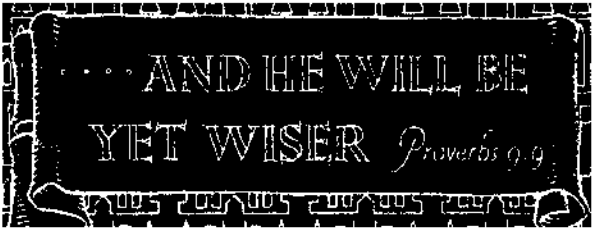
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VOLUME IV
1780-1830

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THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL
1780-1830

based on the original work of
Arthur Compton-Rickett, M.A., LL.D.
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VOLUME IV

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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

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Chapter One

The Nature of the Movement

No label can accurately describe a period so rich and varied in achievement as the fifty years following the death of Johnson. Yet, while allowing for those distinctive qualities that a genius gives to, rather than takes from, an age, there will be found certain underlying characteristics linking the writers of the period together in a masonic brotherhood.

The term that best fits these varying yet fundamentally intimate features is the term Romance, for, trite and well-worn though it be, it expresses, as does no other word, the peculiar appeal to the imagination made by the great writers of this time.

What is Romanticism? What is this emotional tide which ebbs and flows throughout literary history, reaching high-water mark in the ages of Shakespeare and of Wordsworth, yet taking on so varying a complexion in the work, say, of a Marlowe or a Scott?

Romanticism, generally speaking, is the expression in terms of art of sharpened sensibilities and heightened imaginative feeling. Romanticism is an imaginative point of view that has influenced many art forms, and has left its mark also on philosophy and history The loose popular meaning attached to the word indicates

roughly its defects rather than its merits, for it is often used as synonymous with extravagances and sentimentality.

The word classical has been mentioned with reference to eighteenth-century literary modes and, in opposing to it the word romantic, we cannot do better than examine the suggestive remarks of Walter Pater on the subject:

> "What is classical comes to us out of the cool and quiet of other times, as a measure of what a long experience has shown us will, at least, never displease us. And in the classical literature of Greece and Rome, as in the classics of the last century, the essentially classical element is that quality of order in beauty which they possess, indeed, in a pre-eminent degree."

Order, clarity, tranquillity are obviously classical qualities, and these are the qualities that have engaged our attention in dealing with the literature of the Dryden and Johnson age. Pater goes on to define the romantic character in art as consisting in " the addition of strangeness to beauty ". Further he adds :

> "The essential elements of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty; and it is as the accidental effect of these qualities only, that it seeks the Middle Ages; because in the overcharged atmosphere of the Middle Ages there are unworked sources of romantic effect, of a strange beauty to-be won by strong imagination out of things unlikely or remote."

Curiosity and the love of beauty. These are certainly integral factors in Romanticism, the one intellectual, the other emotional. Are they, however,

the only essential elements? Romanticism seems to me more broadly based than this; more complex also.

May we not say that the features most insistent in Romanticism are a subtle sense of mystery, an exuberant intellectual curiosity, and an instinct for the elemental simplicities of life?

The supreme Romantic movement in English letters was the Renascence. It had transformed not only English but European life; but, like every strong impulse in art and life, it had been followed by a period of reaction. The great Romanticists were, as I have said, also realists, but among the lesser spirits Romanticism always generates a certain tendency to exaggeration and aloofness from the conditions of ordinary life. It was the business of the common-sense, unimpassioned school that followed to correct these defects. This it accomplished and it bequeathed to English literature a greater clarity, a closer correspondence with the actualities of life; then, in its turn, becoming artificial and one-sided, another tidal movement was needed for purposes of spiritual adjustment.

The Romantic Revival was the result of no one cause. Broadly speaking, it was the inevitable corollary of the Renascence and Reformation. The dignity and importance of man as man, the glories of the world of Nature—these ideas, of which we hear so much at the close of the eighteenth century, were born centuries before, and had been gradually working in men's minds through all the political unrest of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first

flowering of Romanticism in England, the bloody horrors of the French Revolution, the kindling of a new idealistic philosophy in Germany under Kant and Hegel, the political upheaval in America—all these things were but varying symptoms of a general ferment that had lasted on from the fifteenth century.

it is well to remember this for, although the social theories of Rousseau roughly embodied in the familiar phrase, the " return to Nature ", did materially affect doctrinaires like William Godwin, and through Godwin, Shelley; and although the battle-cry of the Revolutionaries, " Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity ", impressed itself on the youthful imagination of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the general characteristics of the Revival suggested above were collateral with the Revolution, not derived from it. They arose, as we may see, in verse and fiction during the lifetime of Pope, and impressed many an imagination long before the overthrow of the Bastille had given these ideas a more urgent vitality.

Let us consider these characteristics of Romance at greater length.

The *subtle sense of mystery* is found on analysis to be a complex emotion compounded of awe in the presence of the unknown, wonder in presence of the known, and an exquisite response to manifestations of beauty wherever they may be found—that we may call, for want of a better word, Rapture.[1]

[1] Such are the elements which lie implicit in Theodore Watts-Dunton's famous phrase, " the renascence of wonder ".

Now, if we search for an expression of this in the life of the age under discussion, we shall meet it in philosophy, in history, in its attitude towards Nature and towards social life. Romanticism, when it touches philosophy, favours mysticism and idealism. For the more subtle our sense of mystery the less satisfied we are with the materialistic explanation of the universe, and the more we demand an ideal rather than an empirical solution of phenomena.

In history the awakened sensibility led to the study of the past, to fond dallyings with medievalism. It was because many thought they saw in medievalism a richer inspiration for the mysterious forces they felt about them that they turned from modern conditions of life towards the folk-lore and legendary wealth of the Middle Ages. So emphatic a part did medievalism play in the revival of Romance that Heine saw in it merely the reproduction of the life of the Middle Ages. Yet medievalism, as Pater shrewdly observed, is an accidental, not an essential, characteristic of Romance.

At its onset, Romance drives those who feel its spell into strange by-paths of thought and feeling, away from the broad highway of ordinary human experience. It was thus with Marlowe in his world-moving visions; thus with Scott in his fervent medievalism. But ultimately it brings us back to the highway—only at a greater elevation. We seek it first in the thunder and the earthquake of the fantastic and bizarre, and find it, after all, in the still, small voice

of everyday life. In other words, Romanticism is not opposed to reality. It is reality transfigured by new powers of vision and feeling. In the deep sense of the word, Marlowe and Scott are realistic *because of* their Romanticism. Marlowe hinted at it in his *Edward II,* though he died too young to realise its full implication. Scott realised it perfectly in his faithful pictures of Scottish life and character.

It was the element of mysticism in mediaeval life that appealed, heightened by the passage of time and the unlikeness of life then to life under modern conditions. The result of this was to make philosophy more historical, and history more philosophical. As regards the effect of the sense of mysticism on natural phenomena—an effect quite patent not only in the poetry but in the prose also of the. time—this much may be said : it is not that men likp Wordsworth and Shelley cared for Nature *more* than did Shakespeare, or in our own time Tennyson, but they cared in a *different* way. Wordsworth found brooding and tranquillising thought at the heart of Nature; Shelley an ardent and persuasive love. In other words, they spiritualised Nature. To Shakespeare the primrose was a pretty yellow flower, and " nothing more ". To Tennyson the landscape was an exquisite stage property, in which human emotions might be pictorially framed. Shakespeare, with the hearty objectivity of his age, loved Nature without questioning how and why. Tennyson, with the introspective tendency of his age, put his sentiment under the microscope, and found that

modern science had stripped Nature of her pontifical robe of metaphysics.

The gradual reawakening of this sense of mystery may be seen by tracing the Nature-poetry of the age from Thomson's *Seasons* to the songs of Blake, and noting the change from a friendly appraising of Nature's charm to a passionate abandonment to her magic.

We now turn to our second characteristic: an *exuberant intellectual curiosity.*

Given an increased sense of awe, wonder, and beauty—in short, an illumination of the imagining faculty—the reaction of this on the more purely intellectual or rationalising side of man is natural and inevitable.

The enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, sometimes called the Gothic Revival, was two-sided. On the one, it satisfied the emotional sense of wonder; on the other, the intellectual sense of curiosity. Men like Addison saw only the extravagant side of the movement. " Gothic " for them was a term of reproach connoting what was grotesque and lawless in art and literature, and they failed completely to realise that this was merely a symptom of the intense vitality of mediaeval methods and ideals, and was in no way an integral part of it. Even in Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, where the extravagances of mediaevalism are patent enough, the strength of mediaevalism as an artistic and intellectual inspiration is not hard to discover. Walpole's imitation castle at Strawberry Hill

may have been little more than an amusing toy, but the genuine interest in the great architecture of the Middle Ages involved in it pioneered not merely the richer antiquarian interest of Scott, but the ecclesiastical splendour of the Tractarian Movement, and the "fundamental brain-work" of the Pre-Raphaelite school. Ridiculous and dull his *Castle of Otranto* may appear today, but it prepared the way for *Ivanhoe*, reminded men once more of feudal times, and stirred an interest in the past that was to find a more intelligent expression in the revival of old ballad poetry, the study of such mediaeval arts as glass-staining, wood-carving, tapestry embroidery, and a livelier acknowledgment of the greatness of an age that gave us our finest cathedrals and churches.

Nowhere is the intellectual curiosity of Romanticism better shown than in the regeneration of English poetic style. The earlier dissatisfaction with eighteenth-century conventions led to a mere imitation of Spenser. That is always the case in the history of literary movements. First of all there is a reversion to an elder convention, a mere slavish return to other fashions. It is only gradually realised that not by imitation but by a fresh creative outburst, by an expression of the present in terms not of ancient externals, but of ancient ideals and tendencies, Art is revivified and glorified.

The first sign of the change, then, is in the imitation of Spenser shown in such poems as Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* and Shenstone's *Schoolmistress.* The more

important stage is reached when Bishop Percy, with his ballad collection, reminded men of the metrical inspiration to be found elsewhere than in Dryden and Pope.

Percy's *Cliques of Ancient English Poetry,* consisting of old heroic ballads, songs, and other pieces of our earlier poetry, -was published in three volumes in 1765, The value of this store to modern literature was made clear in the revival of Romance. The metrical peculiarities of the old ballad gave fresh inspiration to great poets like Coleridge and Keats? Without these ballads rescued by Percy it were a hard matter to imagine how our great Romantic poets would have shaped. Wordsworth's own indebtedness is slight, but Scott's obligations are obvious. Both *The Ancient Mariner* and La *Be//e Dame Sans Merci* are directly inspired by their fresh *naivete,* and in much of the work of Rossetti, and the earlier work of William Morris, the indebtedness is unquestionable.

Also in poetry we have not only to reckon with the aesthetic inspiration, with the heightened sensibility of the imagination, but with the speculative, intellectual power that underlies the best work of such writers as Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge.

Incoherent and contradictory as this may prove at times, it is impossible to ignore the suggestiveness of Wordsworth's poetic theory, of Shelley's transcendentalism, and Coleridge's critical insight. As an illustration, take Shelley's transcendental reading of Nature, which some readers find so vague and misty.

Acceptable it may not be to some minds; vague it assuredly is not, since Shelley's philosophy of Nature is perfectly clear and consistent, and in his finest lyrics, such as *The Cloud* and *The West Wind*, there is a logical power of development and, when the poet is so disposed, a scientific accuracy that are too often overlooked by the slovenly reader.

The revolution wrought in literary criticism by the Romantic writers is a matter of common knowledge. Roughly speaking, what they did was to transform criticism from the cult of finding faults to the art of revealing beauties. They brought into the interpretation of great writers the creative imagination of the poet. The historical method of criticism, inaugurated by Coleridge, substituted order for chaos; it viewed the subject relatively in terms of its time and place; it put an end to the old absolute standard of criticism, in which current prejudices and standards served as the one criterion. That some of the Romantic critics, for all their brilliance and sensibility, failed to transcend at times the true spirit of their own day or peculiar idiosyncrasies of temperament is merely an indication of human infirmity. The important point is, that the view they upheld has been responsible for the richest and most suggestive criticism that our literature can boast, for in its romantic inspiration it is both intellectual and imaginative—intellectual in its form, imaginative in its comprehending vision of the inner soul of literature.

The third characteristic noted in Romanticism was

an instinct for the elemental simplicities of life. This may be traced both in the poetry and prose of the time. Rousseau is the pioneer here. He it was who eloquently emphasised the dignity of man as man and dwelt upon the transcendent power of human love. The reaction against the complexities of civilisation, especially insistent in the growing life of our teeming cities, that is so marked in the writing of socialistic idealists like Edward Carpenter and William Morris started with Rousseau.

The new attitude towards Nature was indeed only part of a larger naturalism that sought to bring us back to the bosom of Nature, and reclaim us from the superfluous conventions with which we had choked the elemental verities of life. As a result of this we got the idealising of childhood by Blake and Wordsworth, and of simple unsophisticated natures by Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge; and the sense of mystery, which we have seen sending seekers to a remote past, was gradually realised to be capable of satisfaction closer at hand. The great Romantic poets found it not only in the inspiration of the Middle Ages and in Greek art, but also in the simplicities of everyday life; an ordinary sunset, a walk over the hills, a cluster of spring flowers, the rain-bearing west wind, the song of the nightingale, a cottage girl, a simple old dalesman —such are a few of the subjects that inspired to supreme achievement a Wordsworth, a Coleridge, a Shelley, a Keats.

The Humanistic teaching that lay implicit here can

be traced clearly in the more didactic, if less imaginative, literature of America. Emerson's spiritual asceticism; Thoreau's " reduction of life to its lowest terms ", and his sylvan solitudes; the open-air, democratic fervour of Whitman, are offshoots of Romanticism; while the absorption by Byron and Shelley of certain aspects of the French Revolution, the glorification of Liberty, the vindication of the natural instincts—these matters, that merged into the great stream of humanitarian sentiment which swept through our life and literature in the early years of the nineteenth century, had their source and inspiration in the revival of Romance.

Romanticism as expressed in the literature of the age had, of course, in common with every great movement, definite limitations of its own. It was essentially a school of ideas, of splendid generalisations. Little attempt was made by its exponents to apply their ideas to the concrete problems of the day; it harped on man rather than on men; sought the way of escape from modern conditions of life, rather than a reconstruction of that life, in its reaction against the town and boudoir literature of the previous age; too readily accepted what was primitive, wild, strange, and picturesque as the essential glories of life. Among its lesser souls, moreover, we see the tendency to exalt the merely bizarre and to replace the old conventions of " correctness " at all costs by extravagance at all costs.

But all this was inevitable. No great movement ever took place that did not sweep out of proper per-

spective certain aspects of life and thought. In the zeal for fresh air some windows are bound to get smashed, as Lowell puts it in one of his essays. The chief thing to remember is that the fresh air was badly wanted; our literature needed a vivifying and expanding influence. This the writers of the time achieved.

Chapter Two

Continental Influences on the English Romantic Revival

(i) The Influence of Germany

DURING the last few years of the eighteenth century an extraneous influence from Germany came to swell the insular stream of change that had already modified considerably the literary ideas of an Addisonian, Popian, and Johnsonian age. In Germany the literary climate had been much the same as in England. French Classicism, that from the time of the Restoration had so profoundly affected English literature, had taken root even more firmly in Germany. Johann Jacob Bodmer and his follower, Heinrich Myller, sounded a vigorous protest against the literary domination of France, and by the publication of the *Nibelungelied* stirred the imagination of their countrymen to refashion a national literature, and turned their thoughts in the direction of greater freedom, greater spontaneity, a richer play of fancy.[1] We need not concern ourselves with the band of writers who followed in their lead, for this is a matter of German literary history. It is sufficient to note the increasing interest in things mediaeval, that showed unmis-

takably the flow of the Romantic tide; most significant sign of all, the sudden absorbing interest in the Shakespearean drama. Wieland's work as translator was followed by the more famous Tieck-Schlegel translations (1797-1813), but it was Wieland who first interested Goethe in Shakespeare, and Herder who brought the magic of mediaeval folk-song into his life. Meam while Lessing, about 1767, had tried to show the greater affinity between Sophocles and Shakespeare than between Sophocles and the French classical dramatists.

In short, just as in England, the new movement was a protest and a challenge to the decorous, common-sense, unimaginative ideals that had hitherto ruled poetry and prose. The protest was more violent, the reaction more excessive than in England, and the mediævalism of the new school laid greater stress on supernaturalism and mythology. Pure fantasy overran the literature to a degree of extravagance that found no counterpart in our country. But the classical models it superseded were less formidable than ours in England. Our Romantic revival, as we have seen, proceeded more slowly and for a long time its pioneers compromised with the classicists, whose impressive contribution to letters there was no denying, and even our greatest Romantic writers showed the lingering influence of the school of Dryden and Pope?

In Germany there were no great writers of the Classical school, so the movement went on more impetuously, and with little attempt at compromise; it synchronised with the awakening of German national

self-consciousness. It was natural, therefore, that it should assume an importance that reacted on English literature. It had the good fortune to sweep into the stream some minds of the first magnitude: the youthful Goethe; the scholarly Schlegel brothers; Novalis, the mystic; Fouqué, the author of *Undine*, Brentano, the romancer; and Uhland, one of the founders of Romance philology.

Then in April 1788 a paper was read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh by that thorough-going sentimentalist Henry Mackenzie, in which attention was drawn to German Romantic literature, and the " literary persons of Edinburgh " learned that " the taste which dictated the German compositions was of a kind as nearly allied to the English as their language; those who were from their youth accustomed to admire Shakespeare and Milton became acquainted for the first time with a race of poets who had the same lofty ambition to spurn the flaming boundaries of the universe and investigate the realms of chaos and old Night; and of dramatists who, disclaiming the pedantry of the unities, sought, at the expense of occasional improbabilities and extravagance, to present life on the stage in its scenes of wildest contrast, and in all its boundless variety of character. . . . Their fictitious narratives, their ballad poetry, and other branches of their literature which are particularly apt to bear the stamp of the extravagant and the supernatural began also to occupy the attention of the British literati."

Some years later (1794) Scott became acquainted with a translation of Burger's poems by William Taylor of Woolwich, having heard about his harrowing ballad L*enore,* and in the following year he published a translation of this poem which had greatly impressed him. Others beside Scott and Taylor had anglicised the poem, which had certainly left a strong impression on the imagination of the time.

Taylor is an important connecting link between German and English Romanticism. By his translations and literary criticism he did much to make German literature known in England. He had become acquainted with Goethe while in Germany, and had published translations of Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (1793). His powers of criticism may have been small, and his tastes were eclectic, but of his skill as a translator there can be no question: "You have made me hunger and thirst after German poetry," wrote Southey in 1799. Certainly he prepared the way for a greater mediator between the two countries—Thomas Carlyle.

One distinctive feature of German Romantic literature lay in its multitude of fictions in verse and prose, dealing with ancient magic and sorceries. They found a more congenial soil amid the legend-haunted scenery of the Rhine and the Black Forest than in our island; and it must be allowed that German concocters of melodramatic romances managed their "horrors" better than did Horace Walpole in his *Castle of Otranto.* But the cult of the blood-curdler

was not confined to Germany; and if Walpole owed nothing to their imaginings, Mrs. Radcliffe and Monk Lewis, Beckford and Mrs. Shelley, assuredly did; while Scott's *Lay of the "Last Minstrel* and *Marmion* were not free of debt to Goethe's play, *Goetz* (1773).

Just as Goethe's *Goetz* gave an impulse to Scott, so did his *Sorrows of Werther* colour the work of Byron. The *diablerie,* freely made use of in Schiller's plays, left its impress on Coleridge.

[More powerfully still did Kant influence the English Romantic movement on its intellectual side. Passing through the prismatic imagination of Coleridge, lit served as a transcendental beacon to fire English religious thought, and to its inspiration both the High and Broad Church movements owe philosophic obligations)

Thus, in reviewing the main current of the German influence in Britain, we have seen that England, through her Shakespeare, first carried the sacred fire of Romanticism to Germany. It is quite clear that the earlier phases of our Romanticism were quite independent. Percy's *Reliques,* Macpherson's *Ossian,* Waipole's *Romances,* owed nothing to our Continental neighbours. Only in the later years of the century did Germany repay her debt to England, and she did so on two distinct occasions. William Taylor, Scott, and Monk Lewis are the earlier borrowers from Germany. The second stage opens with Coleridge, and is rounded off by Carlyle.

With the differences between English and German

Romanticism we are scarcely concerned in this necessarily brief sketch, but this much may be said: German Romanticism was more philosophic and critical, more coherent in its body of writing; it was not merely an exuberant outpouring of the artistic imagination, as with Scott, Coleridge, and Shelley, but a creed and a religion. Wertherism involved the suicide of a number of young German students, and Schiller's *Robbers* started a fashion in highway robbery. English Byronics were satisfied by a disarrangement of collar; Scott's romances had no other effect save that of keeping our forefathers up reading when they ought to have been in bed. In short, while English Romantic literature was merely a light-hearted escape from, German literature was a serious expression of, its life.

(ii) The Influence of the French Revolution

The Romantic movement in France followed the political Revolution, and was considerably later, therefore, than either the English or the German.

While it owed something to both Scott and Byron and Goethe, its own reaction upon other countries was slight, and its influence upon English literature is confined to a few Victorian writers like Swinburne. But the social and political upheaval in France did play a considerable part in influencing the course of English Romance.

Our indebtedness to Rousseau has akeady been

touched upon, and it is possible to distinguish three phases of the French Revolution, each of which affected English Romanticism, (1) The Doctrinaire phase—the age of Rousseau; (2) the Political phase—the age of Robespierre and Danton; (3) the Military phase—the age of Napoleon. Rousseau's sentimental influence touched Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge; his intellectual influence affected Godwin and, through Godwin, Shelley. A love of external nature and of simple ways of living found expression in the earlier poets. The compelling value of love shown in the *New Heloise* is what Shelley reiterated with much ecstatic eloquence.

Rousseau's intellectual position was briefly this. Original impulses are good because they are natural. Men have become evil because they left uncontaminate Nature, growing luxurious and artificial. To escape from this state of sickness we must return to the mountains and meadows. In other words, we are to destroy the social structure raised by man during centuries of human history, and start afresh. Why do political institutions exist? Merely to enable the rich man to rob the poor, the tyrant to oppress the weak. Force is mischievous. There is no compulsion with anything but love. There is no way of erecting a new social order save by the light of pure reason. The perfectibility of human reason was taught by Godwin in his *Political Justice*, and from this book Shelley declared he had learnt " all that was valuable in knowledge and virtue ". Godwin, of course, as we shall

see later on, owed his views to others beside Rousseau. But Rousseau was a very potent influence.

(Byron is scarcely touched by the intellectual side of the Revolution, and from the historical side he certainly stood aloof, at once fascinated and repelled. What does emerge in Byron's poetry is the last phase of the movement, with Napoleon as the first figure. Byron's own intensely egotistic nature seized upon that aspect of the Revolution which sees in it the conflict of personalities. The tremendous force of the greater personalities, especially Napoleon, intoxicates him, and runs through his poetry. Living at a time of disillusionment, it is rather as a negative power that he shaped English Letters, but towards the close of his life he realised the moral emptiness of a restless, self-centred nature, and ended in a fine blaze of disinterested social enthusiasm.

The doctrinaire side of the French Revolution, the Revolution as an intellectual theory, gave substance not merely to Godwin's philosophy but to Blake's spiritual creed. For Godwin it was a reasonable hypothesis; to Blake, a vivifying joy. Freedom to him was a kind of mystical rapture, antinomian certainly, but so exalted and impassioned, so free from dross, that it sounds the same high note of beauty as did Shelley's lyrical paeans.

In 1789 the second phase of the Revolutionary movement opened, and in the first flush of the struggle it stirred to the depths the imagination of the English Romantic writers, and Wordsworth, Coleridge, and

Southey caught the contagious enthusiasm. Truly, as Wordsworth exclaimed :

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven.

The spiritual asceticism and stoical vigour of Wordsworth's genius were soon horrified by the blood and fire across the water. But Wordsworth's recantation, and the lapse of Coleridge, must not blind us to the fact that the best work of both poets had been done in the days of their Revolutionary enthusiasm.

Yet the most whole-hearted singer of the Revolution was Shelley, and this was not because he looked more leniently on the horrors of the guillotine, or looked beyonjd the immediate disaster to a future reconstruction, but because his imagination was far less concrete than those of his great contemporaries. Ideas inspired him, not episodes; so he drank in the doctrines of Godwin, and ignored the tragic perplexities of the actual situation. Widely divergent in temperament and genius as Shelley and his mentor were, they had this in common—a passion for abstract speculation. Where Godwin expressed them in pedestrian prose, Shelley gave to them music and colour.

And so it was that the catch-phrase of the Revolution, " Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity ", found no more impassioned champion or more eloquent singer than Shelley. But it was the Revolution as an *idea*, not as a concrete historical event, which attracted him.

Looking back upon these diverse streams of Roman-

ticism, it will be seen that both the revival in England and in Germany were revulsions from French Classicism and, like the earlier Romantic movement in the fifteenth century, carried with them potentialities of intellectual unrest and speculation that tended to break down other modes of thought than those of literary convention.

In Germany Romanticism had a special political significance. It denoted not merely the breakdown of the long-lived Classicism, but the starting into self-conscious life of *national* feeling. In addition to this, it fell in with a conservative and reactionary spirit, such as certainly marked no other Romantic movement. Many German Romantic writers joined the Catholic Church, carrying their mediaeval enthusiasm to a logical conclusion.

It was otherwise in Britain. On certain sides it took the radical impress of the French Revolution, and where it was unaffected by the Revolution political views and literary ideals were wholly disconnected. No attempt was made to harmonise them. Scott, the most successful mediaevalist, remained a Protestant and, despite his keen democratic sympathies as a novelist, maintained to the last a stiff and unyielding Toryism; while Byron, the most radical and revolutionary in some ways of our poets, was a warm admirer of the eighteenth-century school of verse.

In literature, as in politics, we are a people of compromise, and compromise marks our Romanticism as it does everything else in English life.

Chapter Three

Poetry

(i) Robert Burns (1759-96)

IN December 1757, to a homely, clay-built cottage erected by his own hands in Alloway, near Ayr, William Burns brought his bride, Agnes Broun, and here on January 25, 1759 (the year which also saw the birth of the German poet Schiller), Robert, the eldest of their seven children, was born.

At the age of six Robert was sent to the village school, and the following year, with his brother Gilbert, placed under the tuition of John Murdoch. Later he read considerably.

At thirteen, when most boys are poring over school books, making merry with school companions, and getting into mischief, the young Robert was threshing the farm crops for market; when fifteen he was his father's chief labourer, sharing the anxiety of his parents regarding ways and means—small wonder that the long working days ended with " a dull headache ", which later gave rise to the nervous depression that affected him more or less throughout bis life.

The country custom of working in couples in the fields first caused him to " commit the sin of rhyme ". The youthful poet's partner, Nelly Kirkpatrick, was

" a bewitching creature " who inspired his first song, *Once I Loved a Ronnie Lass*, before he was sixteen; after which he gradually added to his songs.

The summer months of 1778 were spent on the smuggling coast of Kirkoswald, for instruction in land surveying; but here, while making fair progress in his studies, he " learned to fill his glass " and " mix without fear in a drunken squabble ".

The next four years of his life were uneventful, if we except his friendship with Alison Begbie, the Mary Morison of his later poems, who refused his offer of marriage.

On the death of his father, in 1784, " the hell-hounds that prowl in the kennel of justice " took their due, and the family were left in that poverty which Burns termed " the half-sister of death, and the cousin-german of hell". They managed, however, to scrape a little money together to prevent separation, and with Robert's " hare-brained imagination " and his brother Gilbert's " good sense ", they joined forces and started farming on their own account at Mossgiel, near Mauchline. Here it was he first met with Jean Armour.

Farming was no more prosperous in the hands of the brothers than it had been with their father, so in 1786 Robert decided to emigrate to Jamaica. He had taken his passage when it occurred to him that, by publishing some of his poems, he might add to his resources and also leave a memento of himself in his native land. John Wilson of Kilmarnock agreed to

print 600 copies, and the collection included *The Cotter's Saturday Night, To a Mouse,* and several other well-known poems. The volume came under the notice of Dr. Blacklock, the blind poet and critic, who predicted such fame for the author that the Jamaica venture was abandoned and a trip to Edinburgh taken instead, where he arrived with a few shillings in his pocket and without a single letter of introduction; but his fame had preceded him, the peasant-poet became the rage, and all classes combined to do him honour. The following year (1787) a second edition was published by William Creech, of Edinburgh. On the strength of a large sale he made a tour of the North before his return to Mossgiel; in 1788, having received some £400 or £500 from his publisher, he took Ellisland Farm, near Dumfries, married Jean Armour, and settled down. This farm was no more successful than the others, so when a friend succeeded in procuring him the office of exciseman for the district, in 1790, Burns added to his income by becoming " a poor rascally gauger, condemned to gallop two hundred miles every week to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels ". In 1791 farming was given up in disgust.

A third edition of the poems with the addition of *Tam o' Shanter* appeared in 1793, and in the same year he wrote *Scots wha hae.*

Grim poverty had tracked him relentlessly throughout his life and was about to beat a retreat; an excise collectorship was within view, and he was looking

forward to " a life of literary leisure with a decent competence", when he contracted rheumatic fever and at the early age of thirty-seven died, on July 21, 1796.

It has been said that " none but the most narrow-minded bigots think of Burns' errors and frailties but with sympathy and indulgence; and none but the blindest enthusiasts can deny their existence ".

The bulk of Burns' work was done between 1789 and 1796. From the time of his sojourn in Mossgiel in 1784, his art found full and satisfying expression, with but little change in power of execution, and merely an increasing fondness for the lyric form in which he excelled.

Like his great contemporary, Scott, he loved the past and lived upon its glories, showing the intimate, spiritual connection between the life of a bygone age and the life of his own day. The forms he used were forms hallowed by years of tradition, and he gave them fresh and glorious vitality. And never does he soar higher than when he kept to the old ballad verse and the " native wood notes wild ". When he is under the passing influence of some other writer, as in certain of his English poems, he is far less effective.

In his pictures of men and women he is vividly concrete; and there we live in the open with the smell of the earth in our nostrils, and the sound of careless laughter and primal agonies in our ears. His figures have the same rude life, though not the same richness, as Shakespeare's, and though he takes us mostly

among the peasant class that he knew so intimately, he will introduce us also to the howling dervishes of piety: to Moodie, who " clears the points of faith with rattlin' and wi' thumpin' " to the factor and the retailer and the broad-minded lawyer, Gavin Hamilton, prosecuted for "causing his servants to dig new potatoes in the garden on the last Lord's Day ". But to whomever he brings us, or wherever he takes us, he does so with a jolly, exuberant energy that gives us continual glimpses into the nature of the singer. He is a genuine democrat, but in the sense that Scott was one, not in the sense that Shelley was one, or that the youthful Wordsworth was one. Unlike the great Romantic poets, the fever of the Revolution never burned in his veins. His radicalism was poetic, not political; though it was made of the substance that created revolutionaries. For if ever there was a poet who loved freedom as the breath of life, even when it ran into licence, that poet was Burns; and this passion for freedom, for the free expression of individuality, is a rough, elemental spirit—the spirit, indeed, of the great god Pan, who comes into our literature from time to time to freshen and revive it.

Pace, passion, precision—these things mark his great achievements, whether in satire or song. *Tarn o' Shanter* rushes along like a whirlwind; *The Jolly Beggars* is a foaming torrent; *The Cotter's Saturday Night* starts in a slow and pensive vein, but soon breaks away. He rattles happily through the narrative of the *Twa Dogs*, and the songs are breathless

melodies, with the warmth of the sunshine in them and the freshness of the mountain air.

The special genius of Burns lay in the unerring instinct with which he seized upon the scattered folk-poetry of Scotland, transmuting its ore through the alembic of his own ardent imagination into the most precious gold, its alloy purged away, its treasure refined and beautified. Many of the familiar features in Scots poetry which we have noticed in dealing with the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reappear in Burns; love and intimate knowledge of Nature, a quaint and racy dialect, a passionate concreteness of imagery, a rich allusiveness—these were focused with especial brilliance in his genius. He seemed to sum up in himself all that was finest in Scots song. With the homeliness of Cowper and the veracity of Crabbe he combined a breadth of humour and a poignant intensity transcending his English contemporaries. A man of the people in the most literal sense of the word, his songs were often transcripts from personal experience, and though the women who inspired his song were rough toilers of the field, primitive and uncultured, they sufficed to inspire him with the finest love-poetry in our literature.

Such a stanza as the familiar

> Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
> Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
> Never met—or never parted,
> **We** had ne'er been broken-hearted

concentrates in its simple intensity of feeling and ex-

pression the inmost heart of sex-romance. It is not, as many fine love-poems are, the expression of a single mood and temperament, but the expression in inevitable language of the moods of thousands. Happy and sympathetic as is his Nature poetry, it is as the poet of humanity that we remember him. The human note is paramount.

When he strays away from his own class, when—whether as a letter writer or a poet—he tries to deal with social matters that are alien to his nature, or with forms of verse inimical to his art, then we merely see in him the rough, uncultured man assuming an unnatural and uncongenial pose. For he was not the poet of civilisation and culture; his wit was not subtle enough, his knowledge not full enough, for such matters; and when the tide of popularity floated him for a while into these strange harbours, we can only regret it—natural though it was—and wait until the momentary lapse is passed and he is his own primal, simple, unaffected self again. And if his work reflects his tragedy, it also reflects his humour; for humour is elemental no less than pathos, and the two lie closely together. Is it surprising that he could draw laughter as well as tears; and that the man who could charm us with *My Luve's like a Red, Red Rose,* or thrill us with *Ae Fond Kiss and then we Sever,* could also move the genial springs of our nature with the gay and rollicking *Tam o' Shanter,* or the keenly satirical *Holy Willie's Prayer?*

Beyond the passion, the homeliness, the humour of

Burns, there lies another reason for his compelling appeal, in the potency of his personality. Widely as he differed from Byron in many ways, there are not a few personal points that account for the magnetism exerted by both men. Quite apart from his stage tricks, Byron expressed himself fully and unreservedly in his work; his vigorous vitality, his contempt of timid conventions, his delight in the strong and elemental, and his undernote of melancholy. All these are matters fully as dear to Burns. Even in their weaknesses they have a bond of union; and both men were frankly alive to their frailties and follies, whatever air of bravado they might assume in the face of the world.

The charm of Burns' best verse lies in his perfect mingling of man and Nature. He carries into his scenic pictures the same tenderness he shows in dealing with the cottagers. This to a daisy :

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem;
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

And he loves a bird or a mouse with the caressing affection many of us scarcely give to children :

Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing
That in the merry months of spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee ?
Where wilt thou cower thy chittering wing
And close thy ee ?

Poetry, as Wordsworth said, comes from the heart and goes to the heart. The truth of this saying is never more apparent than when we are reading Burns; whether he is telling of the love of a man for a maid, of family kinship round the cottage hearthstone, of a wounded hare, of a scarred and sorrowful human life, this vibrant heart appeal lifts the simple material of his songs into that stuff of life which always gives literature its humanising power.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend,
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end;
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise :
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah I tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose :
The toil-worn cotter frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee things, toddlin', stacker through
To meet their Dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.

His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary carking care beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

(ii) William Blake (1757-1827)

James Blake was a hosier in Broad Street, Golden Square, with little money to spare for a son's education : but he did what lay in his power to assist William (b. 1757), whose artistic gifts showed themselves at quite an early age. At the age of ten the son went to a drawing-school in the Strand, where he learned to draw from the antique. He remained here for four years. During this time he amused himself by writing verses, afterwards collected and published under the title of *Poetical Sketches.*

The merit of the verse is not considerable, but it has an interest for the student of literary history as showing Blake's early interest in the Elizabethans : a profoundly formative influence in shaping his genius.

He was apprenticed in 1771 to James Basire, an engraver, and remained with him for seven years, after which he went to the Antique School of the Royal Academy, where he learned to draw from the model. It is not known whether he ever studied painting systematically as he studied drawing and engraving, but we know that he experimented on his own account in water-colours.

In ^782 he made a happy marriage with Catherine Boucher. Blake made the acquaintance of many

artists of note, among them Flaxman and Fuseli, and was getting into touch with literary society. The publication of his early verse marked him as a poet of promise, and though the two aspects of his artistic genius were for a while disconnected, the draughtsman and poet drew closer together as the years went on until, after a period of intermingling, the pictorial artist triumphed over the literary artist in self-expression.

In 1784 in company with another artist he set up as a print-seller and engraver, but in 1787 the partnership came to an end, and he continued in business independently, becoming his own printer and publisher. The first fruits of his work were the *Songs of Innocence,* a volume remarkable both for the beauty of the verse and the accompanying decorative designs. His mystical bent of mind shadowed in the volume found fuller expression in *The Book of Thel* (1789), and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), *The Gates of Paradise* and *The Vision of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). In 1794 came the *Songs of Experience.* In his earlier songs he had given us his vision of the beauty in life; here he deals with the ugliness in life, that experience has taught him. With this volume Blake's finest work as a poet closes. His mystical faculty henceforth found a more satisfying expression in decorative design; his love of symbolism gave an obscurity to his later verse that weakens its appeal; on the other hand, it gave a richer complexity to his work as a decorative artist. From 1796 he was actively concerned in the art of illustration, and the books he

enriched in this way are Young's *Night Thoughts*, Blair's *Grave*; he also executed remarkable designs for the *Canterbury Pilgrims*, and for his own prophetic books, the *Jerusalem*, *'Emanation of the Giant Albion*, and *Milton*. In later life he became, with John Linnell and other water-colour painters, attracted to astrology, and made his magnificent designs for the *Book of Job*. He died in 1827, at Fountain Court in the Strand.

Despite an influential circle of intimate friends, the genius of Blake, whether as poet or artist, was unrecognised by the public at large during his lifetime. But neglect never troubled him, for his hold upon the spiritual world comforted and sustained him through the vicissitudes of his life.

As a visionary he touched both Art and Letters; he is ever looking behind the visible frame of things for the glories and terrors of the world of spirit; not with the earnest, ethical intent of Wordsworth, but with the eye of one who cannot help dreaming dreams and seeing visions. The visionary in him may, and often will, overpower the artist, and a wild confusion of imagery often blurs his work, whether as draughtsman or singer; but if at times it drowns his clarity and simplicity, it gives a phantom touch of extraordinary subtlety, and to much of his work an exquisite beauty, that lifts his lyric faculty into an atmosphere like that of no other poet. The liberty that Burns emphasised as an integral part of life, Blake cherished as the source of his spiritual intuition. He drew, as did the peasant poet, plenary inspiration from

Nature, but with a mystic rapture alien to the Scots singer. Burns lingered on the concrete show of life; it was enough for him. Blake cared for the splendour of human love, or the rapture of the sun and sky, only so far as it carried him to some inner fire whence these have their being.

He loved the Elizabethans for their naturalness and rhythmic music but, save at the very outset, he never imitated them, for his own lyric faculty was peculiarly original; less intense than theirs, but no less ecstatic and lovely, in its more ethereal way. It was like the singing of a happy child expressed with the art of a man. He shook off the heavy preoccupations of a world in the first throes of the Industrial Revolution; he ignored the material cares that clog and chafe the spirit. He saw in the simple joys and raptures of ordinary life a Paradise regained. And in the *Songs of Innocence* he entered an Eden to which man had long been alien.

Both the naturalism and mysticism of the Romantic Revival found expression in Blake; and on this point he differs from pioneers like Burns, who is simply naturalistic, or Cowper, who is only slightly touched by mysticism. On the naturalistic side he deals with the simplest phases of life; with the instinctive life of the child; with the love of flowers, hills, and streams, the blue sky, the brooding clouds; and yet the mystical vision of the poet is always transforming these familiar things, touching obscure aspects, and spirtualising the veriest commonplace into something strange

and wonderful. The human note in Burns is untouched by supernaturalism. To Blake every spot is holy ground; angels shelter the birds from harm, the good shepherd looks after his sheep, the divine spark burns even in the breasts of savage animals. Cruelty to animals incensed Blake; he would give them the same freedom he wished for humankind.

A Robin Redbreast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage !
A Dog starved at his Master's Gate
Predicts the ruin of the State.
A Horse misused upon the Road
Calls to Heaven for Human Blood.
Each outcry of the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear.
A Skylark wounded on the wing
A Cherubim does cease to sing.

Mysticism in poetry is usually blended with a wistful melancholy. " The desire of the moth for the star; of the night for the morrow ", animates the poet's soul; and, in his hungering after eternity, he feels more and more dissatisfied with the show of life. But Blake is an exception. He is a joyful mystic; for him the morning stars sing together, and the splendour of life far exceeds its shadows. There are no mournful regrets in his verse, no sighing for a day that is dead.

Unlike some mystics, he did not seek after the spirit world because he despised the world of sense, but because he loved it so well he felt there was more in it than man could fathom here. His mysticism was not an aspiration for the future : it was a realisation of the

present. The only unreality for Blake was the external world; the great reality was the world of his visions. Whatever validity we may attach to these visions, we cannot write them off as the delusions of an unbalanced mind, for he never confused them with the phenomena of ordinary life; they were differentiated by his mind as something- wholly distinct.

Blake's mind was abnormal certainly, and his faculty for visions extraordinary, but the fact that we cannot share them does not necessarily discredit them. We do not even solve the problem by calling him mad; for even the madman's world is not necessarily an untrue world; mingled though it may be with false estimates as to the precise nature of what he sees and hears. " The Lunatic, the Lover, and the Poet are of imagination all compact ", and to the madman may be vouchsafed glimpses of awful realities that are denied to ordinary perception and feelings. That Blake cannot correlate all he sees, or clarify his cloud of imagery, is another matter altogether. Yet whatever view we hold as to the objective value of Blake's visions, they profoundly controlled his art; and if the source of much obscurity, and no little violent overemphasis, are also the source of much that is beautiful and inspiring. No poet has externalised ideas with greater vividness than he; and had he only taken as much care to focus his visions as he did to beautify and elaborate his technique, his power as a poet would have been more compelling.

But there is a side of his mysticism that is deep-

rooted in the practical side of his nature, and touches the problems of life. His view of love resembles Shelley's. We do what is right not from some categorical imperative but because love bids us act so. The intellectual analysis of spiritual truths revolts him. Logic and argument offend him. I know, he says, and there is an end of the matter. For theology he had no love, and priestcraft he abominated. It was the theologian and the priest who had added to the misery of the world by their distorted picture of God.

Another bond of union with Shelley is his passion for liberty. He thunders at kings and priests and oppressive rulers in his prophetic writings, nor will he spare his own country when he thinks she has been false to freedom.

There is an elfin note in Shelley; there is an elfin orchestra in Blake. At times it sounds in our ears like something grotesque and incomprehensible. The singer loses himself in the " illimitable universe ", leaving upon our minds a mere confusion of signs and symbols; or under the glow of some great idea rushes into the wildest extravagances of speech.

But, at his best, his daring simplicity, his *naivety* his spiritual beauty, claim our sympathies and thrill our imagination, as only a great poet has power to do.

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me :

" Pipe a song about a Lamb ! "
So I piped with merry cheer,
" Piper, pipe that song again I "
So I piped : he wept to hear.

" Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer I "
So I sung the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

" Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read."
So he vanish'd from my sight;
And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

(iii) **William Wordsworth** (1770-1850)

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland, April 7, 1770, being the second son of John Wordsworth, " attorney-at-law ".

In October 1787 he went up to St. John's College, Cambridge. Even in these years he was meditative and susceptible to scenic beauties; for the rest, he was a somewhat boorish youth, self-confident, not over-fond of study, his deepest sympathies being with the simple life of the country. Gradually his mind expanded, his sympathies broadened, and a holiday tour in Switzerland and France brought him into the ardent Revolutionary atmosphere of the Continent. Perhaps if a suitable opportunity had presented itself he

would have flung himself into the life of soldiering at this time. He had been a keen student of military history, while his passionate, headstrong nature was captivated by the idea of commanding troops and fighting for the Revolutionary cause.

But he had no means of realising this dream and on leaving Cambridge he went to London, uncertain as to his future. London did not take his youthful imagination by storm: he was not a " crowd-worshipper ", like Browning, and though interested in Man, cared little for Tom, Dick, and Harry. In fact he always preferred to study the " still, sad music of humanity " from meditative heights.

None the less his life in London was not unproductive, as two or three noble sonnets and such tender pieces as *The Reverie of Poor Susan* testify. But Paris rather than London obsessed his youthful imagination, until the bloody horrors of the Revolution sickened him, his enthusiasm grew cold and faltered, and was ultimately turned in other directions.

During the period of disillusionment his greatest comforter proved his sister Dorothy :

> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy.

After the production of the *Lyrical "Ballads,* Wordsworth and his sister set sail for Germany. The four months stay there did little to broaden his mind or intensify his powers; for, unlike Coleridge, he was not

sensitive to the thought of his age and not responsive to new influences. But it proved an agreeable holiday, and perhaps the detachment from English surroundings served to throw the poet more exclusively upon his imaginative memories. Certainly the English poems he wrote during this time, such as *Lucy Gray* and *Ruth*, are especially happy in their simplicity and charm.

On his return he and his sister went to live in the Lake District, where his earliest impressions had been gathered; and round Grasmere and Rydal the poet lived for fifty years.

His marriage to Mary Hutchinson of Penrith took place in 1802. It was not an epoch-making event in his imaginative life, though it proved a happy and peaceful union. She made a good wife and an interesting companion; but as an influence cannot rank either with his sister Dorothy or with Coleridge.

The record of these years is, on the whole, the pleasant, uneventful record of a man of simple, austere tastes, much goodness of heart, and somewhat limited powers of friend-making. Wordsworth's long poem *The Prelude*, finished in 1805, was intended as a sort of portico to *The Recluse*. *The Recluse* was never written; only a fragment survived under the title of *The Excursion*—a poem which he had hoped to shape as " the first and only true philosophical poem in existence ". During later years Wordsworth more considerably extended his circle of acquaintances. Keats saw and admired him, Rogers proved friendly

and useful, and Sir Henry Taylor—a younger admirer—introduced the poet to some of the Benthamite school, while Crabb Robinson followed his movements with the attentive respect of a disciple; Keble at a later date showed him an almost fervid worship which greatly delighted the old poet. In fact, after many years of neglect he was at last regarded by many with respect; with respect and affection by a few; but concerning his poetic genius there was no cavilling. Jeffery's thundering " This will never do " had long since died into silence.

His life continued one of quiet happiness, with Dorothy of the wild, bright eyes remarked by De Quincey, and his wife, probably the most baknced member of the family, whose countenance exactly showed her temperament, since, as Wordsworth said, it was bright and alert over an honest homeliness. There were five children, his favourite, Dora, being born in 1804. A year later Wordsworth suffered heart-break at the death, by drowning at sea, of his brother John. The event marked a stage in his mental growth, for, as he declared, it was not until now that he realised death to be a reality which could affect him personally. It destroyed the last trace of semi-reality which still clung to the world outside his mind. One result was that he turned to an incomplete poem which he had begun some years before and added its final stanzas. Thus we have the great ode, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of 'Early Childhood.*

In 1808 the Wordsworths moved from Dove

Cottage to a larger house at Allan Bank, nearer Grasmere. In 1813 they again moved, to Rydal Mount, secured in the enjoyment of a sufficient income by the poet's appointment as Stamp Distributor for Westmorland. A year later the first collected edition of his poems was published. In 1819 he became a Justice of the Peace. In 1827 his friend Sir George Beaumont left him £100 per annum so that he might indulge his passion for travelling. In the next ten years Wordsworth spent a considerable amount of time in wandering about Europe. A great sorrow of these years was the condition of Dorothy, whose physical and mental health suffered grave deterioration after 1829.

Dora married Edward Quillinan in 1841 and Wordsworth for a long time felt the loss of her from his home. His position as a man of letters received its greatest recognition when, on the death of Southey in 1843, he was appointed Laureate. The high rank he had won for himself by the work of earlier years had been maintained by further publications, such as *The White Doe* (1815), *The River Duddon* (1820), and *Yarrow Revisited* (1831). While it is true that much of his kter work cannot add anything to his merit as a poet, it is untrue that lack of self-criticism resulted in all his later work being mere verse. The fact seems to be that, as a poet of Nature, his mission was accomplished by the year in which he published *The Excursion*—1814. Thereafter he wrote much unworthy stuff. Yet we must not overlook the fact

that he was always a great poet who, from time to time, created poetry able to rank with anything he had ever written.

In 1847 Dora Quillinan died. Wordsworth experienced the greatest loss he had known since the death of his brother John. On this occasion there was no one to sustain him as Dorothy and his wife had formerly been able to do. He gradually declined to a peaceful death in 1850.

It was Wordsworth's aim as a poet to seek for beauty in meadow, woodland, and mountain-top, and to interpret this beauty in spiritual terms. He was for ever spiritualising the moods of Nature and winning from them moral consolation; and it was his special characteristic to concern himself, not with the strange and remote aspects of the earth and sky, but with Nature in her ordinary, familiar, everyday moods.

Wordsworth's best work was done between 1796 and 1808. Although he lived until 1850, and was writing up to the very last, there are only occasional flashes of his real genius during this later period. Roughly speaking, one may say that the decline of his poetic inspiration and the decline of his revolutionary enthusiasm synchronised. The Republican Wordsworth is the great Wordsworth; the Tory Wordsworth is the second-rate and third-rate poet. It would be unfair to say that he did no work of the first order after 1808; part of *The Recluse* was written after that date, and there is fine work there; there are memorable sonnets also—e.g. *I Thought of Thee (c.* 1820), *Scorn not the*

Sonnet (c. 1823). But the old power, the ancient magic, comes fitfully and rarely, whereas in the earlier period the output is wonderfully level in its high quality.

Considering first the poet's general outlook on life, it will be noted that he is concerned specially with two things—Nature and Man. The subject matter is less comprehensive than at first sight it appears.

In Nature the poet is concerned far less with the sensuous manifestations that delight most of our Nature poets than with the spirituality that he finds underlying these manifestations. The primrose and the daffodil are symbols to him of Nature's message to man; the grandeur of the mountain torrent appeals to him because he can link its beauty in his mind with the glory of the floating clouds, with the charm of a young girl's face; a sunrise for Wordsworth is not a pageant of colour; it is a moment of spiritual consecration:

> Magnificent
> The morning rose in memorable pomp
> Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front
> The sea lay laughing at a distance; near
> The solid mountain shone, bright as the clouds,
> Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
> And in the meadows and the lower grounds
> Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
> Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
> And labourers going forth to till the fields..
> . . . . .
> My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit.

With the outward show of things, with Nature's bewildering profusion, her teeming, concrete life, her riddles, her magical appeal to the eye and the sense of touch, he is little concerned. The appeal to the ear does indeed interest him as a poet, but only because through sound he can interpret the particular consolation and benison he is seeking. He listens to the discords only to detect the harmony underlying " a central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation ". Wordsworth and Shelley have this point in common. They, unlike their contemporaries, *Intellectualised* Nature; their music, each glorious in its own way, is set to transcendental language. They are not merely poets of Nature, they are prophets of Nature; they are concerned less to depict than to explain; less to marvel at her beauty than to exult at its inner significance. They are ever moving from the external fact to the idea. It is otherwise with Coleridge, Byron, and Keats.

Coleridge, sympathising as he does intellectually with his friends' transcendentalism, is far more readily influenced by the multifold sensuous appeal of Nature; while Byron and Keats delight with a frankly pagan joy in landscape, waterscape, and cloudscape, and are content to worship the goddess, not to consult the oracle.

But if Wordsworth and Shelley have a common end in view, their way of achieving that end is sufficiently distinctive. Wordsworth proclaims peace and order to be at the heart of things; Shelley, love; Shelley's

method is largely diffusive, Wordsworth's concentrative. Shelley finds expression in a cry—sometimes of pain, sometimes of joy—but always at his most impassioned moments a cry; for Shelley's mind was ever overhung with wonderful dreams.

There is very little of the visionary in Wordsworth's spiritual meditation.

That this method of repression carried with it limitations is obvious. Variety, light and shade must needs be sacrificed. On the other hand, it certainly gave depth and intensity, whence came what Matthew Arnold finely called "the bare, sheer, penetrating power" of his best work. And to achieve this stark splendour he is content to leave much on one side.

He gazes around him and
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass in gladness lay
Beneath him.—Far and wide the clouds were touched
And in their silent faces could be read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle; sensation, soul and form
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living Goo,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired,
No thanks he breathed, he professed no regret;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love.

The passage is a fine one, more notable, however, for its spiritual ecstasy than for its poetic presentment. To combine the two, and to be both deeply mystical and nobly poetical, that is the constant aim of Wordsworth, and while it is productive of many of his most disastrous experiments in verse, it is the source also of some of his greatest things—grand rhapsodies such as *Tintern Abbey*.

Unhappily it is so fatally easy for mysticism to slip into theological formula, and when the Moralist obtrudes, poor Imagination has to hide away. One deplores the didacticism of Wordsworth the more since he can, when he wishes, give delicate and subtle expression to the sheer sensuous delight of the world of Nature. He can take a pleasure fully as keen in the placid lake:

> The calm
> And dead still water lay upon my mind
> Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
> Never before so beautiful, sank down
> Into my heart, and held me like a dream.

He can actualise with fine clarity all the little graces and charms of a summer day :

> The northern downs
> In clearest air ascending, showed far off
> A surface dappled o'er with shadows fleecy
> From brooding clouds,

and can throw the very spirit of June into a couplet:

> Flaunting Summer when he throws
> His soul into the briar rose.

A brief study of Wordsworth's scenic pictures, with their rhythmic felicities, will reveal to the student the peculiar power of the poet in actualising sound and its converse, silence.

An interesting contrast with Shelley is discernible here. Wordsworth is the poet of the ear, just as Shelley is the poet of the eye, and never more felicitous [1] than in conveying some phase of silence, tone of sound.

The following passages will illustrate to some extent the dominant characteristic, for, as Shelley said, Wordsworth has awakened " a kind of thought in sense ".

> The winds that would be howling at all hours
> And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers.

> To lie and listen to the mountain flood
> Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

> A gentle shock of mild surprise
> Had carried far into his heart, the voice
> Of mountain torrents.

What poet other than Wordsworth would have preferred the sound to the pictorial effect of the torrent ? Shelley in particular would have delighted in dwelling on the prismatic effect of the sunshine upon the waters.

The restfulness of evening and the spacious quietness of the country allure him :

> It is a beauteous evening calm and free,
> The holy time is quiet as a nun
> Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
> Is sinking down in its tranquillity.

In fact, just as the thinker in Wordsworth is always striving to realise the peace at the heart of things and the joy that comes from peace, so does the literary artist strive to exhibit this peace and joy through one of the channels of sense, the one most effective for his purpose.

Now and again the eye is charmed with some pictorial fancy, as the image of the mountain daisy with

> The beauty of its star-shaped shadow thrown
> On the smooth surface of the naked stone,

which was written when the poet was over seventy. But the witchery of sound is the witchery that we realise with the most compelling beauty. As the poet of the eye he has many peers, and in richness of effect and subtlety of appeal must yield the palm to a crowd of singers less great than himself; but when it comes to the symbolism of sound, Wordsworth is supreme. No other poet could have written :

> A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
> In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
> Breaking the silence of the seas
> Among the farthest Hebrides.

If we pass from Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature to his attitude towards Man, the same method is observable. Just as in Nature he is always eager to pass from the concrete to the abstract, so in dealing with humanity he is less concerned with individuals than with certain qualities common to mankind.

Nature had awakened his earliest inspiration; under her influence he had dedicated himself to the life of the interpretative imagination; and he saw Man—if I may so put it—through Nature's eyes, dwelling therefore not on accidents of temperament and disposition that go to differentiate men and women from each other, but on those primal qualities of humanity where Man and Nature touch and blend.

Thus his love of Nature is transferred to the shepherd and simple dalesman of the north, and after them to ordinary men and women with ordinary joys and sorrows.

Indeed, the sentiment of that hackneyed strophe from *Lady Clara Vere de Vere* concerning "kind hearts" and "simple faith" is more essentially Wordsworthian than Tennysonian in spirit; and his knowledge of peasant ways and of the peasant character was gained by patient, watchful investigation. He believed in them and he admired them, and, with the passion of a scientist, he eagerly collects facts and traits that may help him to build up his portraits; and it is ever one thing he is on the look-out for—something to inspire man's higher faculties. He watches men and women with the expectant gaze of one who is looking for some particular attitude or posture which he is anxious to portray. No doubt by this method he missed a great deal of rich human material, but he is a moralist at heart, with one steady purpose in view, and leaving aside much that was fascinating and perplexing he contents himself with a

few broad, simple issues; and there, at his best, he exhibits a massive splendour of compelling power.

Only by purging away the accidentals, only by allowing your own emotion to be " recollected in tranquillity ", only by climbing the heights of contemplation and ridding yourself of petty cares and distractions, will you get a true and faithful vision of human life. That was Wordsworth's view.

Apart from the sanctifying touch of Nature, men and women are poor creatures to Wordsworth. The farther we travel from Nature, the more paltry we become. This is the burden of his splendid sonnet *The World is Too Much with Us.* Better, he says in effect, people the woods and streams, the plains and ocean, with nymphs and gods and goddesses, and retain something of the fresh simplicity and austere endurance of Nature, than give up our souls to the mere accumulation of wealth and to the superficial life of pleasure.

The forms he adopts are the narrative, the lyrical, the elegiac, and the sonnet.

His narrative poetry is sometimes cast into heroic metre, sometimes into that of the ballad, and in each medium he achieved distinction. His ballad verse has not the fire and lilt of Scott, but exhibits often a simple force and chaste tenderness unmatched by his contemporaries. Here, as always in Wordsworth's poetry, simplicity lapses at times into triviality, but in ballads like *Lucy Gray* there is no touch of triteness to mar the simple strength and unaffected beauty of the

story. His narrative powers are considerable; and his gift of simple directness stands him in good stead here; yet he is not at his best in narrative, for the simple reason that his deep interest in spiritual rather than physical crises, his preference for meditating over his subject and delaying or obscuring the story renders him effective in snatches, but not effective as a good narrative poet should be.

The full force of his genius is best displayed in elegiac, sonnet, and lyric forms. Read his narrative, and rarely do you feel the glow of romantic imagination. But once allow the meditative muse in Wordsworth to come to the fore, and the slumbering romantic fervour breaks forth immediately in such lines as :

> Old unhappy far-off things
> And battles long ago. *

To his lyrics Wordsworth brought a freshness and pensive sweetness that gave them quite an original place in this form of writing. The Elizabethan lyric had become stereotyped; when not imitated it was neglected for other forms. Wordsworth breathed new life into it. He had not the force and versatility of Shelley, but he helped to prepare the way for that consummate lyric genius by taking themes of rural life as inspirations. The dainty and delicate grace of poems like *Three Years She Grew, She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways, I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*> familiar and well-worn as they are, have no superior of their kind in our language.

Why, we ask, is there a deplorable inequality in iWordsworth's style ? No poet had a higher regard for his calling than he; the slapdash carelessness of Byron is as alien to him as the crude luxuriance of the early Keats; yet no great poet has descended to greater depths of bathos and puerility than he. The poet who could \yrite with a finely austere reserve :

She is dead.
The light extinguished of her lonely hut,
The hut itself abandoned to decay
And she forgotten in the quiet grave,

could also perpetrate these lines about a grave :

I've measured it from side to side,
'Tis three feet long and two feet wide.

The poet who could pen such a line as :

The silence that is in the starry sky,

could suffer this line without a qualm :

The silent heavens have goings on.

His deficient sense of humour is accountable for many banalities, but the chief reason for this mixture of puerility and grandeur is found in his poetic theory. This theory is set forth elaborately in the preface to the later editions of the *Lyrical Ballads,* where Wordsworth professes to use " a selection of the language really used by men … in humble and rustic life ", while at the same time he tried " to throw over " the matter described " a certain colouring of imagination ". Now, had Wordsworth meant by this a rich infusion into poetic diction of racy dialect and the quaint

idiomatic expression of an unlettered rustic, he could no doubt have achieved some remarkable results, as Burns and others have done. But nothing was more remote from his intention. He would scrupulously purge the rustic speech of all particular conventions, and in so doing take away its individual flavour, reducing the diction to something that was merely bald and prosaic.

Poetry can learn something from rustic speech most assuredly, as Ebenezer Elliot showed, but this is something quite other than Wordsworth intended.

Happily, Wordsworth's splendid imagination was often too potent for his theory, and in his best work he unconsciously ignores it altogether.

His natural diction is the "grand manner", resonant with stately beauty, and it is only when uninspired, or in some mistaken outburst of conscientious endeavour, that he jars upon us with his flat and foolish speech. But if the theory as he understood it and tried to practise it was an unsound one, there was behind the theory the entirely sound principle that poetic style should be as simple and sincere as the language of everyday life, and that the more the poet draws on elemental feelings and primal simplicities, the better for his art.

If the lyric form suited him better than the narrrative, the sonnet and elegy suited him even better. • He says he was first stirred in the direction of sonneteering by hearing his sister Dorothy read some of Milton's in 1801; and from this date to the end of his life he was

richly productive in sonnet-making, with an impressive total of 500 to his credit.

The best of these were written during the early years of the century, mostly in 1802, and include: *Milton; Westminster Bridge*; *If is a Beauteous Evening;* and *The World is Too Much with Us* (1806). After 1808 there is a decline, not in workmanship but in imaginative beauty; but right up to the last he will flash out again and again with something of the old passion and splendour, and this just when we had made up our minds that his inspired mood was a thing of the past. Of these later sonnets, some of the *River Duddon* group and one on *Mutability* are among his best.

The technical exaction of the sonnet medium, the necessity for clear and orderly development, and the opportunity it afforded for intellectual articulation—all these things lent themselves readily to Wordsworth's reflective cast of mind and cool clarity of diction. The particular form he chooses is not that known as the Shakespearean form—only once does he experiment in this—but in the Miltonic form based on the traditional Italian structure. Wordsworth did valuable service to English poetry by thus reinstating the sonnet; and the poets who followed him, notably Keats and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, were not slow to take the hint and develop still farther its possibilities.

His elegiac poems, with which we may couple the odes, also give us Wordsworth in his highest moments, and exhibit his power of fusing metaphysical thought with lyrical feeling. Nature and the spirit that

animates and transcends Nature, this is the theme of *Tintern Abbey* and *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*. Our appreciation of the *Ode* will depend to some extent upon our sympathy with its metaphysical standpoint; but even those who are not touched by Wordsworth's idealism of childhood cannot be blind to the splendid rhythmic felicities with which the *Ode* abounds—felicities that have passed into our language and become incorporate with it.

What, then, is the cumulative effect of Wordsworth's verse; what is its dominant note? It is not ecstatic, not gay, not tragic, but it is profoundly restful and restorative.

There is a fine sedative influence about Wordsworth's poetry which soothes and tranquillises, never enervates.

In his admirable pen-portrait of Wordsworth, Carlyle speaks of his " veracious strength ", and this is perhaps the most enduring quality in his best work. To many of us he has given a glimpse of " truths that wake to perish never "; while even to those for whom his mysticism carries no inspiration there are touches, splendid in their stoical fortitude :

> We men that in our morn of youth defied
> The elements,—must vanish : be it so !—

Upon Westminster Bridge

> Earth has not anything to show more fair :
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty :
> This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !

The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The essential teaching of Wordsworth, the central doctrine of his approach to Nature, must be understood if we are to escape a good deal of the pseudo-mysticism which has been wrapped round it. Too fond admirers have claimed him as a new prophet through whom an extension of divine revelation has been given to mar. In plain fact, Wordsworth taught nothing new; his virtue lies in his teaching what he found at a time when most of it had been forgotten. This point has been briefly touched on in the previous volume, where much of his thought was found to lie in the writings of the metaphysical poets and, indeed, all the way back to Plato.

Taking Wordsworth as he really was, we find him returning again and again to the earliest experiences of childhood, to recall those experiences whose significance was slowly to be opened by bis mind. The pre-conscious period of life he likened to the winter; this is followed by consciousness, the spring which brings the flowers of thought to growth. This was

the time when he began to realise that the outer world seemed to him part of himself, when he had to put his hand to the branch of a tree to assure himself that it was a separate thing.

From this outer world impressions poured upon him, stirring wild and strange delights in his heart, although his mind could not comprehend them. Thus he wrote :

> Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
> Fostered alike by beauty and by fear …

The ecstasy of those early years was such that be returned to their memory many times, to add new impressions to them or to draw from them consolation and understanding of life. In the end, understanding of what was happening to him came, and while this understanding coincided '.vith the freshness of his joy he wrote his finest poetry. Then the vision faded. Occasionally it returned, but he knew that it would go again, to come back less clearly or not at all. Memory remained but not vision. His work was done. Unfortunately he did not realise this, and continued to write too long. It is strange that one so gifted should have seen that his inspiration was ended without realising that the form of its song should end with it.

All this can be read in Wordsworth's poetry,'and the following brief quotations are given merely as indications of his thought. The passages could be many times repeated in other words from his writings.

Of his early impressions :

> … I have felt,
> Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
> Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
> Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
> An intellectual charm; that calm delight
> Which, if I err not, surely must belong
> To those first-born affinities that fit
> Our new existence to existing things,
> And, in our dawn of being, constitute
> The bond of union between life and joy.
>
> Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
> And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
> The faces of the moving year, even then
> I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
> Of curling mist, or from the level plain
> Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

Gradually he understood that Nature is intended to educate man. First she draws him to her by the wonders of her shapes, her colours, her sounds, her movements. Captured by this love, man clings to Nature, and thus learns to see and admire the order in which she is disposed. From this, in turn, he learns what Wordsworth was shy of stating briefly and clearly : the Divine Presence in Nature which conserves that order in being. Nature, then, is man's shortest way to God. As he travels this way, he learns what man must do and what he must avoid. If he reaches for what he may not have, Nature herself frightens him, places phantom images in his mind

which haunt him day and night. This salutary action of fear is definitely taught by Wordsworth as part of Nature's work for man. We see it in *Nutting*, in the incident of the stolen boat or the robbed springes in *The Prelude*, and elsewhere. But if he seeks what he may have, Nature rewards him by abundant happiness. So he learns the Will of God, as far as Nature alone can teach it. Beyond this Wordsworth did not care to think—a fact painfully obvious in the great ode, where he repeatedly appears to be on the verge of a definite statement of religious belief and finally, to the poem's great loss, he evades the responsibility.

As a brief statement of this doctrine and an example of the kind of experience from which he drew it, we may take this passage :

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe I
> Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
> That givest to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion, not in vain
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood did'st thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human soul;
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things—
> With life and nature, purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognise
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
> Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
> With stinted kindness. In November days,
> When vapours rolling down the valley made
> A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
> At noon and mid the calm of summer nights,

When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

It was the meaning and influence of Nature which became important to Wordsworth, and for the lessons which taught him these things he gave thanks, not for the glories themselves :

Not for these I raise
The songs of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings . . .

Rather was he grateful for

. . . those first affections,
Thore shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet the master-light of all our seeing ...

In this Tennyson differed from Wordsworth, that for him the beauty of the earth was Nature, while for Wordsworth it was only Nature's way of drawing man to herself that she might educate him.

Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse . . .

Learning both restraint and ardour, the child of Nature continues to study the secrets of that which is within the order of the universe.

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

Because Nature drew him to what is divine, Wordsworth experienced the yearning for what Nature cannot give, since she, like him, is a creature. He is haunted by emotions whose causes he has forgotten. Sometimes he can write :

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath pass'd a glory from the earth.

Often repining the loss of the ecstasy he knew while he was learning the real significance of Nature, he praises the decree which established that mode of learning and admits the longings which his teacher can no more satisfy. Here he comes nearest to expressing his belief, such as it may have been, in the nature of life after death.

. . . and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.

Thence did I drink the visionary power;
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation : not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.

And again:

Our destiny, our being's heart and home
Is with infinitude and only there;
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.

Here is the real and only mysticism in Wordsworth, stripped of the sentiment which too often is fastened on to it by superficial readers. It is as real, and comparison is interesting in proving it so, as in St. John of the Cross or Francis Thompson. Here Wordsworth found the truth, beautifully expressed in the tribute to Annette Vallon :

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Here also Wordsworth found his true vocation, not as the versifier of *Simon Lee* and many a worthless sonnet, but as the worshipper and teacher of Nature, the instrument of God in the natural education of man. When his work is done the vision fades, the prophet is

left alone in darkness, sorrowing for his loss, but grateful for the work he has been called upon to do, waiting for the final consummation of which Wordsworth never speaks.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath elsewhere had its setting,
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

As an artist Wordsworth accomplished a rare work. In any form of art the artist creates a third personality, which is made up of the thing he sees, as he sees it, and as the beholder sees it. He conveys what he perceives to someone else, so that that person sees it as he is intended by the artist to see it. In the case of Wordsworth the thing seen is neither Nature nor himself, but the relationship between Man and Nature. By conveying this to us so that we also perceive it as he did, he not only creates this third reality, but does

so in a way which allows us to see its formation. In doing this he accomplishes a work almost unique in poetry.

The essence of the union between Nature and Man is best defined in the manuscript version of the second Book of *The Prelude.* In one of his unfortunate revisions, he replaced lines 410-14, thus removing a clear statement of his vision. Speaking of his knowledge of Nature, he wrote :

> I saw one life and felt that it was joy.

The implications of the line are obvious, and complete his teaching. Nature and Man are creatures of God, who has placed in Nature the means of drawing Man to herself, so that he may learn something of the Creator. Thus Man and Nature unite in a life which is proper to neither alone. And the essence of that life is joy.

With this summary we may leave the poet, quoting the lines which best express him :

> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

(iv) Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, on October 21, 1772.

At Cambridge, 1791-94, he became an ardent republican, and was the leader of a band of enthusiasts apparently more addicted to wine-parties than the pur-

suit of learning. As an interlude he ran away and enlisted, a strange proceeding as he had a horror of warfare. However, this freak soon came to an end, and, shortly after, we find Coleridge engrossed in a scheme for the reformation of the human race.

In the spring of 1796, through the assistance of his friend Cottle, he published his first volume, *Poems on Various Subjects*', a volume curiously stiff and turgid in form for a poet who was to shape so soon as a pioneer of the simple style. Twelve months later he met William Wordsworth at the village of Racedown in Dorsetshire, a memorable encounter that proved the beginning of a memorable friendship.

The stimulus of Wordsworth's companionship helped to mature his poetic genius, and the sympathetic intelligence of Dorothy Wordsworth also had the happiest effect upon the young poet's imagination.

His marriage in 1795 to Sarah Fricker did not prove a happy one. It was the old story of incompatibility of temperament.

About this time Coleridge had thoughts of entering the Unitarian ministry; and it was on the occasion of his preaching in the Unitarian Chapel at Shrewsbury that Hazlitt first heard him. Hazlitt's enthusiasm found expression in one of his best papers and, although years brought a measure of disenchantment, nothing ever quite dissipated the enthralment that the poet seemed to cast over all with whom he came into contact.

Meanwhile the *Lyrical Ballads,* the fruit of a walking tour in North Devon with Wordsworth, had brought the two poets fame. But early in the new century the poet's health broke down and, as a solace for the physical pain that racked him, he had recourse to opium.

The slavery had now begun. The tyranny of opium spread its dark shadow over the remainder of Coleridge's life. He has given us some account of his state of mind in the pathetic *Ode to Dejection.*

His friends did break him of the habit for a time; but he suffered so dreadfully as to say it was better to die than to endure his present sufferings. But the effort was persisted in. From time to time his health improved for a short space, and something of the old gaiety returned.

His health was on a perpetual see-saw and, although his imaginative powers, excited to additional brilliance by the narcotic, flamed out at intervals, his power of concentration seemed to grow weaker and weaker. A voyage to Malta and Italy was of slight benefit. It is true that his intellectual powers were brilliant enough but, with an inability to fix his mind upon any consecutive piece of work, this availed him little. His fine intelligence, like a rudderless boat, drifted hither and thither on the stream of every passing emotion. Urged on by his friends, he started a course of lectures in London, which, though broken by ill-health and its usual attendants, achieved much success. A subsequent course on Shakespeare seems to have been

even more striking. These lectures were delivered extemporaneously and only fragmentary records of them exist.

In 1819, depressed by misunderstandings with his friends, and worried by the usual want of money, he received a fresh blow by the expulsion of his son Hartley, on the score of intemperance, from his Oxford Fellowship. The scholastic success and brilliant promise of his boy had always been a joy and pride to Coleridge. He saw in his degradation the inheritance of his own weakness of will. His health became worse and he plunged yet more deeply into the solace offered by his grisly comforter. From this date until his death in July 1834 he never regained his health, except for brief intervals. The tortures of conscience, however, and the harsh but often salutary admonition of friends, helped to keep the opum habit within bounds, although it had affected his constitution far too deeply to admit of any permanent recovery or of any complete emancipation. His days of literary work were now things of the past. It was as a talker, and one of the most marvellous that ever lived, that he was noted during the last ten years of his life. His reputation and his attractive personality brought to Highgate some of the finest minds of the day. On those famous Highgate Thursdays men crowded to hear him speak, in a strangely chanting voice, on every conceivable subject. From 1830 till his death in 1834 he was practically confined to a sick-room. Harriet Martineau and Emerson sought him about this time.

Despite his long, rambling monologues and the impossibility of engaging him in connected conversation, for his intellect invariably shot off into some meteoric display on its own account—despite this, he fascinated all hearers.

In the summer of 1834 Coleridge felt that he was dying.

On the evening before his death he dictated to his friend, Mr. Green, portions of his *Religious Philosophy*', till gradually articulation became difficult: he fell into a state of unconsciousness and a few hours later passed quietlyaway.

Richly imaginative, subtly humorous, acutely discerning, with a genius for friendship no less than for letters, he left an ineffaceable impression upon all with whom he came into contact. Notwithstanding his infirmities of character, he was essentially a great man. Lamb's happy dictum was not the extravagant hyperbole of a partial friend but the appraisement of a true critic, when he called him " an Archangel—slightly damaged ".

It is Coleridge as one of the great poets of Romanticism who compels our immediate attention.

The first impulse towards expression in poetry came with the chance reading of the *Sonnets* of Bowles : it stirred within him that rich and ardent delight in natural beauty that had always been his dower, and of which he now became, for the first time, self-conscious as an artist.

His spiritual interpretation of the universe, coupled

with a rich yet delicate appreciation of the beauties of the physical world, may be traced in his verse at this period. *Songs of the Pixies* (1793); the *Lines on an Autumnal Evening; Lewti* (1794); especially in *Religious Musings* (1794-96). His *Fall of Robespierre* is quite unimportant as a piece of literature, though here and in some of the *Religious Musings* his revolutionary ardour, always more idealistic than concrete, breaks out in vaguely rhetorical expression.

The first period ends with the rupture of his early intimacy with Southey, and in the memorable meeting with Wordsworth.

In the second period the intimacy with Wordsworth and with his sister Dorothy bears its first fruits in the odes *To the Departing Year* and *To France.* This abandonment of his youthful social ideals is celebrated here with a fire, passion, and freedom of expression hitherto lacking in his work, the scenery round Stowey moving him more profoundly than his former rustic surroundings.. Probably the subtler charm of his fresh Nature-pieces, *This Lime-Tree Bower, Frost at Midnight, Fears in Solitude* (1797-98), is due more to the influence of his new friends than to any greater appeal in the environment. But the full flowering of his genius—this was only the blossom time—came (in 1797-98), with *The Ancient Mariner, Christabel* (1797-1800), and *Kubla Khan* (1798). Of these poems, *Kubla Khan* is only an exquisite dream fragment. The other two exhibit the highest power of Coleridge as a poet; and Coleridge at his highest has no rival even

among his great contemporaries. To have written one of these poems would alone have brought him within the small circle of supreme makers of verse. Each of its kind is unique. After *Christabel* the poet never again reached the heights, though a few minor pieces survive of his later writings, dealing with *Dejection, Love's First Hope,* that show some measure of his ancient cunning. It was not a decline of poetic energy, as in Wordsworth's case, but an arrest of poetic power, of creative imagination. His imagination was as rich as ever, his intellect as restless and keen, but they sought expression in channels other than those of verse.

There are two outstanding characteristics in the poet's work, the first a psychical, the second an intellectual quality. The psychical element lies in its pervading sense of mystery; the intellectual in the crystalline simplicity with which this sense of mystery is expressed.

A love of mystery was, as we have seen, a dominant feature of romantic story-telling, from Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe down to Sir Walter Scott. It led its earlier votaries into the dim recesses of mediævalism, where the wealth of superstition and the robuster excitements of stirring adventures furnished copious material for the mystery-maker. But if we compare the supernaturalism of Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe with that of Coleridge, we realise in a moment the difference between the maker of horrors and the maker of horror. These romancers were not charlatans;

their sense of mystery, though not delicate and subtle, was genuine enough so far as it went. But they mistook its manifestations; they felt bound to give their mysteries a " local habitation and a name ", nor stayed to remember that the indefiniteness they strove so vigorously to banish lay at the source of its magic; and that by subtle suggestion, not by crude description, do you create the atmosphere.

Coleridge does not use the spells of medievalism as so many stage properties ; he absorbs them into himself, and they reappear rarely distilled and inextricably blended with the poet's exquisite perception of the mysteries that surround the commonplace things of everyday life. If we survey the content of *The Ancient Mariner,* its amazing comprehensiveness will strike us no less than its imaginative power. Every phase of landscape, seascape, and cloudscape is touched upon, from the quiet scenery of an English woodland to the lurid scenery of the tropics. The poet touches with equal power and beauty every phase of life at sea : the ship flying before the freshening gale, the torrid fierceness of the stagnant waters, the freezing cold of the Arctic region, the horrors of the becalmed passage, the blessedness of the welcome rain, the clear sky, the storm-cloud, the great sea-fog, the incarnate fury of the storm, the soothing peace of the temperate seas, the loneliness of the great ocean, and the welcome sight of familiar landmarks once again as the mariner views the peaceful English harbour; and over the whole poem there is that strangeness and

remoteness, even when describing simple ordinary things, that marks the highest Romantic art.

The whole poem is wrought with the colour and glamour of the Middle Ages. From the quaint embroideiies of the " merry minstrelsy " to the central pattern of the Catholic idea of penance—everywhere we see the mediaeval touch : the fateful cross-bow, the vesper bell, the shriving hermit, the invocation of " Mary Queen ". Yet there is no slavish attempt to reproduce another age. The voyage itself is not such a voyage as mediaeval mariners were wont to make. The voyage, whatever use the poet may have made of Shelvocke's *Voyages* and its story of a black albatross, is in essence created out of " such stuff as dreams are made on ". It is the ethereal and subtle fancy of a great poet, " the baseless fabric of a vision ". We do not ever know if the weird scenes that the Mariner describes were actual occurrences or mere phantasmagoria, the product of his heated and distorted imagination. The poet leaves it splendidly vague, as it should be left. All we do realise is the spell of the story, the horrors of the lonely seafarer, the dreadful effect on the Mariner of the ghostly sights and sounds. The Mariner himself gathers up into his person the elements of romance, with his glittering eye, his skinny hand, his arresting voice, and the spiritual misery that drives him into speech to ease his tortured soul.

The supernaturalism of the poem is no matter of stage-lighting, as with " Monk " Lewis; of hysterical

declamation, as with Mrs. Radcliffe; of scenic accessories, as with Scott—it is an atmosphere that suffuses the entire tale; the outcome of a hundred delicate touches and subtle hints, made convincing to the reader by the profound psychological insight of the poet.

Note the masterly skill with which we are prepared for the spiritual horror :

> Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
> 'Twas sad as sad could be;
> And we did speak only to break
> The silence ot the sea !

The nerves are overwrought by the dreadful silence; then comes the physical strain of the parched system :

> Water, water everywhere
> And all the boards did shrink;
> Water, water, everywhere,
> Nor any drop to drink.

The stagnant waters with their myriad putrescent life, the intolerable waiting for the calm to break and *then*, when mind and body were broken down, the appearance of the phantom ship.

As the spectral horrors multiply, the poet reproduces for us, with the imaginative fidelity of the great artist, those little pictures of sunrise and sunset, and th^ quiet beauty of the moonlit night, that give additional power to the strange and fearful sights :

> The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
> At one stride comes the dark;
> . . . . . .

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide;
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside——

Nowhere in our literature is the benison of sleep to the tired, racked spirit suggested with more moving power than in these lines :

Oh sleep 1 it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole !
To Mary Queen the praise be given !
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

During sleep the spell is broken, and the long-hoped-for thing comes to pass :

And when I awoke it rained.

The phantasmagoria melt away, the elements attune the watcher to the welcome change, while the very boat shares in the peaceful aftermath :

. . . the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon.
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

" He prayeth best who loveth best " is no moral tag at the close of a fine descriptive poem, but the summing up in a few lines of the spirit with which the entire poem is charged; an intimate kinship with all " happy living things ".

So far we have dwelt more particukrly on the psychical aspects of the poem; it remains to note the

technical beauty of the work, with its simple clarity and artless art.

The homely diction of mediaeval balkdry is reproduced with a skill greater than that even of Scott:

> Day after day, day after day
> We *stuck*. . . .
>
> Alone, alone, all, all alone,
> Alone on a wide, wide sea.
>
> The sun came up upon the left,
> Out of the sea came he;
> And he shone bright and on the right
> Went down into the sea.
>
> I moved and could not feel my limbs,
> I was so light—almost
> I thought that I had died in sleep
> And was a blessed ghost.

All the resources of the old ballad metre are used by the poet, yet never overdone; for instance, the effective medial rhymes and the trick of alliteration :

> The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
> The furrow followed free . . .

The ballad habit of repetition :

> With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
> We could not laugh nor wail . . .
> With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
> Agape they heard me call.
>
> The seraph band each waved his hand,
> It was a heavenly sight. . .
> The seraph band each waved his hand,
> No voice did they impart. . .

A besetting sin with the Romantic poet is the abuse of archaic terms. Chatterton was the great sinner here; Keats in his earlier work is nearly as bad. Coleridge, with finer instinct, just gives an occasional archaism to preserve the mediaeval atmosphere :

Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

And, by the holy rood.

And now all in my own countree.

A certain shape, I wist.

Thus all the simple beauty of the old ballad is imparted with none of its extravagances, while with the medievalism he blends the modern spirit, so as to convey a more moving magic to the reader today.

Where in *The Ancient Mariner* Coleridge reproduces for us the old balhd form, in *Christabel* he goes to the metrical romance, and uses variations of the octosyllabic couplet, variations introduced deliberately to harmonise with the " nature of the imagery or passion ". In sheer artistic power the poem is scarcely inferior to *The Ancient Mariner',* where it yields precedence is in its more limited appeal and more circumscribed *milieu.* Whether it be taken as an allegory or merely as another excursion into the dim dream-world of fantasy, its beauty and magic are indisputable.

Once again we are in a mediaeval atmosphere; there is the old moated castle with its feudal accompaniments of heralds and pages, with its massive gate " ironed

within and without "; we have the witch woman with the evil spell and the innocent victim; hints of the tourney. This poem is a fantasia on the elemental theme of good and evil, light and darkness, set in the appropriate key of moonlight and nocturnal mystery. The precise character of Geraldine; how far she was evil; the nature of her spell; the reason for its failure—such matters are left as vague and indefinite as the flickering shadows cast by the great fireplace in the hall. Nor does it really matter. The essential point is that the poet triumphantly suggests the eeriness and remote horror of the scene without having recourse to any elaborate machinery.

Just as in *The Ancient Manner*', the diction is homely and simple; you are conscious of no effort to make the flesh creep, yet every touch tells. You feel the oppressive silence, the ominous loneliness; the Powers of Darkness are abroad; whatever light there is shrinks and dwindles; the firelight in the hall dies down, while in the chamber of Christabel " the silver lamp burns dead and dim ".

The first part of the poem is flawless; the second part, for all its passages of beauty and tenderness, is in another key. The earlier mood has been forgotten; time has elapsed since the unfinished poem was put aside. Other interests have crowded upon the poet's mind, and it is obvious that he cannot recapture the elusive charm of the midnight scene. Yet the second part of *Christabel* abounds in noble lines and lovely images.

The fine passage :

> Alas ! they had been friends in youth;
> But whispering tongues can poison truth;
> And constancy lives in realms above;
> And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
> And to be wroth with one we love
> Doth work like madness in the brain.
> And thus it chanced, as I divine,
> With Roland and Sir Leoline.
> Each spake words of high disdain
> And insult to his heart's best brother :
> They parted—ne'er to meet again I
> But never either found another
> To free the hollow heart from paining—
> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
> A dreary sea now flows between

touches a note of poignant personal emotion rare in the work of Coleridge.

Individual as is his Nature poetry, with a subtlety and delicacy rarely found in Wordsworth, yet undoubtedly he was influenced by his friend, and a comparison of the scenic touches in his earlier work and in his work after he had known Wordsworth shows an intensity of affection and an accuracy of perception not to be explained away merely in terms of poetic development.

His supreme strength lay in his marvellous dream-faculty; one might add that the dream-faculty lay at the root of his greatness as a poet and his weakness as a man. But there is no finer dreamer in English verse. His plays are not interesting and, despite the

flashes of beauty in *Remorse* and *Zapolya,* it is quite clear that the medium is uncongenial to his powers.

Several of his briefer poems—*Love,* and *The Dark Ladie, Youth and Age*—have grace and tenderness and touches of personal emotion; but his reputation as a poet will rest on *The Ancient Mariner, Christabel,* and *Rubla Khan:* to have written these is to touch the heights of poetry, and to mingle with the great immortals.

But oh ! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover !
A savage place ! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover !
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced,
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounuing hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacrea river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean :
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war !

(v) Robert Southey (1774-1843)

Robert Southey, at one time closely associated both in friendship and reputation with Wordsworth and Coleridge, is now practically a spent force in literature.

Wordsworth and Coleridge live on as an inspiration, but Southey's writings have no following. Yet he played no small part in the literary history of the Romantic revival and a portion of his work at any rate meiits the consideration of the literary student.

Born at Bristol of good middle-class stock, Southey was educated at Westminster and Balliol, Oxford. A short sojourn in Portugal as a young man gave him a taste for the literature of the South, and he devoted his life to the pursuit of letters.

A thrifty and careful man, he lived for forty years at Greta Hall, near Keswick, and not only managed to live in tolerable comfort, but to bring together a fine library, support a large family, and look after the children of his more brilliant and far more erratic brother-in-law, " S.T.C" In 1813 he had been made Poet Laureate, and he did good solid work, poorly paid, for the *Quarterly Review*. Like Scott, for some time before his death his mind had been deranged.

His best verse was written in early life and in the last few years of the eighteenth century. True to the fashion of the times, he turned his hand to ballad work, and his contribution here, if less attractive than Scott's, is certainly distinctive and original. The grotesqueries of German romance he could achieve with success; and he had the genuine gift of comic exaggeration that gave rise to a form of writing which probably inspired Barham's *Ingoldsby Legends.* His irregular metres had freshness and raciness; there is plenty of life, if little beauty, about such pieces as *The Old Woman of*

Berkeley, there is humour and character about such ballads as *St. Michael's Chair,* while *The Devil's Walk* (originally published in the *Morning Post* as *The Devil's Thoughts)* is a breezy, effective " ding-dong chime ".

He had a turn for comedy of a rough-and-ready kind, and it is a pity that in his long epic narrative he kept it so severely in check. Of the epics, *Thalaba, the Destroyer* (1801), *The Curse ofKehama* (1810), there is little to say. It is not that they are-ill written, but they are lifeless. There is no transforming touch of high imagination about them. Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, one and all have written cruder verse, but their worst verse has some redeeming touch that Southey's lacks : no doubt the methodical and too temperate soul of Southey was ill suited to an Eastern subject. Yet the poems impressed his contemporaries, and from them Shelley borrowed his irregular blank metre in *Queen Mab.*

Southey's cycle of Spanish songs, *The Chronicle ofthe Cid,* is a spirited piece of work, while in *Don Roderick* (1814) he told a stirring story not merely with excellent zest but with a power and sense of actuality too seldom found in his longer poems.

His early travels in Spain had impressed its scenery and Spanish ways of living upon his imagination, so that he had not to rely, as in his other epics, on merely bookish inspiration.

Southey's prose is better than his verse. Indeed, the weaknesses of his verse became positive merits in the prose. The clear, even, business-like, unob-

trusive style gives value to such subjects as *The Ufe of Wesley,* or that of *Nelson.* In many ways it is like the great prose of the eighteenth century, yet in its individual flavour it falls below the level of the work of such prosemen as Addison, Defoe, or Swift: there is personality behind these; there is little personality in Southey's prose. He is at his best when purely objective. As soon as he comes forward himself he brings with him literary tricks culled from a score of sources—an affectation of Sterne, a flourish of Rabelais—and we sigh for the clear, straightforward manner in which, as a rule, his biographical studies were written.

Regarding his work as a whole, it may be said that it is like a vast stretch of tame-looking landscape with unexpected tracts here and there of sylvan charm and beauty, that the painstaking pedestrian will light upon and the casual traveller overlook. The real failure of Southey's staying power, despite his scholarship, industry, good sense, and wholesome feeling, lies in the sterility of his imagination. It can send forth picturesque grafts but it has no fructifying power, no depths, no reserve.

Yet, with all his imperfection and limitations, he upheld worthily the dignity of letters, left behind him some good verse and better prose, and proved, as his correspondence shows, an amiable, wise, and agreeable friend to such men as Wordsworth, Lamb, and Landor. To have held their friendship is no slight tribute to any man.

My days among the Dead are past;
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old :
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedew'd
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead; with them
I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears;
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead; anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them will travel on
Through all Futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

(vi) Samuel Rogers and Others

Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), like Southey and Tom Moore, occupied an important position among the men of letters of his day, and, like them, his literary influence was a transient one. He is inferior everi to them as a creative force, but he had a sharp and caustic wit which made him an acquisition at social gatherings, and sufficient susceptibility to the romanticism of his

time to give his verse the cachet of popularity. Original he certainly was not, and in poetry he shapes as a versatile and clever imitator of the various artistic fashions which had taken the literary world by storm. He could be Byronic in mild fashion, as his narrative poem, *Italy*, testifies, just as earlier he could reproduce the tricks of the didactic eighteenth-century poet in his *Pleasures of Memory.*

A wealthy man and a generous host, he played no small part as patron of literary genius.

Mine be a cot beside the hill;
A bee-hive's hum shall soothe my ear :
A willowy brook that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow, oft, beneath my thatch
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest;
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
And share my meal, a welcome guest.

Around my ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing
In russet gown and apron blue.

The village-church among the trees,
Where first our marriage-vows were given,
With merry peals shall swell the breeze
And point with taper spire to Heaven.

Among the crowd of minor and for the most part imitative romanticists are Mrs. Hemans (1793-1835), picturesque, melodious, and facile, and the two Montgomerys, James (1771-1854), and Robert (1807-

55). Robert *is* perhaps the better-known name, thanks to the notoriety he attained through Macaulay's slashing attack; but James was the better poet, with many of Mrs. Hemans' qualities set in a more sober, humanitarian framework.

(vii) Sir Walter Scott

Born on August 15, 1771, at Edinburgh, Walter Scott had as his birthplace a city alive with associations of national greatness and glory. His father was a Writer to the Signet, his mother the daughter of a well-known physician; while his ancestry was intimately connected with Border warfare. As a child he was delicate and ailing but his fragile physique at this time lent a more vivid life to his imaginative sensibilities.

At the age of three he was sent to his grandfather's farm in the valley of the Tweed, where he was lapped round with many romantic associations, and while lying on the grass he would eagerly absorb any tale told him by the shepherds of the life of the Border and drink in the songs and legends taught him by his grandmother. On the improvement of his health he went to school in Edinburgh. When he was thirteen he became familiar with Percy's *Reliques,* while the romances of Tasso and Spencer's *Faerie Queene* proved more congenial than ordinary book-learning. Any old song that came his way he would seize upon " like a tiger "; and from boyhood upwards he never tired of telling stories to his companions. Even when

called to the Bar in 1792 he proved a more promising story-teller than a lawyer, was a delightful, high-spirited companion, by no means averse to a skirmish with the authorities, and the first to begin a row, the last to ead it.

During his youth, while he travelled from one farmhouse to another, he had gained an intimate knowledge of the by-ways of Scottish life, while his retentive memory seized upon every association, treasuring it up till he could make use of it as a literary artist. In 1802 we have the earliest results of his enthusiastic indulgence in the two volumes of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border;* but before that time he had been attracted to German romantic literature (1788) and had taken to translating German ballads. The influence of " Monk " Lewis must also be noted; while the friendship with that erratic but brilliant, gifted poet, James Hogg, began in 1799 and proved a lively inspiration for many years to come.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel, his first original work, appeared in 1805, and was followed by *Marmion* in 1808 and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). Scott did not take his verse seriously, and upon someone asking his daughter if she had read the *Lay,* came the unexpected reply : " No, papa says there is nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry."

About this time Byron sprang into sudden fame with his *Childe Harold,* displaying in his poem many of the gifts which had made popular Scott's own verse. With his usual good sense and geniality, Scott recog-

nised the superiority of his rival and decided to give up verse-making, since Byron had beaten him at his own game.

Money difficulties supervening, he was in need of another source of livelihood and, while looldng for fishing-tackle one day, came across the manuscript of a half-finished story, *Waverley.* Better bait he had never lighted upon for tempting fish. The change of literary expression was by no means so marked as it seemed. He had always been a story-teller in verse rather than a lyric poet; he now became a story-teller in prose, using the same fount of inspiration; and it was quite clear that the new medium suited him better than the old, giving him greater elbow-room and an opportunity for exhibiting his rich sense of broad imagery, that had found no outlet in verse. *Waverley,* first published anonymously in 1814, was followed by other stories of Scottish life: *Guy Mannering, Rob Roy, The Antiquary,* and *Old Mortality.* Indeed, for the next sixteen years he held the stage of fiction, publishing twenty-nine stories in all. When asked for his opinion of *Waverley,* Lord Holland said, " We did not one of us go to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout". Meanwhile, in 1812, Scott had built himself a characteristic dwelling-place, Abbotsford, in imitation of an old baronial castle, on the Tweed, near Melrose.

For the next few years he was successful both in life and letters, and Abbotsford became a Scottish Mecca. Happy in his friendships and his life, famous

in his work, his existence seemed ideally satisfying, when, with tragic suddenness, came the collapse of his publisher and of his own fortune. With fine manliness of spirit, and splendid industry, he set to work to repair his fortune but now he was no longer young, and his health was failing, so, although he managed to satisfy most of his creditors, the effort proved too great for his enfeebled body, and in 1832 he died, with the sound of the beloved Tweed in his ears, the music he loved best in all the world.

(a) *His Genius for Vitalising the Past.*—The quality most obvious in Scott's work, whether in prose or verse, in his genius for vitalising the past. His feudal home at Abbotsford was no literary affectation, as was Walpole's gimcrack affair at Strawberry Hill, but a genuine expression of the man's romantic mediaeval spirit.

Never did he see an old tower or a stream without instantly conjuring up its old-world associations. For him every common bush burned with the fire of romance. Dowered with this creative energy of imagination, he made the reader also feel the glamour of places and the actuality of the past. He could effect with an old legend what a great composer could with some folk-song. He could improvise round it a host of fantastic variations. A fluent and ready writer, his work suffered few corrections.

He compels our interest by no literary trick, but by making us feel that men and women of a past age were real live human beings. How does he manage this ? By reason of his intuitive perception that the Scot of his

own day was the product of the past and organically connected with that past. Knowing his own peasantry with as intimate a knowledge as Burns, he makes the reader feel that his Dandie Dinmont, his Jeanie Deans, his Bailie, his Covenanters, were no creations of other times but might be found in modern dress in the Scotland of his own day.

Thus he welded together the past and present in a homogeneous whole, and shows us the spiritual continuity of history. Thus he makes manifest how the national type of character is the vital embodiment of centuries and is evolved from countless customs and traditions. With this power, wherein we see the finer aspects of the conservative attitude of mind, he reconstructed Scottish society and looked with jealousy and fearful eye upon anything that threatened to sweep away some relic of the past. Hence his opposition to the French Revolution is readily understood.

Leaving aside for the most part the mystical aspects of medievalism that attracted the German romancers and our own Coleridge, he fastened upon its showy and picturesque externals. He is a kind of mediaeval reporter, fancifully detailing the spectacular effects of the time, and concerned chiefly with the colour, the variety, the bustling vigour of mediaeval times. The inner life of the Middle Ages, as fashioned by the austere, mystical soul of Dante, was alien to his vision. The ecclesiastics of Scott are no living symbols of strange, passionate faiths, but picturesque people, jolly or evil-natured as the case might be, but with

nothing demoniac or saintly about them. It is quite true that he genuinely admired Gothic architecture and the ritual of Catholicism but he did so for their external impressiveness. He revelled in their possibilities of local colour; he was touched by the part they played in moulding human lives. But he viewed them always from the outside; they never seized upon his inner life as they did on that of the German romancers.

(b) *His Love of the Earth.*—Scott's passionate attachment to the past of his country is blended with his equally passionate attachment to its soil. Critics have spoken of his love of Nature, but the phrase suggests the transcendental affection felt by Wordsworth or Shelley, rather than the hearty, concrete attachment of Scott. It was with him Earth-worship, not Nature-worship; and the Earth in particular of special localities, endeared to him by a hundred associations. This qualification differentiates his Earth-worship from that of Meredith, which was general, cosmic, not specific and humanised. He loved his country's soil as a child loves, for its associations; he told Washington Irving that if he did not see the heather once a year he thought he would die. Yet to him a beautiful landscape meant little without the human touch in it. Sanctify it with some legend or personal association and he took it to his heart.

> O Caledonia ! stern and wild,
> Meet nurse for a poetic child,
> Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
> Land of the mountain and the flood,

Land of my sires 1 What mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand.

The names of places had a natural magic for him, as they had for Lamb. Hence the definite concrete character of his romances. Most of his legendary stories he connects with particular names and places. That nebulous atmosphere of dateless climes loved by some romancers—Coleridge, for instance, in his *Christabely* and Keats in his *La Belle Dame*—was alien to Scott's nature. He was never happy till he could give his fantasies a geographical label. It is here that the individuality of Scott's romances, be they in prose or verse, differentiates him so clearly from other great names in the revival of Romance.

To Wordsworth the pageant of the Middle Ages was a dream of ancient strivings that stirred the imagination and touched him as another chord of that " still sad music of humanity ", which came to him from a distance, as it were, sitting in philosophic aloofness. He would ruminate gently over " old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago ", but to Scott the unhappiness concerned him far less than the variety and excitement, and for him battles were never " long ago" but exhilarating actualities near at hand.

(c) *His Hearty Humanity.*—In historical enthusiasm he is supreme among writers of fiction. It is no one particular century, no passing phase of social life that moved him, but the past as a whole. His antiquarian

interests are so wide, so minute, that at times they overburden the narrative and make for tedium, but so sure is the man, so sure is his instinct for what is picturesque and dramatic, that we forget the antiquarian in the storyteller; and the lasting impression upon our minds is the impression of vitality.

And what gives his historical pictures their vital significance is the hearty humanity with which he endows them. Scott was no psychologist, in the sense that we apply the term to literary artists like George Eliot, Meredith, or Hardy. He was not given to analysis of any kind, and was notoriously careless in giving reality to his heroes and heroines, whom he is quite content to leave as picturesque accessories to the stories. But whenever he has to deal with humble folk he shows a lively sense of their virtues and foibles, and is as warm in his democratic sympathies as is Burns himself.

The essential kindliness and generous sympathies of the man exhale from his romances. That much-abused word "wholesome " is peculiarly applicable to Scott's work. It is full of good sense, manly feeling, and a rich if not subtle humour. As a humorist his great divergence from the chief humorists of the eighteenth century lies in his distaste for satire.

Satire presupposes the moralist. Scott was not a moralist; he was content to tell a good story in verse or prose, to dash off a situation, to light up an oddity, withouc ulterior comment. Yet, if no moralist by

intent, he was a moralist in effect. After reading one of his romances, the tribute of Byron rises to our memory : " Walter Scott is as nearly a thoroughly good man as a man can be, because I know it by experience to be the case."

(d) *His Influence and Significance.* Coleridge said of Schiller that he was " master not of the intense drama of passion but the diffused drama of history ". The same might be said of Scott; and his greatness lies in the breadth and range of his romantic sympathies. Take his work piecemeal, and his limitations are soon perceived.

In his verse the elements of awe, mystery, and wonder are seldom touched. His muse is robust, facile, theatrical; not subtle, profound, inevitable.

His intimate acquaintance with mediaeval romance is, in itself, a positive bar to high distinction of phrase. If he had captured the opulent variety of the old romances, he had carried away no little of their fluent redundancy, while his conservatism led him to retain something of the stilted phraseology of the age in which he had been cradled. His metrical inferiority to such a consummate master as Coleridge is made evident at once by comparing *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* with *Christabel.* It was his hearing the recital of *Christabel,* while that poem was still in manuscript, that inspired the " light horseman stanza", which he favoured so greatly. But the variety, the delicacy, the easy charm of Coleridge as a

metrist were beyond his more vigorous, straightforward methods.

In his fiction the same defects are apparent, though less obtrusive, because of the fecundity of concrete life that crowds the pages. This is most distinctly felt in the bluntness of his characterisation and the careless manipulation of his plots. Beside Dumas his awkwardness as a story-teller is realised again and again; beside the great novelists of the Victorian era his characterisation is often insipid and superficial.

Let these failings and limitations be frankly acknowledged. It remains for us to say wherein, despite these, lies his unassailable greatness.

In the first place, he is great because he links up most of the various phases of Romanticism that meet us in his predecessors. Scott brings them together, focusing their power, in both verse and prose. What is morbid and exotic he puts aside, and if he lacked the subtlety and delicacy of some of these exponents, there is no mistaking the big, massive effects of his large and varied canvases. Thus Romanticism is no longer the literary inspiration of a few detached artists; it has become a power to move the many.

While it has often been shown that Scott's work falls into a threefold division—in the form of the popular ballad, of the metrical romance, of the historical novel—what has been less seldom emphasised is the fact that his greatness lies in all-round excellence, in the vigorous breadth and ease shown in each of these departments, rather than in his supreme technical

mastery of any particular one. He succeeds by reason of his versatility and unerring popular appeal.

Critically considered, his ballads, with all their verve and swing and attractive charm, never attain the imaginative heights of such pieces as *The Ancient Mariner,* nor the exquisite workmanship of *Rose Mary* and *Sister Helen.* But taken as a whole there is no collection of ballads to equal, much less exceed, Scott's; for he has not only greater knowledge but, what is more important, a saner taste than Percy. Mention of his ballad work must not pass without reference to his exceptionally fine ballad *Proud Maisie,* where he comes nearer than anywhere else to Coleridge and Keats.

Compared with his splendid work as a ballad-writer, his metrical romances seem of less enduring fame. But it is easier, perhaps, to see their defects than appreciate their merits today. Despite their limitations and inequalities of workmanship, their narrative power is of the first order : and not only Macaulay and Browning, but more modern tellers of tales in verse, owe much to the vivid and graphic force displayed in *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake.*

Most important of all is Scott's significance as a novelist. Here he was both an innovator and a conserver.

He brought to converge upon the novel the same scattered influences of Romanticism that he did in his poetry; enriching its thin, arid founts of inspiration with his wealth of antiquarian lore, his open-air enthusiasm, his delight in the colour and movement of

bygone times, and his intimate knowledge of Scottish *life.*

Thus the historical novel as created by Scott was an entirely fresh departure in fiction. One has only to compare the Waverley Novels with the historical fiction preceding these to realise the originality of his formula. Strictly considered, every historical novel is a romantic speculation. He succeeded because, in place of hauling the past into the present and thereby disconnecting past and present, he boldly projected the present into the past, using his knowledge of contemporary life to humanise his old-world characters. Manners may change and fashions alter but human nature remains constant; and thus we have the apparent paradox that Scott's success as an historical novelist lay in his sturdy realism; that he made the men of Robin Hood's day and Shakespeare's day alive and actual by virtue of his acquaintance with the men who lived around the Tweed of his own day. Wisely, moreover, he does not concentrate the interest around the historical figures of the past but around his own fictitious characters, for his own characters, after all, were real; they were drawn from personal observations; his sketches were clever guesswork. He envelops his characters with the broad strands of real historical events, yet he bids us follow not the intrigues of Louis **XI** but the varying fortunes of Quentin Durward. Such was his method, and such the method adopted by his numerous followers—James, Ainsworth, Lytton, Kingsley, Hugo, Dumas.

Proud Maisie

Proud Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

" Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me? "
" When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye."

" Who makes the bridal bed,.
Birdie, say truly ? "
" The grey-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.

" The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady.
The owl from the steeple sing,
Welcome, proud lady."

(viii) The Ballad-makers

Scott's name and fame are associated closely with his two countrymen, James Hogg, " the Ettrick Shepherd ", and John Leyden. Hogg was a genuine poet of a subtler though less varied imagination than Scott, and as a ballad-writer found literature more profitable than " driving sheep to Edinburgh". Leyden was a scholar equally versed in Sanscrit and Border-lore. He had much to do with Scott's earlier studies in balladry and, though his own output was slight, he was the author of a few ballads—*The Elf-King* and *The Mermaid*, for instance—that deserve to rank alongside the work of Scott and Hogg.

James Hogg (1770-1835) was well named "the Ettrick Shepherd ", since he could neither read nor

write until he was thirty. Hearing a reading of *Tam o' Shanter,* he vowed to succeed Burns. He remained a sheep-farmer all his life but he also became the man of letters in Edinburgh which he aimed to become. *The Mountain Bard* (1803), *The Forest Minstrel* (1810), *The Queen's Wake* (1810, his finest collection) and several other volumes of verse established his reputation. Much of his work is unworthy of notice; in a few pieces not weakened by his diffuseness he is as admirable as Burns :

Kilmeny

She saw a sun on a summer sky,
And clouds of amber sailing by;
A lovely land beneath her lay,
And that land had glens and mountains gray;
And that land had valleys and hoary piles,
And marled seas, and a thousand isles.
Its fields were speckled, its forests green,
And its lakes were all of the dazzling sheen,
Like magic mirrors, where slumbering lay
The sun and the sky and the cloudlet gray;
Which heaved and trembled, and gently swung,
On every shore they seem'd to be hung;
For there they were seen on their homeward plain
A thousand times and a thousand again;
In winding lake and placid firth,
Little peaceful heavens in the bosom of earth.
sKilmeny sigh'd and seem'd to grieve,
For she found her heart to that land did cleave;
She saw the corn wave on the vale,
She saw the deer run down the dale;
She saw the plaid and the broad claymore,
And the brows that the badge of freedom bore;
And she thought she had seen the land before.

Another Scottish singer is Robert Tannahill (1774-1810). He was a weaver of Paisley with an origin?! gift of song, and temperamentally had more in common with Burns than with Scott. His main concern is love—love primal and passionate—and such a lyric as *Jessie, the Flower of Dunblane* is among the most intimate and moving songs that breathe an elemental atmosphere of nature and humanity.

Allan Cunningham (1784-1842) was a stonemason of Dumfriesshire. He attracted the notice and won the friendship of Sir Walter Scott, who admired his gift for vivid, homely ballad-writing. His stirring sea-song, *A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea,* is a first-rate ballad of its kind, and there is a direct simplicity about *Hame, Hame, Hame,* that makes its appeal at once.

Cunningham wrote a useful *Life of Burns,* and will be remembered also for his services in collecting Scottish songs.

Along with Cunningham must be mentioned William Motherwell (1797-1835) who, like Tannahill, was a native of Paisley and, like " honest Allan ", was an admirer and editor of Burns. He wrote also a *Ufe of Tannahilly* and in 1819 and 1827 published a collection of songs : *The Harp of Renfrewshire* and *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern.* His most distinctive claim to remembrance lies less in his Scottish songs, excellent as some of these are, than in his ballads from the Norse. The rich folklore of Scandinavia was yet to find its great modern discoverer, but Gray and Motherwell are certainly among the early pioneers.

The fighting note in Motherwell's muse finds a counterpart in Campbell's ballads. Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) has more affinity with the English Gothic School than with the simpler, more elemental ballad-writers with whom we have been concerned. There is something of Mrs. Radcliffe's melodramatic violence in Campbell's effects and the colours he lays on so freely are perhaps sometimes spoilt by tawdriness. None the less, at his best he is a spirited and impressive song-writer in the realm of " battle, murder, and sudden death ".

His earliest work, *The Pleasures of Hope,* though romantic in feeling, was cast into the familiar mould of Pope—a mould certainly not adapted for exhibiting Campbell's peculiar gifts to the best advantage. His vigorous imagination, however, impressed the readers of his day, and he won the notice of Scott, who soon interested him in ballad minstrelsy.

Revolutionary France warmed his blood, and all the horrors and fascinations of the fight took possession of his imagination. There he found the inspiration for *Ye Manners of England, Hohenlinden,* and *The Battle of the Baltic.*

Apart from his songs, Campbell is not an interesting writer. He imitates Scott's romantic narrative with nothing of Scott's rich, concrete power.

If Ireland can boast no such body of singers in English as can Scotland, she can at any rate claim one of the most popular literary personalities of his own or any other time, that of Thomas Moore (1779-1852).

Born in Dublin, May 28, 1779, the son of a grocer, he received a good education, and after leaving Trinity College, Dublin, he went to study law at the Middle Temple. Like many another, he speedily turned his attention from legal subtleties to the delights cf letters and in .the early years of the century did well with a translation of Anacreon and *The Poems of Thowas Little.* An appointment in the Bermudas (1803) proved of some financial value but subsequently, owing to the misconduct of his deputy, he became involved in pecuniary difficulties, through which he gallantly waded. Two volumes of verse in rapid succession, including the *Irish Melodies,* a duel with Jeffrey, and a brilliant explosion of political squibs entitled *The Twopenny Post-bag,* occupied the next few years. *Lalla Kookh,* an Oriental fantasy came next, in 1817, and met with great success. *The Fudge Family* of the following year was in his satirical and jocular vein. If his later verse is not so happy as the earlier, he gave ample evidence of his mental vigour and versatility by an ingenious prose romance, *The Epicurean,* and an admirable *Life of Byron.* In 1835 he was pensioned, but his last years were somewhat clouded by mental disease.

The vogue of Moore has long since died out, and we are more likely to undervalue him today and to echo Ha2litt's caustic criticism. But he has not a few claims to our remembrance, and was something better than the shallow, facile rhymester he sometimes appears.

In his own day he was amazingly popular, bhelley

admired his verse; Coleridge praised his deftly mingled poetry and music. Of Moore's poetry, the *Irish Airs* and two series of *Irish Melodies* present him at his happiest. His Orientalism was a veneer, and he had little power to suggest the mysticism and passion of the East. *Lalla Rookh,* inspired by Southey and Byron, is no more than a fancy-dress masquerade, for all its brave show of learning, and the irrepressible Tom, with his fine Whig sympathies and fashionable sentimentalism, can be discerned easily. The *Irish Airs* stand on another plane. It is true that they have no touch of what we call " Celtic magic " and give no expression to the subtler spiritual ecstasies of the Irish temperament, but they have a sweet cadence, a delicate pathos, and if they do not transport you to " a peak in Darien ", they conduct you through very agreeable meadowland.

The Young May Moon

The young May moon is beaming, love,
The glow-worm's lamp is gleaming, love;
How sweet to rove
Through Morna's grove,
When the drowsy world is dreaming, love !
Then awake I—the heavens look bright, my dear.
'Tis never too late for delight, my dear;
And the best of all ways
To lengthen our days
Is to steal a few hours from the flight, my dear I

Now all the world is sleeping, love,
But the Sage, his star-watch keeping, love,
And I, whose star
More glorious far

union with any woman "; she refused the offer, but a meeting twelve months later ended in their marriage at Seaham on January 2, 1815. They lived together, first at Seaham, then in London, a life of hopeless financial embarrassment and painful disagreements; doubtless there were faults on both sides, though Byron chivalrously takes the blame : " Where there is blame it belongs to myself, and if I cannot redeem I must bear it."

The birth of their baby girl in December made matters no better, and in January 1816 Lady Byron, to outward appearance quite friendly, left him on a temporary visit to her parents; she never returned, and on April 21 a legal deed of separation was made. Lady Byron died in 1860, and their daughter, Ada, afterwards Lady Lovelace, in 1852.

Four days after the deed was signed, Lord Byron left England never to return. During his wanderings he made the acquaintance of the Shelleys and Claire Clairmont, the mother of Allegra, and on the tragic death of Shelley, Byron witnessed the grim rite of cremation on the shore of the Italian lake.

In 1823, when Greece was struggling for independence, the poet threw all his energies into the cause. His whole heart, mind, and body were given to his self-imposed task, until seized with sudden illness on February 15, 1824. He lingered for two months in distressing suffering, and died at Missolonghi in western Greece on Easter Monday, April 19.

Whatever view we British people may hold of

Byron's work, there can be no doubt that on the Continent he was in his own day, and still is in ours, one of the greatest figures in English literature. There is no other poet in the Romantic revival who touched Europe 30 unmistakably as Byron. Yet his detractors are many and formidable, and there are not a few critics who would deny him any place in the firmament of great poets. Let us admit his faults at the outset if we would judge him fairly. His slovenliness of diction, his cheap rhetoric, his gross errors of taste—these things are obvious enough, and infect his work just as his theatricality and lack of self-control condition any personal estimate we make of the man. Yet it is hard to understand how any careful student of his writings can help feeling that many splendid flashes of beauty and insight overthrow the faults in any final appreciation of his work as a whole.

In the first place, he had from the outset an instinct for admirable and telling prose. His letters scintillate in racy humour and lively personal touches; they are rarely negligible, for Byron was a sound critic—exaggerations notwithstanding—and an excellent observer of men and manners. As a writer of verse his progress was more chequered.

In his experimental period his poetic style is often commonplace and tawdry. The experimental years start in 1807 with *Hours of Idleness,* include *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* and end with *The Siege of Corinth.* The work is very uneven. After 1816, the era of his exile, the style improves steadily and there

is an ampler power of self-expression. If we except the majority of his dramas, mostly uneasy experiments, we may trace gradual progress of his art until, in *Don Juan* and the *Vision of Judgment*, we have the richest fruits of his genius, because the various sides of the man—his wit, his fancy, his passion for beauty, his graphic actuality—find here in these poems their happiest expression.

Lacking the intensity of Wordsworth, the subtlety of Coleridge, the receptivity of Keats, the aerial fire of Shelley, Byron possessed a breadth and vigour of imagination beyond that of any contemporary. Nowhere is this more agreeably illustrated than in his love of Nature. In this love he is at one with all the Romantic poets, and he expresses it quite in his own particular way; there is no meditative musing, little sense of mystery, but a very live sense of wonder and delight in the energising glories of Nature.

> The morn is up again, the dewy morn
> With breath all incense and with cheek all bloom,
> Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
> And living as if earth contained no tomb
> And glowing into day : we may resume
> The march of an existence.

With Byron it is " over the hills and far away ".

In his descriptive passages we are reminded of Scott at his best. There is the same easy vigour and fire. Such poems as *The Siege of Corinth* are rich in brilliant sketches like this :

> 'Tis midnight: on the mountains brown
> The cold, round moon shines deeply down;

Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light . . .
The waves on either shore lay there,
Calm, clear, and azure as the air;
And scarce their foam the pebbles shook,
But murmur'd meekly as the brook.
The winds were pillow'd on the waves;
The banners droop'd along their staves . . .
And that deep silence was unbroke,
Save where the watch his signal spoke,
Save where the steed neighed oft and shrill . . .
And the wide hum of that wild host
Rustled like leaves from coast to coast. . . .

He was a *poseur*, with phases of simplicity and naturalness; an actor, with a strain of fierce sincerity; a revolutionary in thought and a conservative in art. A man of violent emotion, he was constantly betrayed into extravagant assertion. But he was by no means so unstable as he seemed. He loved to shock people and magnify his lawlessness. But he was not a bad man; he was merely a man who did bad things. The distinction is a real one. He had fine enduring traits : courage, generosity, and a capacity for friendship.

There is no poet less objective than he. His heroes and villains (the distinction is not always apparent) are coloured stage editions of himself. *Manfred, Childe Harold, Lara, Don Juan;* in each we can see the insolent dandy, the daring adventurer, the intrepid fighter, the amorist. Such force of personality will not be schooled to the requirements of a

finished art. No great poet has ever been more shamelessly bombastic and turgid; but amidst stanzas of third-rate rhetoric are passages of real power and beauty.

If the flexibility of Byron's verse was well adapted for rhetorical purposes, it was equally well adapted for satiric use. His satire, indeed, is more remarkable than even his rhetoric. *Beppo* and *Don Juan* scintillate with humour. There is no delicacy, no subtlety about it; but it has a daring and liveliness that remind one of the Restoration wits rather than of any contemporary models. Moreover, there is abundant sound sense in Byron's persiflage.

> One hates an author that's all *author*, fellows
> In foolscap uniforms turn'd up with ink,
> So very anxious, clever, fine, and jealous,
> One don't know what to say to them, or think,
> Unless to puff them with a pair of bellows;
> Of coxcombry's worst coxcombs e'en the pink
> Are preferable to these shreds of paper,
> These unquench'd snuffings of the midnight taper.

Slovenly and meretricious Byron can be, and often is. Scarcely ever does he lack vitality. He has been accused of insincerity and insincere he could be when he wished. But it was a thing done deliberately—malice aforethought, an actor's pose. Despite occasional attitudinising in the limelight, there was an elemental greatness and fierce integrity about the man. For this reason preference must be given to *Don Juan* above all his other work. For there you have the real Byron: a medley of perverse humour, keen-

sighted wit, heady passion, and—its coarseness notwithstanding—with that unmistakable thirst after beauty which you find in none but the live and genuine poet.

He has an eye for essentials and can dash off a pictorial effect or a character sketch with amazing dexterity and skill. The effect may be rather of the flamboyant poster type than that of the finished picture. But, allowing for this, there can be no question of his success. Wholly admirable in its way is the pen sketch of London :

> A mighty mass of brick and smoke and shipping,
> Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
> Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
> In sight, then amidst the forestry
> Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping
> On tiptoe thro' their sea-coal canopy;
> A huge, dim cupola like a foolscap crown
> On a fool's head—and there is London Town.

It might serve as a motto to a Whistler study.

Of his lyrics it may be said that while lacking the elusive delicacy of Shelley and the noble distinction of Wordsworth, they have none the less a lilting charm and gracious music of their own.

That well-known lyric

> She walks in beauty, like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies . . .

will take its place beside the best lyrics in our language.

Profoundly touched at certain points by Romanticism, Byron was never a poet of Romanticism in the

sense that Shelley, Scott, and Coleridge were. Like Wordsworth and Southey, he is deeply touched by its influences at one moment but is far away at the next. Of all the great poets of the time, Byron presents the curious and piquant combination of an ardent "omantic imagination and an intellect and outlook essentially worldly and matter-of-fact. With Keats it was the past, with Shelley the future ; with Byron it is the present that really interests and grips him. His ardent fancy dallied with the past on occasion; but he is most at home with the England of his day, the Europe of his day, its social hypocrisies, its literary conventions and affectations. At heart he is always a society gentleman, and both in its good and bad senses a man of the world. Here is the explanation of his genuine admiration for Pope and the Popian methods, of his attack on Bowles (see *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers)* for depreciating Pope. He never took his *Childe Harold* as seriously as the *English Bards*—which is purely eighteenth century in spirit—and thought far more of his *Vision of judgment*, which is pure satire, than of his *Corsair*. For a time his influence was tremendous, though always at bottom more personal than literary. Then, as is always the case, when the spell waned the reaction ran violently to the other extreme, and the Victorian unduly depreciated him. Perhaps we are beginning today to get the right perspective of this strange compound of greatness and littleness. If not one of our greatest poets, there are few literary personalities more interesting than lie, and

he was undoubtedly a powerful force in English letters.

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlit bay.
The twilight glow, which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.
They fear'd no eyes nor ears on that lone beach,
They felt no terrors from the night; they were
All in all to each other; though their speech
Was broken words, they *thought* a language there,—
And all the burning tongues the passions teach
Found in one sigh the best interpreter
Of nature's oracle—first love,—that all
Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.

(x) Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

The poet Shelley was born on August 4, 1792.

Shelley's early education was given at home in company with his sisters; in 1802 he went to school at Sion House, Brentford, where he was looked upon as " a strange, unsocial being ", and three years later passed into Eton.

From Eton he went up to Oxford in 1808, revolutionary in spirit and bitterly opposed to the existing state of society; he was a diligent student, read hard, if not along the lines prescribed by the University, and with frank independence spoke and wrote as he thought. It is therefore needless to say that when his pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* appeared it caused

considerable friction with the authorities, but, having the courage of his conviction, he asked them to discuss the subject with him and was met with an indignant refusal—he must subscribe to the College rule of faith or depart. Disavow his pamphlet he would rot, so he was dismissed, and with his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg left Oxford for London with the impression that the world was against him and a determination from henceforth "to be against the world.

Shelley was but nineteen-when he first met Harriet Westbrook. She quickly aroused his sympathy by hints of tyranny and persecution from members of the home circle, and a few months later they eloped to Edinburgh. At first they appear to have been quite happy : " My wife ", says Shelley, " is the partner of my thoughts and feelings."

In 1812 the cause of Catholic Emancipation in Ireland claimed Shelley's attention, always on the side of liberty, and with his wife and her sister he crossed the Channel. An *Address to the Irish People* was printed and circulated. There was, however, no warmth in the response to his kind offices; the police were also beginning to suggest that his departure would not be lamented, so on April 7 the trio left for Wales. After a brief sojourn at Tremadoc they returned to London, where lanthe, their first child, was born in June 1813; the second, a boy, was born at Bath the following year.

Shelley's love for his children is well known, but for some reason his wife was an indifferent mother and to

this is attributed the beginning of his coldness towards her. With Godwin and his family Shelley was on intimate terms, and the gradual estrangement from the now uncongenial companionship of his wife and her sister threw him more and more into the Godwin circle and the society of Godwin's daughter, a girl of sixteen, " fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look ", with whom, finding much in common, he fell passionately in love.

Gradually the rift widened between Shelley and his wife, and in June 1814 they agreed to separate; Harriet went to her father at Bath and Shelley quite openly left London with Mary Godwin. The tragic circumstances of Harriet's suicide, two years later, are well known.

In 1816, immediately after the death of his wife,. Shelley spent some days with Leigh Hunt at Hampstead. *Alas tor* was published and, on December 30, he married Mary Godwin in London. Early in the following year he made frantic efforts to regain the control of his motherless children but the law, in the person of Lord Eldon, then Chancellor, decided that he was " unfitted for parental responsibilities ". Smarting with indignation, worried in mind, ill in body, and socially ostracised, Shelley and his wife left England in March 1818.

The last four years of Shelley's life (1818-22), spent mainly in Italy with his friends Byron and Leigh Hunt, were also the most prolific in his work.

The year before his tragic death Shelley was living a

quiet, studious life at Pisa, translating Spinoza, in which he was assisted by his wife, seeing much of Byron and Byron's friends, devoting considerable time to boating and fishing.

Had he been less headstrong and fearless lie would probably have taken the advice of those friends who endeavoured to restrain him from leaving Leghorn in a frail boat unskilfully handled, " the smoke on the water, and the devil brewing mischief". In the white fog the *Ariel* was soon enveloped, and nothing more was seen of boat or occupants until two months later, when the bodies of Shelley and his friend Williams were found upon the shore of the lake; pending the arrival of Byron and Leigh Hunt, Shelley's body was buried in the sand, to be burned later in the presence of his friends. The ashes were collected and, with the heart, that Trelawny had snatched from burning, were placed in a box and eventually buried in Rome.

" The fine spirit that had animated us and held us together is gone," wrote Trelawny, " and left to our own devices we degenerate apace."

Shelley exhaled verse as a flower exhales fragrance, and just as the fragrance of a blossom varies in quality and power, so did Shelley's verse vary in poetic merit. The essential point is that there was no effort or laborious artistry about it at any time. He may not always have been a great poet—much in *Queen Mab* is second-rate poetry—but he was always a poet. Rhythm came as naturally to him as breathing. This distinguishes him at once from his contemporaries.

Keats especially strove long and arduously before he arrived at that consummate art that conceals art in such flawless gems as the *Ode to Autumn.*

One other thing distinguishes Shelley from his contemporaries. He was a reformer as well as a poet, uninterested in the past, mindful only of the present when it jarred on his social idealism, his eyes were fixed intensely on the future. In his earlier years Godwin was the figure who most readily impressed his mobile imagination, and in some of the poems dealing with social subjects—*Queen Mab* and *The Rjevolt of Islam*—he is little more than Godwin made musical. In later life Wordsworth's influence is more clearly discernible. But the most potent inspiration came from Greek literature, first brought before his notice by his kindly friend and critic, Peacock.

Shelley, like his admirer, Browning, needed the sunshine of the South to rouse his finest powers. *Alastor* is the splendid product of his first acquaintance with the Alps; and his loveliest lyrics were written under Italian skies.

Two notes dominate all Shelley's work, epic, narrative, and lyric alike—his devotion to liberty, and his wholehearted belief in love as the prime factor in all human progress. To Shelley the Revolution was much more than a political upheaval; it was a spiritual awakening, the beginning of a new life. All that was evil in life he traced to slavery. For him natural development was the only development. These are the thoughts underlying *The Revolt of Islam, The Masque*

of Anarchy, Julian and Maddalo, and the noble lyric drama, *Prometheus Unbound.* Liberty, in Shelley's eyes, "was freedom from external restraint. It is opposed to licence, for to " rule the Empire of Self" was, with Shelley, a moral necessity. I What, then, if force is withdrawn from society, is to take its place ? Shelley's answer is, Love. Love is to reign supreme, for only in an atmosphere of love can liberty efficiently work. Love is, with Shelley, a transcendental force kindling all things into beauty. (In his treatment of it we miss the more concrete touch of Keats and the homeliness of Wordsworth's steady affection.

But Shelley was no ordinary human being. There is a touch of elfin magic about all his work; he sings of human passions, yet as one almost aloof from them, or feeling them only in some etherealised way. This is at once his great merit and his weakness. Consider, for instance, the *Epipsycbidion,* where the poet pictures certain influences that have come into his life. Here surely is a subject wrought out of the poet's most intimate experiences, which might have been profound, vital, and stirring : the love of woman and the power of that love in shaping human life—how poignantly and graciously has Browning dealt with this in his dramatic romances; with what quiet strength does Wordsworth suggest its spiritual aspects; with what fierce ardour does Byron surround its physical manifestation; or look, on the other hand, at the subtle witchery of sex that Keats gives us in *La Belle Dame,* and Coleridge in *Christabel.* Yet none of these things

moves Shelley. No poet felt more deeply the dynamic influence of love in moulding human destiny; none realised more fully the insignificance of life devoid of love; yet Shelley's women are merely lovely wraiths that greet us to the strains of delightful music.

But if, when dealing with human passions, the dreamlike quality of Shelley's verse is a defect rather than a merit, yet, given a note of fantasy to start with, no poet can compel our imagination as he does. The spontaneity, the splendid abandonment, the musical rush of the lines—these things make us his willing captives. He has made our hard, sibilant language a thing of fire and air.' The beauty of the visible world strikes his prismatic imagination and is dissolved into rainbow colours; the very personality of the singer melts into his song, until he ceases to be a man and becomes a voice, a lyric incarnate.

Yet, for all the visionary quality of the verse, for all that strange aloofness, there is no vagueness of effect or intellectual mistiness. The outlines may be faint, but they are unmistakable, and in such incomparable lyrics as *The Cloud* and *The Ode to the West Wind* there is a logical development of idea that blends perfectly with the exquisite music, making it a thing of thought and beauty all compact.

His earliest work, *Queen Mab* (1813), is individual enough in its outcry against the unspiritual forces that weigh down mankind, but is crude in expression, and was obviously written under the influence of Southey's

Orientalism. In the next poem, *Alastor* (1816), Shelley found his true greatness for the first time. The aspiring youth in the poem is the poet himself on his life quest, and if the story becomes at times obscure and discursive, yet the main drift is the revolt of the imagination against the limitations of human life. Following this poem, and spiritually akin to it, are the fine *Hymn to Intellectual beauty* (1816) and the glowing tribute to *Mont Blanc* (1816).

The skilful use of the Heroic Couplet in *Julian and Maddalo* (1818) is interesting, and the picture of Byron is vivid and intimate, but there is too much screaming and verbal hysteria, to make the poem great or memorable : very different are the *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* in the same year, where the discords of life and the passionate idealism of the poet, hoping against hope, are present with supple grace and power. In *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-19) the Shelleyan thirst for freedom reappears in a noble and expansive setting.

If the *Prometheus* is mainly remarkable for its lyrical greatness, Shelley was soon to show in *The Cenci* (1819) that he was not lacking in dramatic power.

The story of Beatrice Cenci is just such a one as would have stirred the Jacobean dramatists, who loved a theme at once tragic and morbid, and Shelley's play has been compared with the work of-Webster and Tourneur, whose dramas were known to the poet. But Shelley's imagination lacked both the passionate intensity of Webster and the coarse, undisciplined

violence that accompanies his genius. Webster would have made the play much more vital; at the same time he would have made it too horrible. Shelley, deliberately eschewing here poetic beauties and giving it that touch of aloofness inherent in all his work, makes it not horrible but merely terrible. *The Cenci*, in fact, with its austere atmosphere and undeviating thread of tragedy, has more points in common with the Greek than the Romantic drama.

The year 1820 sees the birth of Shelley's most exquisite imaginings. Of these, *The Witch of Atlas* is the most ambitious. The witch is a beautiful goddess who watches human destinies; she is tender and beneficent, yet keeps a calm detachment from human passion. She visits mortal beings and gives them fair dreams of beauty.

The treatment is Delicately fantastic and the spell of fantasy is never rudely broken.

The Sensitive Plant (1819) is less satisfying as a fantasy than *The Witch of Atlas,* but has a delicate, exotic grace and many haunting lines.

Greatest, however, are the lyrical pieces, where Shelley's genius always exults : *The Skylark* (1820), the most popular of these, though not the finest, is rich in melodious charm; but infinitely superior in imaginative conception and metrical power are *The Cloud* (1820) and the *Ode to the West Wind(*\<j).*

The Cloud is a Nature myth of flawless beauty. The complete identification of the poet with his subject, the superb rush of music, the crystalline clearness of

the picture, not for a moment marred by over-profusion of metaphor, as in *The Skylark*—these things make criticism tongue-tied. Even to comment on its beauties is an impertinence. It is made for our wonder and delight.

The *Ode to the West Wind* is not greater artistically—that were impossible; but it has an intellectual and human interest designedly absent from the shorter piece.

In the following year, -1821, came *Adonais,* a noble and eloquent elegy, deliberate and concentrative in its method, the finest of his non-lyrical pieces. As in *Adonais* he celebrates his love and admiration of a brother poet, so in *Epipsychidion* does he voice his affection for certain feminine influences that have entered his life.

Hellas (1822) is inspired by the Greek Revolution, to which Byron gave his life and Shelley some of his most impassioned music. As a garner of lyrical song it is a worthy pendant to *Prometheus Unbound,* reflecting both the superb lyrical invention of the poet and his live, intense humanitarianisnO Then, in the early flush of the Italian summer, came *The Triumph of Life*—a beautiful fragment left incomplete by his death.

Turning from his verse to his prose, we are struck by its even clarity and sober sense. His letters have not the pungency of Byron's but they are never dull; and the later ones abound in rich and satisfying phrases. Certainly the prose is worthy of the poet.

His philosophy is often pantheistic in expression—

notably in *Adonais*; and he is frequently spoken of as a pantheist; but he obviously vacillates between dualism and pantheism, and the struggle between the good and evil Deities is clearly the burden of such poems as *Alastor* and *"Prometheus.* On the whole, he believes that the light will swallow up the darkness but, like most optimists worth their salt, he has moods of doubt and dejection. In his attitude towards art and the relation between art and conduct he is as clear-headed as Coleridge, and saw plainly the quagmire of didacticism into which Wordsworth had fallen. As he says in his *Defence of Poetry,* " the great instrument of moral good is the imagination "; thereby touching in a simple phrase the ethereal power of all great literature.

Although in Shelley's diction we find favourite words, like "curse", "poison", "demon", that remind us of the Gothic school of terror, where Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe ruled, yet the mediaeval note is strikingly absent from Shelley's poetry. He cared as little for the past as did Byron, and the dim cloistral mysticism of the Middle Ages, with its magic and its pageantry, stirred no pulse-beat in the author of *Hellas.* His passion for freedom, his craving for moral harmony, drew him towards Greek ideals. Intellectually his sympathies were always with Greek thought; though temperament and idiosyncrasies made his own poetic art something very different from the measured, orderly beauty of Hellenic culture.

The peculiar quality of Shelley's lyrical genius

demands some comment. As a rule our great lyric poets have excelled in portraying sexual emotion, sometimes striking the note of elemental passion, as did the Elizabethans and Robert Burns, sometimes improvising tender sentimentalism and exquisite conceits around the primitive themes, as the Caroline singers and Tennyson were wont to do.

It is somewhat of a paradox that a poet to whom human love is the vital inspiration of his art should prove so elusive in his love lyrics. The sentiment is so rarefied, so readily does he pass from the personal to the universal, so engrossed is he with love as an abstract ideal, that as a love-poet, as we ordinarily understand the term, he is curiously unsubstantial and ineffective. Certain events in his own life tend to persuade one here that this quality in his love-songs, satisfying in every respect *save as an expression of love*, is due to an elfin, a non-human element in the man's nature. But the real solution does not lie here, I think, though there may be a grain of truth in the view.

In some ways Shelley is intensely human, vividly passionate; but he is far more easily stirred by an idea than by a person; and his singularly subtle intellect exercised a cooling and impersonal influence upon his imaginative life.

Liberty for the downtrodden, hope for the oppressed, peace for the storm-tossed—these are things that fire his songs and stir his imagination to its depths. For this reason *The Masque of Anarchy*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *Hellas*, the *Ode to the West Wind*

move us in a way that none of his love-poetry does; and, for the rest, when he holds us with his magic music it is when he becomes as one of the elements himself, and, stripping himself of human emotion and thought, projects himself into the universe, loses his own identity, and charms us in just the same way as might a storm, a sunset, or the moon upon the waters.

Pervading Shelley's work is the implicit belief that the human race is perfectible. The poet is filled by the idea that man, when he understands and accepts what Shelley means by love, will reach a Golden Age of material and spiritual happiness. In the decline of the Romantic Revival it was from this idea that men turned away, under the influence of Benthamite thought and particularly, as will be mentioned later, as the implications of the Malthusian theories were realised.

(xi) John Keats (1795-1821)

Popular estimation pictures Keats as a morbid, hysterical author. As a matter of fact he was a bright, enthusiastic youth, shy and reserved at times but in the company of friends sane and cheerful in talk, often with a vivacious humour of which there is little trace in his work. Afterwards disease sapped his energies ana he became moody, but to the last he was brave and stoical. The best side of Keats' nature is not displayed in the love-letters to Fanny Brawne.

Nor did he show any special intellectual interests as a boy. He was not a dreamer, like young Coleridge>

nor a voracious reader, like the youthful Morris. He was just a high-spirited boy with the ordinary boy's love of outdoor sports; simple in his tastes, and lovable in his nature. His boyish hobby was—fighting. Then suddenly, in his fourteenth year the mind woke up and he gave to his books the energy and zest he had before bestowed on games. Classical antiquity especially appealed to him, and even the somewhat arid charm of Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* held him in thrall. His parents died while he was still a lad and his guardians took him from school at the age of fifteen and apprenticed him for five years to a surgeon, Hammond, who lived at Edmonton. But his heart was not in the problems of compound fractures but in literature, and his leisure time was devoted to his books.

A notable event was the reading of the *Faerie Queene,* lent him by his friend Cowden Clarke.

Thus did he begin to find his powers; and later on, when his poetic apprenticeship was past, achieved one of his great successes with the Spenserean stanza in *The Eve of St. Agnes.*

In the spring of 1816 we find him " a dresser " at Guy's Hospital, assisting the surgeons and dreaming of fairyland all the while with a detachment of mind that would have horrified both the operator and the patient had they known about it.

Little wonder that he soon gave up all thought of a medical career and devoted himself to literature. Spenser had been his first enchanter, the second was

Homer. Once again the introducer was Cowden Clarke. After poring over Chapman's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with fascinated delight, he wrote his fine sonnet. He had found his " Peak in Darien " and never deserted it.

In 1816 Keats made the acquaintance of Leigh Hunt, whose agreeable personality and cultured tastes attracted him at once. This " matchless fireside companion ", as Elia called him, proved an excellent mentor, and in rural retirement with Hunt, at Hampstead, Keats spent many happy days.

Indeed, Keats was in a circle where great spirits abounded. Wordsworth and Lamb and Leigh Hunt met the young enthusiast, and each in his own way fed the poetic enthusiasm.

About this time he met Shelley but did not take to him so unreservedly as he had done to the others. Shelley, on the other hand, was greatly struck by Keats, and his admiration for the poet impelled him to one of his supreme inspirations, years afterwards, when the tragedy of Keats' life had closed.

After publishing his first volume of verse, Keats went to the Isle of Wight in order to obtain the quietude and freedom from distraction that was needed for the ripening of his powers. He returned to London and at the close of the year had completed the first draft of *Endymon.* The reception of the poem was unfavourable. Keats' association with Leigh Hunt was sufficient in itself in certain quarters to discredit him, for Hunt's political radicalism had made

him odious to the great Tory reviews. Keats, always sensitive, and at this stage beginning to feel the onset of the disease that finally overwhelmed him, took the savage onslaught of the critics deeply to heart. But it is a mistake to think that he was killed by :criticism; deeply as he resented the gross unfairness of the attack, he soon took their snarlings at their proper valuation. " Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could inflict : and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine."

But misfortunes accumulated. In 1818 his brother Tom died of consumption, while his other brother, George, emigrated to America. Keats himself fell ill, and never recovered fully from the fever that had ravished him. Yet in this and the next year he wrote some of his greatest poems; for while his body was wasting away, his imagination was becoming more vital, his creative power more wonderful. The love affair with Fanny Brawne came at a time when his nerves were already strained to breaking point by physical frailties, so that the letters to that young woman, on which the popular estimate of Keats' character is largely based, must be taken as showing the poet at a special disadvantage and in no way expressing his naturally virile and courageous self.

In February 1820 he caught a chill and spat blood. " I know the colour of that blood," he said to a friend; " it is arterial blood . . . that drop of blood is my death warrant—I must die."

A slight rally which resulted from a change of air heartened his friends, but a relapse soon followed, and the doctor warned him that to winter in England would be fatal. Quietly and resolutely, though it agonised him to part from Fanny, who had nursed him during his illness, he made plans to travel with a friend, Joseph Severn, and on September 8 set sail from Gravesend. He realised he would never return. Gradually his grief lost its first poignancy and at the end he was reconciled to his fate. Early in 1821 he passed away, in the arms of his loyal and tender-hearted friend, Severn, and found his last resting-place in the Protestant cemetery at Rome.

Intellectually Keats was strongly in sympathy with Shelley and Byron. Indeed, in religious philosophy he was really more extreme, more whole-heartedly pagan than either. Byron, for all his cynicism, never freed himself entirely from the spell of Christianity, and Shelley's transcendental fervour is far more obvious than his so-called atheism. But Keats had no religion save the religion of beauty, no God save Pan; the Earth was his great consoler, and so passionately did he love her, with a love far more concrete and personal than that of Wordsworth or even Shelley, that no other consideration impinges upon his work. He fled from the workaday world into an enchanted realm of his own, jealously closed against the intrusion

of ordinary human affairs. Shelley's idealism is continually coloured by his revolutionary ardour. Keats' idealism reflects nothing of the life of his day. He took from medievalism and Hellenism material for fashioning his sequestered land of beauty, but what he found here he used for sensuous delight, not for ethical inspiration.

To Scott the appeal of the landscape lay in its historical associations; to Keats in its legendary inspiration. As Leigh Hunt said of him, " He never beheld the oak tree without seeing the Dryad ".

At the same time it is well to remember that this artistic eclecticism, so uncongenial to some minds, was the eclecticism of youth. There are indications towards the end of his brief career which show that he was approximating gradually to the actualities of life; and in criticising his exclusive preoccupation with Arcady and Fairyland we must make allowances for the rich, artistic endowment of a very young man who responded more readily to the glories of art than to the problems of life.

Where Wordsworth spiritualises and Shelley intellectualises Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses; the colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsing music—these are the things that stir him to his depths; there is not a mood of Earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him. " The setting sun will always set one to rights, or if a sparrow come before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel."

When first he began to write, the wealth of his perceptive life bewildered and embarrassed him. The influence of mediaeval Italy and its store of legend, the pastoral sweetness and sensuous beauty of Spenser, coming upon him in his early impressionable years, almost overpowered his abnormal sensibility.

Need we wonder that his early experiments in verse, *Calidore, Sleep and Poetry,* even *Endymion,* are overcharged with Spenserean imagery and Elizabethan conceits ? Yet even here there is an individual note, and in I *Stood Tip-toe upon a Little Hill* there are touches that no other poet but Keats could have given us :

> A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
> Born of the very sigh that silence heaves.

Sleep and Poetry is faulty in execution, but the point of view of the young poet is unmistakable :

> Beauty was awake :
> Why were ye not awake ?

We read these early efforts, discerning that all their ornate extravagances, their abuse of double rhymes, their faulty emphasis, their occasional vulgarities, are the stammerings of a great poet. The soul is already there, the gift of satisfying speech is at present denied. But the inspiration of Greece will prove his guerdon if we give him time.

Meanwhile there is the glorious promise and immature fulfilment of *Endymion.* The old myth concerned with the search for ideal beauty, with all its mythological accessories, is but indifferently told, and

much of the descriptive writing is weak and diffuse. But there are Songs by the Way, for which, as in Tennyson's *Princess,* we may forgive many a nerveless line, and no lover of poetry would forego the lovely " roundelay " to Sorrow and the splendid Bacchanalian Ode.

In one of his happy phrases Keats tells us that " poetry should please by a fine excess "; and no one could strike the note of " fine excess " more triumphantly. Yet in his most perfect work, in the *Odes, La Belle Dame sans Merci,* and that fragment *The Eve of St. Mark,* he shows that the pleasure of poetry depends no less on the fine restraint.

It is the lack of this restraint that troubles us in the rarely imaginative version of a tale from Boccaccio, *Isabella;* in the glowing diction of *Lamia;* in the tapestried beauty of *The Eve of St. Ayes.*

Of these, perhaps *Isabella,* despite its morbid sensibility, alone achieves its purpose. *Lawia,* with its serpent woman, certainly fails to grip the imagination in the way intended. To realise how imperfectly Keats has wrought his atmosphere of mystery, one has only to compare it with the *Christabel* of Coleridge. There is mystery in the one and genuine *diablerie.* But Keats can no more make the flesh creep than can the Fat Boy in *Pickwick.*

Regarded as a piece of richly decorative verse, *The Eve of St. Agnes* is pleasant enough, with its " lucent syrops tinct with cinnamon". But the "lucent syrops " are too generously supplied and there are

times in the poem when we would gladly welcome the romantic vigour and directness of Scott to give life and zest to the story.

In all these poems mediævalism serves as the inspiration, and though it gave Keats ample opportunities for that richness of colouring that was at once his merit and his failing, it did not appeal to the strongest side of his nature. On two occasions, by some happy chance, it inspires him in high vein—that is, in his ballad *L.a Belle Dame* and the *Ode to a Nightingale*—but it is under Hellenic influence as a rule that he gives us of his best.

Placing on one side for the moment the *Odes,* let us consider *The Eve of St. Mark.* We have here only the Prologue to the poem, for the legendary subject of the poem is never reached. But how consummately the scene is set, the atmosphere suggested! The quaint old-world town with its leisurely quietude; the girl brooding intently on the legend, half fascinated, half afraid; the chilly sunset tremulous with premonition.

The picture is perfectly visualised and the details, so unobtrusively given, so cunningly observed, make the whole thing amazingly actual. The restraint, the balance, the simplicity, the ease, are beyond praise; with rare economy of effort, he arrests the reader and makes him feel the impending tragedy.

But just as Byron finds the ultimate and most complete expression of his personality and temperament in *Don Juan,* so in the *Odes* does Keats give us most of his inmost self, and when he does so it is with the sure

hand of the great artist. Not all the *Odes* stand on this footing. The *Ode to Indolence,* faithfully portraying as it does a transient mood, has no high beauty to commend it; the *Ode to Psyche,* reminiscent of his mythological loves, shows too clearly the tool-mark of the craftsman. But the *Ode to a Nightingale,* the *Ode on a Grecian Urn,* the *Ode on Melancholy,* and the *Ode to Autumn* are among the mightiest achievements of English verse.

The *Ode to a Nightingale,* embodying the very spirit of old romance, is the most voluptuous and passionate in its emotion. At points the emotion threatens to overpower the writer, and an hysterical euphuism here and there jars on the reader. But for the most part the passion, for all its intensity, is focused and controlled, as for instance in such inspired felicities as the oft-quoted (and misquoted) :

> . . . magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn

in the lovely image of Ruth,

> . . . when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

and above all, in the wistful beauty of the stanza, where the poet cries out to

> Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
> What thou among the leaves hast never known,
> The weariness, the fever, and the fret
> Here, where men sit and hear each other gxoan;

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-ey'd despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Passages such as these are among his choicest and[1] best.

The solace of romance is exchanged for the solace of art in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn.* Human life and happiness may be brief, yet Art may enshrine them with an ideal beauty that outlives the years.

Most satisfying of all the *Odes* in thought and expression is the *Ode to Autumn.* Most satisfying because, for all the splendour of diction in the others, there are times when the poetic fire dwindles for a moment, whereas in this *Ode,* from its inception to its close, matter and manner are not only superbly blended but every line carries its noble freight of beauty. The first stanza is a symphony of colour, the second a symphony of movement, the third a symphony of sound. The artist shapes the first and last, and in the midst the man, the thinker, gives us its human significance. This is the poem perfected, its sensuous imagery enveloping its vital idea.

Hyperion, written about the same time as the *Odes,* is a tine fragment marked, on the whole, by an austere Miltonic beauty that shows how far Keats had travelled since *Endywion* days. Be the reason what it may, the poem is left unfinished; to show the heights of metrical achievement to which the poet could rise, and to hint

that with fuller life and development he might have added a great epic poem to our language. With the merest smattering of mediaeval life and literature, he has yet seized upon certain aspects of its magic more surely than any other English poet. With a rough secondhand knowledge of Greek art and culture, he grasped the secret of Hellenism in a way never atttained by poets far richer than he in Hellenistic lore—Shelley, Landor, and Swinburne.

Among the formative influences in his work, Spenser stands first, but Chaucer and Milton influenced only in a secondary degree his poetic style and vocabulary; lesser poets, like Chapman, William Browne, and his friend Leigh Hunt, affected him especially in his earlier work, in his choice of words and phrases, and in his search for colour. But the finest part of Keats' work owes nothing to a derivative source. In the fragmentary *Ode to Maia*, with its purity of phrase and chastened beauty, there are no echoes, no obligations :

> O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
> Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span
> Of heaven and few ears,
> Rounded by thee, my song should die away
> Content as theirs,
> Rich in the simple worship of a day.

Perhaps his most notable divergence, as a poet, from his contemporary Shelley, is that he elects, as a rule, to deal with sensations rather than ideas, with concrete life than with abstract imaginings—sight and hearing respond to ideas; touch, to sensations. The meta-

physical power that charges with intellectual fire the visions of Shelley is outside his scope. Not that he eschews ideas—the *Odes* eloquently refute such a suggestion—but when he elects to deal with ideas he chooses such human things as love, sorrow, life, and beauty, and presents them in concrete shape :

> The moving waters at their priest-like task
> Of pure ablution round earth's human shores.

> She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss ;
> For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair.

Thus do his ideas, like his memory, become incarnate with the shaping splendour of the consummate artist; and thus does he help us to realise, as no other poet has done since Shakespeare, the oneness of Truth and Beauty.

To Antumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness !
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
  With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
    For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitrng careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft:
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

The Eve of St. Mark

All was gloom, and silent all,
Save now and then the still foot-fall
Of one returning homewards late,
Past the echoing minster-gate.
The clamorous daws, that all the day
Above tree-tops and towers play,
Pair by pair had gone to rest,
Each in its ancient belfry-nest,
Where asleep they fall betimes,
To music and the drowsy chimes.

All was silent, all was gloom,
Abroad and in the homely room :
Down she sat, poor cheated soul !
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal;
Lean'd forward, with bright drooping hair
And slant book, full against the glare.

Her shadow, in uneasy guise,
Hover'd about, a giant size,
On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,
The parrot's cage, and panel square;
And the warm angled winter-screen,
On which were many monsters seen,
Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,
And legless birds of Paradise,
Macaw, and tender Avadavat,
And silken-furr'd Angora cat.
Untir'd she read, her shadow still
Glower'd about, as it would fill
The room with wildest forms and shades,
As though some ghostly queen of spades
Had come to mock behind her back.

(xii) Leigh Hunt (1784-1859)

Closely connected with the great triumvirate of poets is that agreeable and versatile man of letters, Leigh Hunt. His career and his prose work have been dealt with elsewhere; here it is for us to touch on his share in the Romantic movement so far as poetry is concerned, and to think of his influence upon Keats in particular.

It would be hard to over-estimate the work done by Hunt in reviving the interest of the reading public in Italian literature. While yet a lad in Christ's Hospital he had been drawn to Ariosto, and when, in 1822, he went to Italy to stay with Byron and Shelley he pursued his -Italian studies with a livelier zest than ever. Some years before this, in 1816, he had published what the critical wags of *Blackwood's* called " Mr. Hunt's smutty story of *Rimini "*—it would have been more to

the point to have called it " sugary ". The story itself is a grim study of primal passion of the Paolo and Francesca drama, but Hunt sweetened and sentimentalised this tale of Dante's, making of its tragedy melodrama, turning its passion into a " pretty-pretty " amorousness. The poem has good points; it exhibits Hunt's undoubted skill in picturesque description, daintiness of phrasing, and an intimate ease that is pleasant enough when it does not descend into mere vulgar loquacity. But Hunt's strength lay really in interpretative rather than in creative work. He was a fine scholar, an excellent " taster ", and is acknowledged universally as an admirable translator. More important than his *Rimini*, therefore, was the volume of *Stories from the Italian Poets*, published in 1846, where he paraphrases freely *The Divine Comedy* and passages from Ariosto, Tasso, and other Italian poets. With Ariosto and Tasso he had some temperamental kinship; a nature more opposed to Dante's at every point one could not imagine, with his almost perky optimism and carpet-slipper attitude towards life.

Hunt's influence on Keats was on the whole certainly for good. If Keats owed to him many of his cumbrous rhymes and his early lapses from good taste, he owed also his introduction into the rich pasturage of mediaeval romance. Hunt was a better mentor than his verse sometimes suggested, and his critical acumen and wide reading did a good deal to inspire the eager, imaginative life of the youthful genius.

On the whole, Hunt's chief merit as a poet lies in his

short pieces. His *Sonnet* on the Nile is one of remarkable beauty, and was written in amicable rivalry between himself and his friends, Keats and Shelley.

Here is Hunt in one of his blithe and graceful fancies :

Jenny Kiss'd Me

Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in I

Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have miss'd me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kiss'd me.

(xiii) Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864)

Born at Warwick, January 30, 1775, he signalised early his characteristic tempestuousness by expulsion from Rugby at the age of ten. Later on at Oxford he took an encore, and " the mad Jacobin ", as he was called, suffered rustication for firing a gun in the room of a Tory undergraduate and declining to explain his conduct. Shortly after this there was a fresh explosion of Landor's " life-force", a quarrel with his father which led to a temporary separation. Fortunately, a reconciliation was patched up but the young firebrand found it better to retreat to South Wales with " one servant and a chest of books " and £150 a year.

His first volume of poems had been published in 1795, and in 1798 came *Gebir,* the fruits of studying

Milton and Pindar. *Gebir* is an Oriental tale, told with an artistic reserve that signalised his lack of sympathy with the prodigal exuberance of his great contemporaries.

In 1802 and 1804 came *Chrysaor* and *Gu.tlaug and Helga*. The first is a classic legend congenial to the poet's methods. The second poem, Norse in inspiration, is less happily suited to Landor's style and spirit. In 1805, on his father's death, the poet settled in Bath, but he did not treat his material means with the same reserve as he did his artistic. After an experiment in military adventure (1806), when with a few volunteers raised at his own expense he went to Spain in order to help to emancipate the Spaniards from the tyranny of Buonaparte, he returned to England, bought an estate in South Wales, and soon managed, despite his more laudable intentions, to alienate all his neighbours and bring himself to the verge of financial ruin. His marriage in the meantime (1811), with a lady whom he had met at a ball and knew nothing about, proved equally disastrous. But troubles notwithstanding, his literary ardour never abated and his tragedy of *Don Julian*, published at this period, found an enthusiastic admirer in De Quincey.

A stay in France was followed by a wander journey to Italy. He lived successively at Como, Pisa, and Florence, and wrote under a southern sky his *Imaginary Conversations*, the most notable of his books.

Critical and creative work in prose and verse came rapidly from his pen during the ensuing years, naturally

varied by some external excitement, this time in the shape of an action for libel, at home. Finally, he made his home at Florence, where his rooms were constantly visited by the most eminent men of the day, and here the " unsubduable old Roman ", as Carlyle called him, died in September 1864.

The external history of his life exhibits him from the least favourable aspect point of view; for deep down there was something noble and great about the man, as his many friends were quick to recognise. Dickens' portrait of Boythorn in *Bleak House* is no unkindly sketch, making allowances for the usual Dickensian extravagances, but does not indicate the intellectual vigour of Landor.

Despite the ardent admiration and homage of a few, his work appeals but slightly to the many. Splendid in patches, his work in general is too eclectic and circumscribed, and lacks the universal appeal that gives durability to the work of men like Shelley and Keats, Coleridge and Wordsworth.

His earlier work is almost wholly poetical, and for the most part in heroic blank verse, excelling in detailed effect and isolated passages, but lacking organic unity and homogeneity of style. Then came the *Imaginary Conversations* planned on the principle of the *De Consolatione Philosophies* of Boethius, though unlike this in method. These *Conversations* are, in substance, varying heroic and idyllic episodes, strong in primal passion and tender grace, and recounted with a noble beauty of style and a subtle appreciation

of " the sense of tears in mortal things ". Occasionally the strength degenerates into weakness, as in the dialogue *of. Peter the Great and Alexis,* but it is more often immensely effective, with a throbbing, full-blooded vitality, more Elizabethan than modern, yet with nothing of the Elizabethan extravagance and coarse profusion. *Marcellus and Hannibal* is an example in point, with its poignant pathos, and *Tiberius and Vipsania,* with its dramatic intensky. The idyllic dialogues present another side of Landor—that of the gracious and kindly companion of women. *JEsop and Rhodope* is exquisite in its tender pathos; *Euthymedas and Thelymnia* is delightful in its light gaiety. *Bossuet and the Duchess de Fontanges, Eugenius IV and Lippi,* show a rich sense of ironic humour that remind one of Browning's full-length portraits.

The more argumentative *Conversations* are less interesting, not because of any intellectual weakness in the writer—Landor's level is uniformly high—but because of a certain monotony of style and lack of plasticity in treatment. He is at his best when illustrating some phase of human nature, where a more generous call is made on his power of fancy and emotion.

Alike in his prose and verse, Landor is sculptural in method, with all the merits of the sculptured style, and with its concomitant weakness in literature. That is to say, he excels in epigrammatic power, fine distinctions of phrase, delicately wrought embellishments of fancy, and suffers from a certain stiff restraint and monotony of effect.

In the early work the defects are more obvious than the merits, and *Gebir*, for all its occasional magnificence, has too chilly a beauty to capture the reader's imagination. There is the same chill, though rather more beauty about the rough-hewn drama of *Count Julian.* Here the blank verse rises to a height of gracious dignity and force that is only equalled by Wordsworth's finest work; yet the cumulative effect is not happy. We are constantly led to the verge of some great moment, some splendid scene that shall take us by the throat, and it never comes. The exquisite marble needs to be kissed into life.

With his lyric poems and briefer excursions in verse this chariness of praise is no longer needed; nowhere is he more original or distinctive; nowhere is he less affected by the literary influences of his age, or of any other age. There is nothing of Byron, Shelley, Keats, or Scott in his lyrics; he belongs far more by spiritual affinity to the late Elizabethans, and his kinship with Ben Jonson has been noticed by many critics.

His love-poems are suffused with stately chivalry rather than with passion; clear and sweet they always are, thrilling never. But they exhibit deep feeling none the less and are strong in epigrammatic power :

> Stand close around ye Stygian set
> With Dirce in one boat convey'd !
> Or Charon, seeing may forget
> That he is old and she a shade.

He is equally happy in the mood of pensive remi-

niscences. It is impossible to overpraise the mellow beauty of those well-known lines :

> I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
> Nature I loved and, next to Nature, Art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
> It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

An interesting study of Landor's development may be found in *The Phocaans,* especially in the careful and scholarly pages of a critical examination of the poem published by Dr. W. A. Bradley (1914). This excellent monograph appears to be as little known as the poem with which it deals, although the serious student of Landor can scarcely afford to overlook either.

The last word on Landor must always concern his prose. A striking poet, with occasional flashes of greatness, he is a noble master of prose, with occasional tracts of cultured dullness. He was sufficiently imbued with the romanticism of his time to endow prose with the glow and colour of poetic imagination, while his self-critical and classical sympathies gave body and dignity. If he lacked De Quincey's touch of mystery, the tender whimsicality of Lamb, the brilliant incisiveness of Hazlitt, yet he could rise to greater heights of sonorous and chastened beauty, and enjoy a wider range of artistic effects.

(xiv) Minor Poets

Charles Jeremiah Wells (1800-79) was an early companion of Keats and, like Keats, he went to

mediaeval Italian romance for inspiration. But his most important work, the drama *Joseph and his Brethren*, suggests the influence of Marlowe and Peele rather than any Italian source. This lengthy drama was published in 1824, under another name, and attracted little attention. Years afterwards it was discovered by Rossetti, who was much impressed by its magnificence of diction, and, besides this distinguished admirer, it enjoyed further the enthusiastic commendation of Swinburne. The poem was re-written.

The following fine passage is certainly not unworthy of the creator of Tamburlaine :

Within the car
Sat Pharaoh, whose bare head was girt around
By a crown of iron; and his sable hair,
Like strakey as a mane, fell where it would,
And somewhat hid his glossy sun-brent neck
And carcanet of precious sardonyx.
His jewell'd armlets, weighty as a sword,
Clasp'd his brown naked arms—a crimson robe
Deep edg'd with silver, and with golden thread,
Upon a bear-skin kirtle deeply blush'd,
Whose broad resplendent braid and shield-like clasps
Were boss'd with diamonds large, by rubies fir'd,
Like beauty's eye in rage, or roses white
Lit by the glowing red. Beside him lay
A bunch of poppied corn; and at his feet
A tamed lion as his footstool crouch'd.
Cas'd o'er in burnish'd plates I, hors'd, did bear
A snow-white eagle on a silver shaft,
From whence great Pharaoh's royal banner streamed,
An emblem of his might and dignity. . . .

The Elizabethan drama came into its own again in

the age of Wordsworth. Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, De Quinccy, had rediscovered not merely the greatness of Shakespeare but, as we have seen, the greatness of many a fugitive dramatist, and in the years that followed this enthusiasm exhibited itself in many dramatic experiments.

Along with Wells may be mentioned Thomas Wade (1805-75), also a narrative and dramatic poet of power. Wade's imagination is less rich and concrete than Wells', and whereas Wells and Keats may be associated together, Wade has more spiritual affinity with Shelley. His drama, *Woman's Love, or the Triumph of Patience*, met with success at Co vent Garden. His lyrics and sonnets are more agreeably typical of his gifts. A collection of these, *Mundi et Cordis Carmina*, was published in 1835.

Two other poets of distinction are Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874), known as "Barry Cornwall", and George Darley (1795-1846). Procter enjoyed the wider popularity, and much of his verse appeared before the notable Romantic singers had departed. Mediaeval and Elizabethan inspiration is once more to be noted; it may be traced in the *Dramatic Scenes* (1819) that won the praise of Lamb. In later volumes the influence of his great contemporaries is too overpowering for the modest creative impulse of the writer. The most interesting is the volume of *'English Songs* (1832), where he makes a not unsuccessful attempt to give the public popular lyrics on familiar themes. These show little originality, are frankly unpretentious,

and in the opinion of the not over-fastidious supplied a genuine want.

" Barry Cornwall" was also a playwright, whose tragedy *Mirandola* made a mark at Covent Garden. But *Miraniola* has no vitality as a drama, and Cornwall is best remembered as a writer of pleasant verse, and as a staunch friend of the unhappy Beddoes.

Less facile and more individual is George Darley. Like many a greater writer, his dramas are more remarkable for their incidental songs than for their dramatic texture. *Sylvia, or the May Queen* (1827) is a medley of fairy fantasy; and here he has steeped himself to good purpose in his Shakespeare, for both the fantasy proper and incidental songs abound in charming fancies and sweet melodies.

As a prose-writer he is bright and informing, very often more readable than in his verse. But there is less distinction here. In style he is a blend (considerably diluted) of Lamb and Hazlitt. He has a share of Ella's whimsicality, a larger share of Hazlitt's incisive humour.

Among all these derivative forces of Romanticism there is no figure, excepting Landor's, so considerable as that of Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-49). Profoundly affected by his famous contemporaries Keats and bhelley, he yet retains an individuality of his own. At Oxford he had saturated himself with the Elizabethans ; later in Germany he felt the magic of Goethe at a time when the great man was yet unknown to the majority of Englishmen. But he was too exclusively

romantic in temperament and outlook to be a whole-hearted admirer of Goethe, and his admiration fell short of that of Carlyle. *Death's jest Book* (1825) is the title of his most characteristic work and it abounds in all the extravagance of Gothic fancy. There is more than fancy and grotesquerie in his work : there is real if fitful emotional power; and in his rapid transition of mood one is often reminded of Heine.

He died by his own hand, of poison, in 1849. Death always fascinated him; finally, from a literary inspiration it became an obsession.

He is an admirable song-writer and his best lyrics have a magic all their own. As a literary critic he is often excellent, if not wholly reliable; and his opinions are never echoed, but are always well thought out, while as a letter-writer he ranks high.

How many times do I love thee, dear ?
Tell me how many thoughts there be
In the atmosphere
Of a new-fall'n year,
Whose white and sable hours appear
The latest flake of Eternity :
So many times do I love thee, dear.

How many times do I love again ?
Tell me how many beads there are
In a silver chain
Of evening rain,
Unravell'd from the tumbling rain,
And threading the eye of a yellow star:
So many times do I love again.

Chapter Four

Prose

(i) English Romantic Fiction

(a) *Minor Writers*

JUST as Bishop Percy's *Cliques* and Macpherson's *Ossian* heralded in the romantic revival in poetry, so did Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) proclaim its entrance into fiction. The actual tale need not detain us, for its puerility is extreme and our interest today is merely an historical one in the pioneer of the so-called Gothic romance.

Distressed ladies and spectral appearances, set in a background of mediaeval upholstery, no longer appeal to our taste, but the sudden change from the boisterous realism of much contemporary fiction was significant. That the change was welcome to many, whose imaginations had been starved on " common-sense " fare, is quite clear from Gray's letter to Walpole : " It makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights." Today it would more likely serve as a safe hypnotic. None the less it produced a considerable stir, and appears to have inspired many talented imitators.

Walpole was a virtuoso and collector of no slight

knowledge, but he knew more about mediaeval art than about literature, and even the medievalism of *The Castle of Otranto* is a very indifferent matter.

In 1777, Clara Reeve (1729-1807) published her *Champion of Virtue,* afterwards called *The Old English Baron,* obviously inspired by Walpole's story.

Miss Reeve thought to improve upon the original, and economised with her supernatural effects; but she succeeded in exceeding Walpole's. tale only in its tedium, repeating most of his absurdities and showing even less acquaintance with mediaeval life.

A more interesting romance than either Walpole's or Clara Reeve's had been published in 1762. This was L*ongsword, Earl of Salisbury,* and is really the first historical *romance* in our fiction. It was written by an Irish cleric, Thomas Leland, and despite his inability to reproduce the language and customs of the time, there is a genuine attempt at historical detail, the period being the reign of Henry III.

A more remarkable force in romance fiction appeared in the pen of Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), the lonely wife of a busy journalist. To while away the time, she wrote five romances, that displayed a lively if undisciplined imagination and a skilful faculty of depicting wild scenery. Her stories were published between 1789 and 1797. The elements of medievalism are all here: monks, inquisition, disguises, intrigues, escapes, gloomy castles, fierce banditti—with scenery and language to match.

Mrs. Radcliffe makes greater use of the prevalent

sentimentalism than do her contemporaries, weaving it skilfully into her sensational melodrama. Her heroines are generally affected by their scenic surroundings; shudder at the whistling winds, dissolve into tears when the moon shines upon them, though they would have been more acceptable young women had they been blessed with a sense of humour.

It is interesting to note the influence upon Mrs. Radcliffe of the Thomsonian school of verse, with its increased sensibility to Nature, and the way she combines this with the influence of Richardson. The heroines are true sisters of Clarissa, both in emotional expression and in moral impeccability.

Her best stories were *The Mysteries ofUdolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), these being the two latest. Certainly they influenced Scott, just as Mrs. Radcliffe's picturesque, dark-browed villains reappeared later in Byron's *Lara* and *Manfred.*

Another romancer is William Beckford (1759-1844), a wealthy dilettante whose imagination sought in the fables of the East the inspiration others had found nearer home. In 1782 he wrote in French an " Arabian tale ", *Vathek,* which was translated and published in England without his consent, before its publication abroad. Satire mingles with sensation in Beckford's fiction; but the horrors of Beckford are drawn with greater power than those of Walpole or Mrs. Radcliffe. Beckford was certainly a man of considerable force of intellect and brilliant, though hectic, imagination.

He was influenced to an extent by the satirical romances of Voltaire, and stands somewhat apart from other fantastic writers of the time.

The lineal descendant of Mrs. Radcliffe was Matthew Lewis (1775-1818), who tried his best to excel her in mystery and sensation.

In 1795 he published *The Monk,* and was afterwards known as " Monk " Lewis.

Magic and witchcraft were to him congenial matters for the business of fiction. " A ghost or a witch," he says, " is a *sine qua non* ingredient in all the dishes of which I mean to compose my hobgoblin repast."

Lewis's acquaintance with Shelley was not without literary results; these may be seen in Mrs. Shelley's extraordinary romance, *Frankenstein.*

Contemporary with this Gothic romance, where " horrors on horror's head accumulate" and the main idea seems to be the reproduction of ancient sorceries and superstitions, is a type of fiction in which romance is only an ingredient and the didactic note is especially emphasised.

Among makers of fiction, William Godwin (1756-1836) takes the most important place. He had absorbed the principles underlying the French Revolution and aimed at reconstructing a new society.

Godwin's social writings are so matter-of-fact that it comes as a surprise in *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* to find a writer of such genuine imaginative power. *Caleb Williams* is a good, sensational story that may be read with no little enjoyment, if one skips thv didactic

discussions interspersed through it. In his subsequent novels, *St. Leon* (1799) and *Fleetwood* (1804), Godwin's skill as a story-teller is even better exemplified. The supernaturalism of *St. Leon*, if not wholly convincing, is certainly a *tour de force* for one with Godwin's materialistic views; while in *Fleetwood* it would really seem as if Godwin the novelist has to some extent triumphed over Godwin the matter-of-fact philosopher and champion of reason.

The didactic note persists through the tales of Mrs. Opie (1769-1853), who wrote *Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter* (1804), and Mrs. Inchbald's more artistic work, *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796); while the sudden passion for educational fiction aroused by Rousseau's *Ewile* found expression in a number of decorous and extremely dull stories for children, including Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton.*

Finally there remains for us to note the immediate predecessors of Scott in historical fiction.

For a time *Longsword* found no successor, though it gave a vogue to historical background in romance, more or less successfully introduced by Mrs. Radcliffe.

Then in 1783 Sophia Lee wrote the first part of a tale dealing with the days of Queen Elizabeth, published later in parts in 1786. Here the sentimentalism of Richardson and Sterne is noticeable.

More adventurous, and in the Smollett vein, are James White's *Adventures of John of Gaunt* and *Earl Strongbofr*. But none of these writers of fiction equals

in power and knowledge Jane Porter (1776-1850), whose *Scottish Chiefs* (1810) is an excellent melodramatic romance dealing with the time of Wallace, and *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803), concerned with the partition of Poland, an earlier and well-written story.

Joseph Strutt's *Queenhoo Hall* brings us to Scott himself. His fiction has been discussed already.

Strutt was an antiquary who left behind him a half-finished romance. The story, completed by Scott and published in 1808, exhibits more knowledge of mediaeval England than previous writers had shown, and his picture of the manners and customs of the time—the pageants, the May games, and the social life of the streets and taverns—is admirably well informed. Unhappily, there is no lifting power of imagination to fuse the ambiguous knowledge, and Jane Porter, with her more limited historical knowledge, remains the most able historical romancer previous to Scott.

(b) *Thomas Love Peacock* (1785-1866)

Thomas Love Peacock was born on October 18, 1785, at Weymouth.

In 1808 he was employed on a man-of-war, being assistant secretary to Admiral Popham, but found his duties on this " floating inferno " did not conduce to literary study, so gave up the appointment within the year. Soon after this he found employment at the East India House but never took kindly to any business occupation.

Previous to his marriage in 1820, Peacock had published a volume of verse, and three of his satires and romantic novels : *Headlong Hall* (1816), *Melincourt* (1817), *Nightmare Abbey* (1818). In the year of his marriage he published his *Four Ages of Poetry.* In 1822 appeared his most romantic and least satirical fiction, *Maid Marian* ; his Arthurian fantasy *The Misfortune of Elphin* (1829), and *Crotchet Castle* (1831) followed; then after a long interval *Gryll Grange,* in 1860, written when he was an old man.

Apart from literature, music was his only other relaxation, and for some years he attended the opera and wrote criticisms for the *Globe* and *Examiner.* He had no little of Landor's independence and self-sufficiency, as well as his fiery nature.

Both writers are acquired tastes; and both appeal very strongly to the select few, but have no universality of interest. A remarkable link between the age of Shelley and the age of Meredith is found in the first marriage of the Victorian novelist with the eldest daughter of Peacock. Meredith's first volume of verse is dedicated to his father-in-law with " affectionate respects ", and the influence of Peacock as a writer may be traced in some of Meredith's scenes and characterisation, such for instance as the interview between Sir Willoughby Patterne and Dr. Middleton over the old port.

Peacock's associations with the literary history of the earlier years of the nineteenth century were many and interesting. He was the friend and adviser of

Shelley, knew most of the Benthamite Radicals, and had written for many of the important reviews and magazines, including *Bentley's* (which he helped to start) and *Fraser's.* Byron admired his work, especially *Melincourt,* and his literary eclogue exhibits traces of Peacock's influence.

Robert Buchanan admitted frankly to his influence; Thackeray and Frederick Locker admired his verse and have recorded their admiration; while, putting aside his son-in-law's appreciation and probable indebtedness, the majority of the best critics today are unanimous in their praise of Peacock's power.

In fact, we shall find that the farther we move from Peacock's time the more considerably has his reputation advanced. With a few exceptions he was practically disregarded when at the height of his powers, and never received the critical meed of praise that was his due. The reason for this may be found in the character of the satirist's work. Writing in the full flush of the Romantic revival, Peacock is far too eclectic in his tastes to catch the ear of the lover of Romanticism.

Nor did he fit in any better with the literary tendencies of the succeeding age; neither with the democratic ideals of the early Victorian Era nor the scientific tendencies of the mid-Victorian had he anything especially in common. He declines to be placed. No label fits him. The friend of Shelley, he mocks at Romanticism. A lover of the Classics, he is far too idiosyncratic a writer to observe the classical conventions ; a writer of fiction, he flouts all thoje points

over which the novelist usually expends his art—there is the roughest characterisation, next to no plot, scarcely any action, and no passion. As a witty controversialist he is no more likely to attract those who care for didactic writing, for he plays with rather than advocates opinions, and makes merry at everyone's expense. Life for Peacock was a pleasant holiday where everything was fit cause of laughter. Yet to the few who are attracted by the cynic's attitude once again Peacock proves disconcerting. He is for ever railing at men and women but there is no bitterness in his mockery.

In short, this paradoxical personality, with its many contradictions, must be taken as an independent force in letters and not as belonging to any school. The one thing about him that is clear, straightforward, and indisputable is that he was an artist in irony, who loved to depict human frailties from sheer high spirits. So he made of farcical extravagance a fine art. He is serious about nothing save his work as an artist.

It is this point that divides Peacock from the contemporary satirists of his day. Dickens, Thackeray, Disraeli, were moralists as well as satirists; with them humour subserved a serious purpose. Peacock is as guiltless of preaching as was Jane Austen. He did not laugh at the world to improve its morals, but merely to improve his own digestion. It pleased him to do so, and he would laugh at his best friends or himself with the same zest as he laughed at those whom he disliLed.

His style is admirable : lucid, harmonious, apposite. In his care for achieving his effects, in his fastidious sensibility for the precise phrase and proper emphasis, he reminds one rather of the great eighteenth-century humorists than of his contemporaries. All who care for ironic humour flecked with flashes of poetic feeling will hold Peacock in affectionate remembrance.

(ii) Criticism and the Essay

(a) *Charles "Lamb* (1775-1834)

Charles Lamb was cradled in the quiet cloisters of the Temple and the old-world atmosphere of the Temple clung about him all his life. Like the mediaeval retreat that nestles in the very heart of Fleet Street, lapped by its ceaseless flow of life, so did Lamb, hugging always the concrete actualities and humanities of the great City, keep none the less a cloistral recess in his nature, redolent of old-time ways and fashions.

The first seven years of his impressionable youth were passed within the precincts of Crown Office Row. Little money could be spared for educational purposes, and it might have fared ill with Charles had not Samuel Salt, his father's patron, obtained for him, when he was seven, a presentation to Christ's Hospital.

At Christ's Hospital he stayed for another seven years. Here he made the acquaintance of the youchful Coleridge, three years his senior, and the acquaintance soon ripened into a friendship that was to last a life-time. Lamb proved a fairly good scholar and, when he left in November 1789, obtained a post in tlie South

Sea House, where the friendly Salt was a Deputy Governor.

In his scanty leisure Lamb threw himself with keen zest into the joys of reading—a joy he shared with his sister Mary. This was varied by occasional visits to the theatre, a brief excursion to Hertfordshire—where some of his happiest moments were spent, and where the one romance of his life budded and faded. His home life was wearisome and gloomy. His father was growing childish and querulous; his mother was an invalid, and the strain of insanity in the family suddenly showed itself in poor Mary, upon whom all the household cares had devolved. In a fit of frenzy she pursued a girl apprentice and, upon her mother's interfering, turned upon her with a knife that she had snatched up. It seemed as if Mary's only future lay within the walls of a public asylum, but her brother Charles offered to Le her guardian and this alternative was accepted; but it involved the sacrifice of Lamb's romantic dreams and of many other ambitions.

While brother and sister moved from lodging to lodging, the incessant change of place being a painful necessity, Charles started on his literary career. His early verse was inspired, with that of his friend Coleridge, by the quiet charm and pensive delicacy of W. L. Bowles. It served well to enshrine some of those memories that always formed the staple of Lamb's original work.

Financial necessities urged Lamb to try his hand at a farce though his previous Elizabethan experiment

John Woodvil (1802), was much more to his taste. He had, however, little dramatic power, and Mr. H—— proved no more successful than the poetic play. It was characteristic of Lamb that, with critical detachment and unfailing humour, he should have seen the weakness of Mr. H——, and joined heartily in the hisses that greeted the performance.

In 1807 he and Mary wrote the familiar *Tales from Shakespeare,* Mary undertaking the comedies, Charles the harder task of making the tragedies acceptable and understandable by children. The result was sixty guineas—and fame.

Between 1807 and 1817 Lamb's contributions to literature were frequent and important, though we must think of him during this time as the critic rather than as the intimate essayist.

In 1817 the Lambs left the Temple for Covent Garden, and an interesting chapter in his life was closed, for it was at the Temple where the famous Wednesday evening gatherings took place—at the Temple, moreover, where he made so many of his lasting friendships.

The most interesting chapter in his literary life was to start, however, in 1820, when Hazlitt introduced him to the editor of the *"London Magazine,* and the famous *Elia* essays came into existence.

In the summer of 1823 the Lambs once again migrated yet farther north, this time to Islington. Failing health made Lamb consider the question of retirement, and he was delighted when, in the spring

of 1825, a pension—practically three-quarters of his salary—was awarded him. " After thirty-three years slavery, here am I a freed man." But the change did not carry with it all the delight he had hoped for. The routine bad been irksome; his unconditional liberty bewildered and confounded him.

Perhaps the loss of some of his best friends weighed upon him also. The fact remains that neither brother nor sister got so much pleasure from this retirement as had been anticipated.

Mary's health grew worse; the country life that was. best for her did not suit Charles. He was ill at ease away from Fleet Street and the ready touch of people for whom he cared.

> "The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street; life, awake, if you awake at all, at all hours of the night, the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street, the crowds, the print shops, the old book-stalls, the pantomime, London itself a pantomime and a masquerade, all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me without the power of satiating me. The wonder of these nights compels me into night walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears for fulness of joy at so much life."

The death of Coleridge depressed him; their friendship had been so long and precious to him; and when, owing to an accident, he fell ill of erysipelas, the disease easily mastered his devitalised body. He passed away painlessly on December 27, 1834, his sister surviving him by nearly thirteen years.

Lamb started as a writer about 1795, when Burke

and Gibbon were at the height of their glory, and some years before Scott had given romantic narrative verse its astonishing vogue.

For some years he wrote little, but his literary friendships helped to stimulate his slowly maturing powers, and in 1820 he discovered in the person of " Elia " the medium best fitted to display his peculiar qualities.

Beginning as a writer, therefore, in the days before the Romantic revival, he " found himself" in its last phase, when Wordsworth and Coleridge had done their best work and Keats and Shelley were the great stars in the firmament of poetry.

Lamb's quality as a critic of the first order was soon after this to make an undeniable appeal. As a result of a commission, he produced the famous *Specimens of 'English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakespeare.* The principle on which these *Specimens* were selected is clear.

Shakespeare is taken as the standard by which his contemporaries were to be measured, and this standard was faithfully kept in view and was provocative of some illuminative comparisons. The importance of this volume cannot be over-estimated. When it was published the Elizabethan dramatists were little known to the public at large and Lamb was the first to sound the note of high praise. Coleridge did not lecture on the Shakespearean drama until three years later, and Haslitt was still an Elizabethan critic of the future. So we may fairly regard Lamb as the pioneer of the New Criticism.

Together with the *Specimens,* with their notes, may be placed Lamb's *Essay on the Tragedies of Shakespeare,* and that *On the Genius and Character of Hogarth.* Lamb's qualities as critic are, his gift of luminous enthusiasm, his faculty for distinguishing the human qualities from the academic. But he has neither Hazlitt's breadth or range nor Coleridge's subtlety of analysis, and he is happier in noting the mountain tops than in estimating the sweep of tableland.

Lamb's work as a critic precedes his work as an essayist, though the essays, no less than the letters, scintillate in brilliant flashes of criticism. His earlier essay work, between 1811 and 1820, is scarcely up to the level of Leigh Hunt's. The flowering time came in 1820, when " Elia " entered upon his own and started with the *South Sea House,* rich in observant humour and reminiscent charm.

In 1833 the final fruits of Lamb were gathered together in *The Last Essays of Elia.*

The genius of Lamb lay in his power of visualising memories. As a stylist does he walk in the past, gathering to himself the pleasant tricks and mannerisms of bygone writers, just as a girl plucks flowers instinctively that blend with her looks and carriage. The blossoms are culled from other men's gardens, but their blending is all Lamb's own. Passing through Lamb's imagination, they become something fresh and individual.

The matter harmonises with the manner. It also belongs to the past; its charm, too, is a retrospective

one. In his dearly loved haunts it is the shadow of bygone times that he sees rather than present actualities; a vanished face, a hushed voice, a recollected gesture, some familiar friend from bookland, the memory of some treasured joyance. But Lamb's memories are not like Wordsworth's, " emotions recollected in tranquillity ". He recalls them not to wring from them some spiritual rapture or ethical significance, but merely as material for his intellect and fancy to play upon. He plays with his thoughts as the wind plays with the leaves, tossing them hither and thither, circling them round in strange eddies, scattering, combining, in all manner of queer ways.

All the conventional approaches to the Essay are quietly ignored by him. Never was any man more intimate in print than he. He has made of chatter a fine art, for he is enchantingly easy, with no suspicion of vulgarity, simple in his choice of subjects, never trite in his treatment, and he can trifle delicately without being trivial.

" Some things are of that nature as to make one's fancy chuckle while his heart doth ache," wrote Bunyan. The nature of things mostly appealed to Lamb in that way. Humour with him is never far from tragedy; through his tears you may see the rainbow in the sky, for his humour and pathos are really inseparable from one another; they are different facets of the same gem; or, to change the simile, one may say that Lamb's moods, whether grave or gay, are equally the natural effervescence of an exquisitely mobile

imagination : whether you call it humour or pathos depends entirely on where the light may strike the bubbles.

Some, like Carlyle, who did not understand the man were puzzled and offended by the wildness of some of his verbal extravagances. They looked on them as the irresponsible fooling of a shallow nature, never realising that these absurd antics were but safety-valves for a hypersensitive mind that had to fight hard for its sanity on occasion.

It is characteristic of the Romantic writer that he should be confidential. As a rule he tells the world more about himself than he tells his friend. This is due to no morbid egotism, no mere loquacity; it is a necessity of his nature to express *himself.* In fiction it is the least apparent, because of the exigencies of this particular art form.

For this reason *The Essays of Elia* especially, and the critical essays to a less extent, are practically auto-biographical fragments, from which we may reconstruct with little difficulty the inner life and no little of the outer life of Lamb.

We may learn of the boyish Charles in *Night Fears* and in *Christ's Hospital;* be introduced to his family in *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple* and in *My Relations;* read of his youthful experiences in *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*; get a vivid glimpse of his long intimacy with Mary in *Mrs. Battle's Opinions*; of his official work in *The South Sea House*; of his sentimental memories in *Dream Children;* of his prejudices and temptations

in *Imperfect Sympathies* and *The Confessions of a Drunkard.*

Even in his most irresponsible dallyings there are flashes of self-revelation, and his *Popular Fallacies* might be described as personal idiosyncrasies in terms of farcical humour.

Lamb's essay work is so individual in its cumulative effect, despite the borrowed ornaments of style, that we cannot place him in any particular school of prose. The formal quality of his work approximates often to the eighteenth-century essay or " character sketch " of Addison and Steele, especially Steele. Yet no sooner do we think we detect the hand of Steele than we find the voice is the voice of Sir Thomas Browne, and no sooner have we caught the echoes of Browne than a richer and intenser music hurries us through the years to the prose utterances of Keats.

Nor is this due in any way to a merely versatile gift of imitativeness. Lamb's reminiscences of style are really due to the fact that he is a poet at heart and unconsciously suits his manner to his matter. Every essay is in essence a tone-poem, set in the proper key and never transgressing it; the variations are many, but never away from the central theme; and its apparent discord resolves itself to a higher harmony.

Within the boundaries of his temperament, Lamb was a great critic. His Elizabethan affinities made him a fine interpreter of the beauties of that age; while his insight into the merits of the Jacobean and Caroline dramatists was more remarkable, even allowing for

certain extravagances of praise into which his enthusiasm led him.

Comparing his work here with Hazlitt's brilliant and more astringent criticism, one must admit to a preference for the saner perspective of Hazlitt. Lamb's defence of the Restoration dramatists, on the other hand, is not merely the masterpiece of special pleading that at first sight it appears. It indicates the best possible way for a modern reader to appreciate the mingled wit and indecency of such men as Wycherley and Congreve—and that is not to judge the plays by ordinary human standards at all, nor to measure their trend by the foot-rule of conventional morality; but to look upon the world of the Restoration dramatists as an unreal fantastic world, where the only thing that matters is the intellectual delight of the flash of repartee or witty illumination of character.

Lamb's appreciation of verse is more limited, less catholic than his appreciation of prose. When as a critic he turns to poetry, the intellectual, fantastic Lamb disappears; strength and passion, nobility of thought, are the qualities that chiefly move him here. He can admire the austere dignity of Wordsworth and the vigorous sledge-hammer satire of Dryden, but Byron disgusts him and Shelley leaves him cold.

Keeping this view of Lamb in mind, the whimsical quality of his work and its apparently inconsequential ramblings assume a rather different complexion from that popularly assigned them. The reiterated apostrophes to the " gentle Charles ", the references to

Lamb as a writer that suggest him as a quaint, soft-hearted prattler or irresponsible jester, convey a wrong impression of the man's personality. Tender he was, inasmuch as his intense humanity made him tolerant and charitable to those around him; but there was behind the tenderness a stern inflexibility of character. The man who could deliberately put aside his youthful dreams of love, who could set himself to watch over and guard, unremittingly and uncomplainingly, a mentally afflicted sister not for a brief space but for a lifetime, and who could fight so grimly and persistently his own weaknesses, handicapped as he was by something of the same darkness that was always obscuring his sister's life—such a man was not the mild sentimentalist of popular estimation. There is a centre of iron in a nature that could shape his destiny along these lines of self-discipline and disinterested affection, and compel the love and admiration of fiery, impatient souls like Hazlitt.

His very extravagances are not the ebullitions of an irresponsible personality but the distractions of a strong and afflicted one. The jester does not frolic out of lightness of heart but to escape from the gloom that might otherwise crush.

Thus may we leave him, reserved beneath all his confidences; serious behind all his whimsical gaieties, true and steadfast at the back of his wilful caprices—a strong, lovable, human soul.

(b) *William Hazlitt* (1778-1830)

William Hazlitt, son of a Unitarian minister of Irish blood, was born at Maidstone in 1778, and nurtured in the keen atmosphere of progressive thought. Social and political problems preoccupied him as a youth and he paid more attention to these matters than to theology, thereby annoying his tutor at the Unitarian College. It was soon quite obvious that the ministry for which he had been intended exercised no compelling influence on his intentions, and he gave up the idea of becoming a minister. From Radical politics he plunged into philosophy and studied the philosophic thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Hitherto the intellectual life had been fostered somewhat at the expense of the imaginative, but in 1796 Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* arrested his attention and its rich eloquence fascinated him. The influence of Burke was reinforced by the yet greater influence of Coleridge in 1798, and Hazlitt's account of their first meeting is written in his happiest vein. Clearly it was a spiritual crisis in his life.

In 1807 he published some political essays, including a reply to Malthus, and in 1808 married Miss Stoddart and went to live at Winterslow, in Wiltshire.

Meanwhile portrait-painting had chiefly occupied him. In 1802 he had gone to Paris to study art and, despite the fact that financial straits and unusually cold weather made this sojourn a trying and exacting one, his tremendous enthusiasm and youthful capacity for

extracting joy out of life made the stay a happy and agreeable one.

On his return he became an itinerant portrait-painter, which suited his tastes, if it did not fill his pocket. He loved tramping over the roads and he had plenty of self-confidence and sufficient ability to get work of a kind. He was more fortunate with his rich manufacturers than with his poets. Southey compared his picture of Coleridge with a " horse-dealer on his trial, evidently guilty, but clever enough to have a chance of getting off ", while Wordsworth's portrait was stated by another critic to be like " a criminal on the gallows deeply affected by a fate he held to be deserved ".

Hazlitt bore these criticisms with good humour; perhaps he did not take his art very seriously, and was only too delighted when, after receiving a small commission, he could dine on seusages and mashed potatoes, " a noble dish for strong stomachs ".

Hazlitt certainly loved his work, and his *Essay on the Pleasures of Painting* lets us into his state of mind at this period.

His last portrait, and one of his best, was that of Charles Lamb, now to be seen in the National Portrait Gallery.

In 1805 he abandoned painting as a profession and for the time gave his best energies to literature.

Previous to his marriage with Jane Stoddart he had figured in various rural love affairs, in one of which he narrowly escaped ducking in the village pond.

Amorous by nature and susceptible to feminine charms, he was continually falling in and out of love, and his marriage with Miss Stoddart was not such a love-match as to absorb all of Hazlitt's emotional nature.

In 1812 Hazlitt came up from Wiltshire and settled in London, first of all in 19 York Street, Westminster, where Milton had lived for some years; he gave lectures on philosophy at the Russell Institution in Bloomsbury, and wrote for the *Morning Chronicle* and *Examiner*. He was at first Parliamentary reporter, and then became dramatic reporter. Both experiences enriched his position as a writer. But he was less of a theatrical critic than a dramatic critic; he judged a play rather by its literary qualities than by its stage effectiveness.

He lectured in 1818 at the Surrey Institute on the *English Poets*, and these lectures met with better success than his previous ones.

In 1819 his wife and he had separated and in 1822 they were divorced. Between this period came the episode of the " cold and sullen " Miss Walker and Hazlitt's mad infatuation for her. This episode he afterwards turned to literary account in the *Uber Amoris*—a brilliant though morbid piece of work. Undeterred by his unhappy matrimonial experience and by his chronic ill success as a peripatetic lover, Hazlitt married in 1824 a widow lady whom he had met for the first time in a stage-coach. With her Hazlitt travelled abroad, and seems to have enjoyed his travels more than he did his wife's companionship,

judging by the negative part she plays in his literary record. In Florence, Hazlitt made the acquaintance of Landor, and the two men, who had no little in common, got on excellently.

During the return journey the second Mrs. Hazlitt left her husband, and they never lived together again.

In the next few years much of Hazlitt's best essay work was published. But about 1828 his health, which had always been indifferent, became worse, and his last few years were darkened by physical disabilities and money troubles. But he continued writing gamely up to the very end. His mind was clear and vigorous despite his enfeebled body, and when dying he remarked to his friend Proctor, " Well, I've had a very happy life ".

The first taste of the real Hazlitt is not to be found in his political pamphleteering *(Free Thoughts on Public Affairs,* 1806), nor in his *Principles of Human Action,* nor his *Reply to Malthus,* but in the vivid portraits of Walpole and others that served to introduce " the eloquence of the British Senate "; while his work as a dramatic critic, even his experience in art, served as a valuable apprenticeship to the Hazlitt of the *Table Talk* and *The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.*

Between 1815 and 1822 Hazlitt had passed through the experimental stage and reached maturity. His Shakespearean criticism, rich in incisive vigour and freshness of imagination, his *English Poets* (1818) and *'English Comic Writers* (1819), caustic in wit yet with the salt of true critical wisdom, his *Dramatic L,it~rature of*

the Age of Elizabeth, with its fine catholicity of taste—all these are memorable additions to English critical literature. Captious at times (it would not otherwise be Hazlitt), they none the less exhibit an astonishing vitality of thought, a pungency of expression, unexcelled even among the great names of English criticism.

As a critic of Elizabethan literature he is more reliable but less eclectic than Lamb. *The Rouxd Table* (1817), and *Table Talk* (1821-22) exhibit more particularly his aphoristic power.

In 1823 came *Liber Amoris.* Despite its psychological power, this record of his violently morbid attachment for Sarah Walker is unworthy of his high reputation. But great things were still before him. If in his book of maxims, *Characteristics* > he does but mark time, in his *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy* (1820) he gives us some of his best things on the Fine Arts; while *The Plain Speaker* (1826) shows him at his mellowest as a discursive essayist. Then came *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), where his scintillating humour reaches its highest point of ironical invective. As a piece of brilliant literary portraiture, the book is a masterpiece. After this he did nothing of the first order, for his *'Life ofNapoleon* is a dull and lifeless thing. But when he died at fifty-two he might well look back with a certain fierce complacency at what he had achieved. Whether as a discursive essayist, a critic of the arts, or a taster of books, he is indisputably excellent.

There are two strongly marked opposing tendencies in his nature that called for no ordinary power of co-ordination. On one side we have the austere, individualistic Puritan strain that came from his Presbyterian forefathers; on the other a sensuous, voluptuous quality that often ran athwart his Puritanism and occasioned him many a mental struggle. The general effect of these two elements in his nature was this: in matters of the intellect the Puritan was uppermost; in the realm of the emotions you felt the dominant presence of the opposing element.

But the power of co-ordination was not always exerted, perhaps was not always possible. There are times when the Puritan element disappears; and it is Hazlitt the eager, curious taster of life that is presented to us. This gives delightful piquancy to many of his utterances. He wanders far and wide, and is willing to go anywhere for a fresh sensation that may add to the richness of his intellectual life. He has no patience with readers who will not quit their own small back gardens. He is for ever wandering as interest or emotional impulse dictates.

Not that he cares for the new merely because it is new. The essay *On fading Old Books* is proof enough of that. A literary ramble must not merely be novel; it must have some element of beauty 'about it or he will revisit the old haunts of whose beauty he has full cognizance.

The sheer joy of being in the open and learning what Whitman called " the profound lesson of reception "

attracted Hazlitt. " What I like best", he declares," is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Pkin without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus with light-winged toys and feathered idleness, to melt down hours to moments." A genuine vagabond mood this.

Hazlitt, like De Quincey, had felt the glamour of the city as well as the glamour of the country, not with the irresistibility of Lamb but, for all that, potently. Yet an instinct for the open, the craving for pleasant spaces, and the longing of the hard-driven journalist for the gracious leisure of the country—these things were paramount with both Hazlitt and De Quincey.

Moody as he was at times, sour-tempered and whimsical as he could be, yet there was a fine quality of joy about Hazlitt. It is this quality of joy that gives the sparkle and relish to his essays. He took the same joy in his books as in his walks and he communicates this joy to the reader.

Better even than his brilliant, suggestive, if capricious criticisms are his discursive essays on men and things. These abound in a tonic wisdom and a breadth of imagination as welcome as they are rare.

Although Hazlitt gave up the brush, he never gave up painting, and his brilliant audacities in prose have survived his experiments in pigment.

Shy and reserved as he was, no one could be more confidential with a pen in hand. Every essay is a fragment of autobiography and every sentence a confession. There is something of Rousseau's senti-

mental garrulousness about Hazlitt and this increased the human interest of his writings. We may dissent from his conclusions or take exception to certain moods, but he never bores us.

As example of his powers of portraiture a passage from his paper on Tom Moore will suffice :

> " Mr. Moore has a little mistaken the art of poetry for the cosmetic art. He makes out an inventory of beauty, the smile on the lips, the dimple on the cheeks, item golden locks, item a pair of blue wings, and thinks it a character and story. This dissipated, fulsome, painted patchwork style may succeed in the levity and languor of the boudoir, but it is not the style of Parnassus, nor a passport to immortality. We cannot except the Irish melodies from the same criticism. If these national airs do indeed express the soul of impassioned feeling in his countrymen, the case of Ireland is hopeless. There are no tones to waken liberty, to console humanity. Mr. Moore converts the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box."

More interesting, however, than all his clever portraits are his *Miscellaneous Essays* and *Table Talk*, as they enable the writer better to display his wit, fancy, and originality of thought.

His habit of introducing personal matter into his essays gives frequently a pleasantly intimate flavour to his writing, and one's interest in the written matter is none the less because of the interesting glimpses afforded of the writer's personality.

He will tell you with gleeful particularity of detail the exact circumstances in which he first made the acquaintance of certain books. He will recall how he

sat up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia,* which he picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; he mentions how he sat down to read Rousseau at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and cold chicken. In a beautiful passage he describes the time when he walked between Wrexham and Llangollen, his imagination aglow with some lines of Coleridge, and says that ever after the beauty of the hill-girt valley was inseparably connected in his mind with the glamour of Coleridge's verse and his own tumultuous, revolutionary sympathies. This walk in North Wales seems to have been to him what that Cumbrian walk was to Wordsworth—a time of rapture and consecration.

With all his infirmities of temperament, Hazlitt had a singularly open mind. The reader is never worried by those notice-boards, dear to the hearts of some critics, warning us off writers of a certain type, and obliging all wayfarers to comply with some aesthetic formula before they can be welcomed. Hazlitt does not mind who you are, so long as you have something to express and know how to express it. He will delight equally in the vigorous, racy vernacular of Cobbett and the splendid rhetoric of Burke; can appraise with fine discrimination the wit of Congreve without losing any appreciation for the subtler aroma of Cervantes' humour. Admiration for Titian does not prevent his doing the amplest justice to the *genre* work of Hogarth; and he can appreciate the genius of Wordsworth without being blind to the merits of

Pope. Naturally his waywardness of disposition shows itself in some of his estimates; he is not always a sure guide in matters of purely *literary* taste, as in his treatment of some of the Jacobean dramatists, and on occasion personal prejudices confound his judgment in dealing with his contemporaries. But on the whole there is no finer critic of all that pertains to " life and manners ". He may miss the merits of a *writer*; never those of a *man;* and the inspiring enthusiasm with which he speaks gives an incomparable gusto to his writings that is their endearing charm.

(c) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1772-1834)

Coleridge has no substantial and connected body of prose to his credit, as have Hazlitt, Lamb, and De Quincey. His prose is a collection of brilliantly discursive fragments; and this less on account of many-sided intellectual interests—though that was a factor—than because of the author's diffusiveness and his constitutional tendency to fly *off* at a tangent. Allowing for this fragmentary character of his prose, it must be admitted that the fragments were extremely valuable. For his critical faculty was second to none, and in purely literary subjects he is easily first in an age of great critics. His aesthetic judgments were regulated and clarified by his philosophical speculations; and he was the first to show, though Wordsworth realised it as well as he, that criticism in the highest sense is a creative fiat of the imaginatior. The

difference between this view and that of the elder school of critics need scarcely be pressed.

There is much sound sense in many of the *obiter dicta* of the eighteenth-century critics, but it is accidental, and necessarily lacks illuminating power when we remember that men like Pope and Johnson made no attempt to understand the point of view of the writers criticised or the standards of their time, but merely assessed them by eighteenth-century ideals.

Germany had led the way in this revolution of criticism, in the person of Lessing. Lessing was one of the early big influences in Coleridge's intellectual life, and the rediscovery of Shakespeare by Coleridge was the outcome.

The imaginative greatness of Shakespeare was realised as it had never been realised before. The conditions under which he wrote, how far he was of his age, how far of the ages, the transcendent power of his characterisation—all these matters were brought before the attention and impressed on the imagination of the ordinary reader. In much the same way he deals with the poetry of Wordsworth, reveals its defects and exhibits its strength. Criticism, therefore, in the hands of Coleridge ceases to be a merely arbitrary bundle of whims and prejudices, and in such papers as *A.; Essay on Taste,* on *Beauty,* and on *Poesy* or *Art* the nature of artistic pleasure is analysed with clarity and subtlety, as also in *Biographia Literaria* (1817).

Even apart from his specific contribution to religious, political, or literary thought, Coleridge is fuU

of good things, acute and pungent sayings, illuminating apothegms.

For instance, these stray examples from his *Table Talk:*

> "A man of maxims only, is like a Cyclops with one eye, and that eye placed in the back of his head."
>
> " A poem is that species of composition- which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure not truth . . . Good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life, and imagination the soul that is everywhere and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole."
>
> " Really the metre of some of the modern poems I have read bears about the same relation to metre properly understood, that dumb-bells do to music; both are for exercise and pretty severe too, I think."

While there can be no question as to the immense influence of Coleridge upon English thought, the extent of his originality as a tliinker is debatable. That he learned much and borrowed much from Shakespearean critics like Schlegel, and philosophers such as Schelling and Kant, is admitted on all sides. But his plagiarisms are really less formidable than at first sight they appeared. His easy-going method of lifting whole passages from these writers without the faintest acknowledgment has led some to look upon him as merely a purveyor of other men's thoughts. But if he stole from other men, he certainly paid handsome tribute for his thefts.

The greatness of Wordsworth lay in his work, not his personality. Coleridge, like Dante Gabriel

Rossetti, seems to have been more remarkable as a personality than as a writer. His personal magnetism seems to have been extraordinary; and even Wordsworth, always chary in praise even of friends, has said that though " he had seen many men do wonderful things, Coleridge was the only wonderful man he had ever met". This power of personality in itself is allied to genius, for it implies a unique quality of imagination, and, enables its fortunate possessor to influence other minds in an extraordinary manner. It is true that it perishes with the man; but the fertilising power goes on through other men, and so it is that his very limitations as a thinker, his immense discursiveness, his fragmentary brilliance, prove an advantage rather than a drawback. For the subtle suggestiveness of his versatile and wide-ranging mind stimulated others in a variety of directions that would have been impossible had he concentrated more and elaborated with fuller completeness. Like Bacon before him, he pointed the way he was constitutionally unable to travel; he opened up lines of thought he had neither the patience nor constructive power to pursue. But no man did more to give a philosophical background to creative art and an aesthetic value to intellectual processes, such as made of literature a fresher and more vital power.

(d) *Thomas De Quincey* (1785-1859)

Thomas De Quincey was born at Greenhay, Manchester, in August 1785.

Quick and responsive intellectually, he took a delight in his school work; first at the Bath Grammar School, where he excelled in Greek. " At thirteen I wrote Greek with ease," he says, " and at fifteen . . . could converse in Greek fluently, and without embarrassment."

An illness necessitated his removal from Bath, after which for about a year he was at Dr. Spencer's school at Winkfield, Wiltshire; here the pupil was found to be in advance of his master in classical knowledge, and the boy conceived a dislike for private schools in consequence. A still later educational experiment at Manchester Grammar School was also an unhappy one. The youth was anxious to proceed earlier to the University than his guardians had intended, and showed his displeasure by running away from the school. He was then given a weekly allowance of one guinea, and began his wanderings among the hillsides of Wales, sleeping in rural inns when the money held out, but more often under a hedge or in a field, making friends with the labourers and writing love-letters for the girls.

De Quincey soon grew weary of this nomadic life and the restricted library at his disposal; he ran away once more, this time to London; but he was soon to realise the loneliness of a great city. His slender means failed him and he was reduced to the direst poverty.

At this juncture he made some strange acquaintances. A Jewish money-lender's agent, a disreputable attorney

who kept a lodging-house in Greek Street, Soho, gave him a shelter; while here, for a time his companion was a poor, forlorn, half-starved child of ten years old, with whom he shared a " bundle of law papers for a pillow and a tattered horseman's cloak for a covering ", where in the empty rooms the noise of the rats " made a prodigious echoing ". " I loved this child", he says, " because she was my partner in wretchedness." The kind-hearted Ann, who spent her last sixpence in order to restore him when he had fainted on a doorstep from exhaustion, and whom he made unavailing efforts to trace and reward later, is well known to all his readers.

An unexpected reconciliation took place with his guardians, and he was sent to Worcester College, Oxford, in 1803.

In 1804, in order to fight the neuralgic pains from which he suffered, he had recourse to opium that not only lulled the pain but, unfortunately, became a " minister of celestial happiness ", and for a few coppers he found " portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint bottle . . . but", he added, " the reader will think I am laughing; and I can assure him, that no one will laugh long who deals much in opium ".

At the examination for his degree, Dr. Goodenough, one of the examiners, deckred him to be " the cleverest man I ever met with "; and, " if his *viva voce* examination to-morrow corresponds with what he has done today, ho will carry everything before him ". For

some reason De Quincey failed to appear the following day, and disappeared from Oxford forthwith.

An enthusiastic admirer of Coleridge and *The A.ncient Mariner,* De Quincey, while on a «visit to Bristol in 1807, made the acquaintance of the poet. The two soon became close friends and later, when Coleridge went to London to lecture, De Quincey offered himself as escort to Mrs. Coleridge and her three children on their journey north; the pleasure was doubly enhanced by the long-looked-for meeting with Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. Shortly after his sudden disappearance from Oxford, in 1808, he made his way to that little band of " Lakists ", where he enjoyed the hospitality of the Wordsworths till February, 1809, making several visits to London in order to keep terms with a view to being called to the Bar, and seeing much of Lamb, whose acquaintance he had made in 1804.

In 1809 De Quincey acquired the lease of Dove Cottage, just vacated by the Wordsworths. Here, says De Quincey, in this " cottage immortal in my remembrance ", the scene of many happy friendships, also bitter struggles and much despondency, we find him a migratory inmate for twenty-seven years, many days of which were " set … and insulated in the gloom and cloudy melancholy of opium ".

In 1816 De Quincey married Margaret Simpson, the young daughter of a Westmorland farmer. Delicate in health, she had a wonderful fascination of manner, and it was said by a much-travelled friend of

the family that " he had never seen a more gracious or a more beautiful lady " than Mrs. De Quincey.

A decreasing patrimony and an increasing family made De Quincey look about him for ways and means to augment his income; brave efforts were also made to restrict his use of the opium that were partially successful. In 1819 he became editor of the *Westmorland Gazette* and began writing for most of the important magazines and reviews. *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eaterstit* published *in the London Magazine* in 1821, and from this year until 1849, when *The English Mail Coach* and *The Vision of Sudden Death* appeared, was the most important period of his literary career.

In 1828 De Quincey removed with his wife and family to Edinburgh, constantly changing his place of abode there; in 1837 his wife died, and his children then found a permanent home at Lasswade, near Edinburgh, he living a solitary life in out-of-the-way lodgings till his death in 1859.

De Quincey was insignificant in appearance, but his manner was peculiarly fascinating; his voice was, said Harriet Martineau, " so clear, so soft, so sweet ". If solitary and simple in his habits, he was not unsocial; visitors from all parts who came to see him were always made welcome and wherever he went people of all classes were happy in his society. His liberality was unbounded, even to the impoverishment of himself. He was good, a true gentleman, a cultivated scholar, and one of the most remarkable figures among

our literary personalities, with but one real enemy—the opium.

De Quincey, like Wordsworth, was a volumiiious writer, from whose *litera scripta* the fine ore of literature must be sifted with care. But whereas Wordsworth was voluminous from lack of self-criticism, De Quincey is voluminous because much that he wrote was written as journalism is written, under financial pressure.

His literary life started in 1821, with the first version of *The Confessions of an Opiuw-Eater*; in this work he utilised his early experiences and showed his fantastic imagination. In the *Dialogue of Three Templars* he displayed that passion for logical analysis which is as distinctive of his genius as his fantasy. This was the fruit of his study of Ricardo. Further, in the twenties he made his first essay into German literature, and this gave him his earliest incursion into narrative-writing.

These three notes, meditative, analytical, descriptive, are inseparable from his work; and in the development of his power sometimes one is prominent, sometimes another; but no one is entirely dropped. The fantastic note is enriched and mellowed in the longer *Opium-Eater* and *Reminiscences*—and in such essays as *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* (1823); the analytical faculty marks his critical work—e.g. style, rhetoric—while the descriptive and visualising power of De Quincey does not reach its maturity save in the *Suspiria de Profundis* and other sketches of " impassioned prose ". Sometimes, as in articles like

The Revolt of the Tartars, fancy, logic, and actuality are admirably blended; while in his purely critical work logic and fancy give a piquant flavour to the dish. He is a brilliant but austere critic, with little of Hazlitt's catholicity of taste; and is really more trustworthy in detecting bad logic than for appreciating good literature.

The first important event in De Quincey's life was the wide roaming on the hillsides of North Wales; the second, the wanderings in " stony-hearted Oxford Street". The spell of London was important in shaping his literary life and must not be underestimated. Lamb also felt the spell, but it was of another kind. What drew De Quincey to London was its mystery; whereas it was the stir and colour of the crowded streets that stirred the imagination of " Elia ". We scarcely realise, as we read of those harsh experiences, those bitter struggles with poverty and loneliness, that in writing of his life in London the man is speaking of some well-known thoroughfare. It is like viewing a familiar scene in the moonlight, when all looks strange and weird. A faint but palpable veil of fantasy seemed to shut off De Quincey from the outside world. In his most poignant passages the voice has a ghostly ring; in his most realistic descriptions there is a dream-like unreality.

That he feels what he is writing about one does not doubt; but he does not suit his manner to his matter. At expressing subtle emotions, half shades of thought, no writer is more wonderfully adept than De Quincey,

but when the episode demands simple and direct treatment, his elaborate cadences are out of place.

In the delineation of certain moods De Quinccy is certainly excellent; but the style is not a plastic style; and its appeal to the ear rather than to the pictorial faculty limits its emotional effect on the reader. Images pass before his eyes, and he tries to depict them by cunningly devised phrases; but the veil of fantasy through which he sees those images has blurred their outline and dimmed their colouring. The phrase arrests by its musical cadences, by its solemn, mournful music.

Here is a passage from *Levana and Our "Ladies of Sorrow:*

> " The eldest of the three is named Mater Lachrymarum, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was head of lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever which were heard at times as they trotted along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven. Her eyes are sweet and subtle; wild and sleepy by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds."

" The Dream Kingdom that rose like a vapour "

from his brain, this it was—this vagabond imagination of his—that was the one great reality in life. It is a mistake to assume, as some have done, that this faculty for day-dreaming was a legacy of the opium-eating. The opium gave an added brilliance to the dream-life but it did not create it. He was a dreamer from his birth—a far more thorough-going dreamer than was ever Coleridge. There was undoubtedly a strain of insanity about him, and it says much for his intellectual activity and moral power that the Dream Kingdom did not disturb his mental life more than it did. Had he never taken opium to relieve his nervous complaint, he would have been eccentric—that is, if he had lived. Without some narcotic it is doubtful whether his highly sensitive organisation would have survived the attacks of disease. As it was, the opium not only eased the pain, but lifted his imagination above the ugly realities of life, and afforded a solace in times of loneliness and misery.

He had, like Froude, the power of seizing upon the spectacular side of great movements which many a more accurate historian has lacked. Especially striking is his *Revolt of the Tartars*—the flight eastward of a Tartar nation across the vast steppes of Asia, from Russia to Chinese territory. Ideas impressed him rathei: than facts, and episodes rather than a continuous chain of events. Thus when he was interested he had the power of describing with picturesque power certain dramatic episodes in a nation's history.

What gives his works their especial attraction is not

so much the analytic faculty, interesting as it is, or the mystical turn of mind, but the piquant blend of the two. Hence, while he is poking fun at astrology or witchcraft, we are conscious all the time that he retains a sneaking fondness for the occult. He delights in dreams, omens, and coincidences. He reminds one at times of the lecturer on superstitions who, in the midst of a brilliant analysis of its futility and absurdity, was interrupted by a black cat walking onto the platform, and was so disturbed by this portent that he brought his lecture to an abrupt conclusion.

On the whole, the mystic triumphed over the logician. His poetic imagination impressed his work with a rich inventiveness, while the logical faculty, though subsidiary, is utilised for giving form and substance to the visions.

De Quincey was an artist of moods, skilfully adapting his style to the theme chosen. He had a ready perception of congruous atmosphere in which to deal with his various topics—e.g. the ironical opening of *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*; the satirical banter of Dr. Andrew Bell; the solemn rhythmic cadence of *A Vision of Sudden Death.* It is, however, in writing of the latter class that he excels. Subtle effects, delicate gradations of emotion—these things De Quincey could render with exquisite delicacy. Sometimes, however, Carlyle's sardonic reference to his " wire-drawn ingenuities " recurs to the reader's mind, and the ornamentation becomes wearisome.

One remembers the dictum of the Scottish cook, " The body has an awfu' sight of words ".

At its best, however, the elaborate poetical prose in which De Quincey couched his imaginative dreams has a fine and delicate beauty about it—a beauty which is quite distinctive and bears little resemblance to the beauty of other prose stylists.

Whether the matter of De Quincey was always worth the fastidious craftsmanship expended on it is another question—but looking at the manner merely, few of our writers possessed so rare a sense of the value of words.

Writers with subtle imagination like De Quincey and Lamb possess an " electric aptitude " for seizing upon analogies. One thing invariably suggests another, and inevitably a large discursiveness of manner is the consequence. To suggest a thing to De Quincey was like bringing an object into a room covered by mirrors. The object assumed at once a myriad shapes; it could be seen from every possible angle. But there is a reason for this; and there is a reason for the apparent complexity of De Quincey's treatment.

We must not forget that the logical faculty in De Quincey is as manifest as his inventive imagination. His discursiveness often merely indicates the spaciousness of his ground plan. He is not really introducing other irrelevant objects but reflecting the same object from many points of view.

The two qualities which go to make criticism of the

first order are subtlety and acuteness; the first a faculty of the imagination—an instinct for detecting what is beneath the surface—the other an intellectual process which arrives, by virtue of an alert logic, at a certain conclusion. Some critics excel in one, some in another. Hazlitt is the more remarkable for acuteness—De Quincey for subtlety; sometimes, as in the essay on *Macbeth,* the subtlety rather overreaches itself, but often, as in the essays on *Milton,* on *Coleridge,* and *Wordsivorth,* it is of great service.

The mysterious side of life, the night side of things, appealed irresistibly to De Quincey. Few writers have given a more vivid impression of the mystery of London, the sense of immensity in its surging crowds, the tragic loneliness of its bustling thoroughfares. He discovers an arresting symbolism in ordinary sights and sounds (e.g. *The Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth).* To have written that gruesome masterpiece, the footnote on the Williams murders, formerly appended to the *Essay on Murder,* is to have assured for himself a place among artists of the horrible, such as Edgar Allan Poe. Few realised more intensely, more subtly, the horror of the unexpressed, the brooding of some impending disaster, than did De Quincey. Whereas Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe had been trying to make the flesh creep with moaning winds and ancient battlements, with Byronic robbers and spectral hands and hollow voices, De Quincey approached with far finer artistry the potency of suggesting—of hinting. The banging of tlie street

door and the dreadful silence which followed, when Williams gets into the house, have a ghastliness about them that surpasses the actual murders. The gruesome silence, then the faint creaking as the criminal moves about, the suspense—these are the things that freeze the blood.

Apart from the horrible, however, the dark, the shadowy side appealed to De Quincey, just as it appealed to Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne preferred, as we know, to take his walks after sunset. When night was gathering over Edinburgh, then De Quincey sallied forth with a zest which he never showed in daylight.

As the man, so the writer. Along the byways of literature he shuffled with a glimmering lantern turned in this direction or that, to light up with a radiance that decorated rather than illumined the darkness of some special tract.

De Quincey himself, though his avowedly autobiographic writings are well defined, is, as a matter of fact, almost always autobiographic. This does not mean that he is telling us explicitly always what has happened to him, but he reveals himself, his moods, his peculiarities of temper, in all that he writes.

In one particular De Quincey's idiosyncratic writing differs from that of his contemporaries—Byron, Hazlitt, and Lamb. He makes use of his temperamental peculiarities as an artist rather than as a man. The consequence is he is less confidential than he seems. This is not so, say, with a writer like Lamb;

Lamb is far more intimate and frank; he wants to open his mind to his readers, and although he hides from us many of his darkest moments by an extra flourish of witticisms, yet it is not difficult to see through this simple histrionic deception. De Quincey, on the other hand, looks upon the experiences of life as so much plastic material for his artistry. He manipulates his material primarily for artistic effect, and only secondarily because he wishes to be confidential. There is none of the impulsiveness about him—the yearning to take the world into his confidence—that there is in the case of Byron and Ha2litt. The history of the *Confessions* serves as a case in point. Pleased with their artistic as well as popular success, he elaborated a much lengthier later edition. There is more of the literary artist, less of the confidential opium-eater, in the later version.

This deliberate detachment, so characteristic of the artist, reminds one more of Walter Pater than of Hazlitt and Lamb.

Although our best friends in literature, as in every-day life, arc always welcome, yet there are times and seasons when they make a special appeal to us. There is a literature of the noonday—and there is a literature of the half-lights. De Quincey's writings belong to the literature of the half-lights and should for the most part, I think, be read in the " clear brown twilight", which Hawthorne desiderates for his delightful tales. Given the time and mood, the fantastic opium-eater will rarely fail to hold us with persuasive charm, by

virtue of his quaint, elusive personality and his attractive garrulousness; above all by reason of his exquisite and delicate art.

(e) *Leigh Hunt* (1784-1859)

The prose of Leigh Hunt synchronises with his verse. It began with his papers in the *Examiner*, and one in the *Indicator*. His sojourn in Italy found expression in his *Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla* (1848), an agreeable volume warm with the colour and romance of the South. His discursive charm and varied knowledge of London life is exhibited in *The Toivn;* while in his *Autobiography* we have the fullest expression of the man himself, his innate sweetness and beauty of character, with his little weaknesses and prejudices. What the *Essays ofElia* are to Lamb, the *Autobiography* is to Leigh Hunt.

In his literary methods as essayist he is akin to Lamb; with something of the same sprightliness, intimate ease, and whimsical charm. What he lacks are the deep tenderness and the high flashes of imagination that mark Lamb's best work. Hunt works on a lower level. But there is great attractiveness about his prose, for his taste was fine, his interests many, and his frank enjoyment of things exhilarating and contagious.

As a delightful trifler in the byways of letters, and as a fine and catholic taster of what is beautiful both in life and literature, he will always be remembered.

Hunt's *metier* was that of the miscellanist. The

planned essay of the eighteenth century was not wanted in his time; instead the demand was for a fanciful and, at the same time, instructional treatment of essay subjects. Viewed from this aspect, his work is seen to share the honours with De Quincey and Lamb, as in *Men, Women, and Books* (1847), or *Wit and Humour* (1846), which provides a wide selection from the work of English poets. Even more notable is the similar *Imagination and Fancy* (1844), which was for long taken to be more or less the last word on its subject. For the modern reader perhaps the most interesting approach to Hunt, apart from his *Autobiography*, is found in *The Old Court Suburb* (1855).

Chapter Five

The Literary Periodicals

THE appearance of newspapers in the seventeenth century was followed by the publication of journals of wider interest. The most famous of these was *The* Otservator(1681-87),published by Sir Roger L'Estrange. Another notable periodical was James Dunton's *The Athenian Mercury* (1690-96). The custom of writing these journals in dialogue form strikes us as highly curious, but we must remember that conversation was from this time forward regarded as a distinguished art which was assiduously cultivated during the following century.

Defoe abandoned this form when he founded *The Review,* which ran from 1704 until its suppression in 1713. Unlike its predecessors, the paper gave little news; instead it aimed at presenting a moderate view of matters affecting Church, State, and commerce. It was deservedly popular during the years when a modish interest in civility and current affairs made customary the reading of news-sheets in coffee-houses, together with the more stylish Letters, which were reports on the news written in the epistolary form which was copied from Paris.

In 1709 Richard Steele advanced Defoe's develop-

ment of the form and manner of the journal. Founding *The Tatler,* he brought it out three times weekly, filling it with essays which were dated from the coffee-houses in which they were written. The periodical ceased abruptly with the issue of January 2, 1711, perhaps because Steele had grown tired of the incessant writing it involved. By then he had fully sketched out in its pages his ideas of the nature of a gentleman, exalted the idea of womanhood, and dealt with a variety of matters of good breeding, good taste, and manners.

Two months after *The Tatler* ceased, Steele's friend and collaborator, Joseph Addison, issued *The Spectator,* which ran through five hundred and fifty-five issues, until December 6, 1711. The paper appeared daily. Each issue dealt in an essay with one subject only, usually of literary interest. Addison imitated Steele (who frequently contributed to *The Spectator)* by expressing his views through the medium of fictitious persons. Steele had had his Bickerstaff and Pacolet and even an imaginary woman editor (Jenny Distaff); Addison had six members of his *Spectator* staff, including Sir Roger de Coverley, Captain Sentry, and Will Honeycomb. It is significant that all these fictitious people were of the middle class.

After these papers periodical journalism declined. The essay in its modern form had been settled; its standard was so high that a falling off was to be expected in imitators. Thus *The Gen tie man' s Magazine* (founded 1731) and the later *Critical Rtf'iew* and

Monthly Review were chiefly the work of literary hacks.

Periodicals languished in the second half of the eighteenth century. When this form of writing was revived, the distinction between a review and a magazine was made finally clear. The former was primarily, a publication of literary criticism, with politics as an alternative interest, while the ktter featured fiction.

The first of the great periodicals in the revival was founded by three famous men, then unknown; the Scottish advocates, Francis Jeffery and Henry Brougham (later to be Lord Chancellor), and Sydney Smith, then a private tutor in Edinburgh. The first issue of their *Edinburgh Review* (October, 1802) was a success. Its politics were Whig and its literary standard extremely conservative. Jeffery became editor from the second issue onwards, and Sir Walter Scott contributed book reviews.

In its handsome livery of saffron and blue the *Edinburgh* won a place as an almost infallible guide in literary taste. Sydney Smith (1771-1845), author of *Letters to Peter Plymky* and *Letters to Archdeacon Singleton,* filled every subject he wrote about with jest and wit. His papers on Methodism, Indian Missions, Hannah More, Public Schools, Game Laws, Botany Bay are representative of his style and treatment. Francis Jeffery made book reviewing an art—even if sometimes it was the art of the slaughter-house—by summarioing contents and delivering a verdict which

was clear, although often enough limited by the narrowness of his literary principles. He is notorious for his more devastating reviews, such as his disapproval of Wordsworth and his " this will never do " comment on *The Excursion.* It is just to remember that, in spite of his faults, he spread the love of good books and raised the standard of good taste. Henry Brougham, one of the century's geniuses, appeared able to write on any subject at a moment's notice. His style, however, was flashy, and faults of character increasingly vitiated his work. Economics were in the hands of Francis Horner, whose early death was lamented in Parliament as a national disaster. His work was scholarly and profound. It has died with him, earning nothing of the sensation attaching to Brougham's famous review of Byron's *Hours of Idleness.* On reading it, Byron assumed it was from the pen of Lord Holland, " drank three bottles of claret ", and sat down to write his reply—the celebrated *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.* Sir James Mackintosh was another *Edinburgh* contributor, more famous now for his prodigious memory and conversational ability than for his *History of the Revolution in England, Life of Sir Thomas More,* and *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy.* In the issue of August 1825 a new contributor, Thomas Babington Macaulay, printed an essay on Milton. It was the first of the long series of so-called book reviews which made him one of the Review's mainstays.

The political violence of Jeffery increased until the *Edinburgh* stood for the Whig view at its mosi. extreme,

a fact which alienated Sir Walter Scott from it just as Jeffery's excisions and " emendations " had lost him many of his contributors, who resented the liberties he felt free to take with their writings. Behind these faults was a fearless honesty which made the *Edinburgh* the supporter of many reforms, more notably of the repeal of the Penal Code, the modification of the Game Laws, the abolition of Slavery, the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the granting of Catholic Emancipation.

Seven years after the appearance of the *Edinburgh*, the Tories founded a periodical to defend Church and State, by which they meant to oppose the *Edinburgh Rwiew* and all its works. Thus *The Quarterly Rjeview* appeared, in February 1809, under the editorship of William Gifford, who had previously been associated with Canning, Frere, and Ellis in *The Anti-Jacobin.* Robert Southey, who had on principle refused to have anything to do with the *Edinburgh*, was for long one of its chief contributors. Sir Walter Scott went over to it from the *Edinburgh.*

Some of the worst features of nineteenth-century journalism were remarkable in the *Quarterly.* To begin with, the editor was supreme, and Gifford was an even stricter censor than Jeffery. Moreover, book reviews were unsigned, so that reviewers were able to express any bias against authors, and in the most unmeasured terms, because they happened to disagree with their religion or politics. The *Quarterly* earned a reputation for savagery; in its pages appeared the

review which is alleged, with little reason, to have broken Keats in health and spirit.

In 1824 S. T. Coleridge became editor for a bhort time and was soon followed by John Gibson Lockhart, an excellent classical scholar and linguist who had four years earlier become Scott's son-in-kw. His reputation rests chiefly on his biographies of Scott and Burns. As a critic he was too swayed by personal taste to be capable of detached evaluation. Keats was anathema to him, and his other opinions were such as to earn him the title " The Scorpion ". Indeed, a book noticed in the *Quarterly* was said to be " hanged, drawn, and Quarterly-reviewed ". Lockhart devoted the remainder of his life to the Review; scarcely less devoted, although less enlightened, was John Wilson Croker, whose connection with the paper ksted for forty-five years. Narrow in his critical opinions, he was expansive in his confidence, facts which led him to edit Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and draw on himself a devastating review by Macaulay in the *Edinburgh.*

Halkm the historian, Sharon Turner (of *The History of the Anglo-Saxons),* and Malthus all wrote for the *Quarterly.* Perhaps the most interesting reviews it published were those by Ellis, on *The Lord of the Isles* and *The Corsair,* and by Scott, on *Emma*—a review which gave Jane Austen her establishment in public esteem.

William Blackwood, disturbed by the success of Constables with the *Edinburgh* and of John Murray with the *Quarterly,* was the next publisher to seeL support

for a new periodical. The Edinburgh Whigs were divided in loyalty to the *Edinburgh* and some of them were eager to found a rival. The result was agreement, and the outcome was the *Edinburgh Monthly*, edited by Pringle and Cleghorn. The periodical was short-lived. Undaunted, Blackwood turned to James Hogg, Lockhart, and John Wilson, who assumed a kind of joint editorship of its successor, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* in 1817. The new Tory paper opened with the famous *Chaldee MS.,* in which pseudo-Scriptural language was used to clothe a satirical attack on the previous editors and to cover with ridicule many respected citizens of Edinburgh. The calculated sensation exceeded Blackwood's hopes. Nick-named *Maga,* from a jumble of the editors' names, the magazine quickly established itself and drew to its support many writers who had previously been occasional contributors to smaller periodicals, such as Leigh Hunt's papers, the *Examiner,* the *Indicator,* and the *Reflector,* the *Companion,* and the *New Tatler.*

Of *Blackwood's* or *Maga's* contributors something has been said elsewhere, except for John Wilson (1785-1854), who later secured, through political influence, the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University. He was an intimate of " The Lake Poets " and author of *The Isle of Palms* (1812) and *The City of the Plague* (1815). The loss of his fortune sent him to Edinburgh and journalism. His most famous book is the *Noctes Ambrosiana,* said to have been suggested by Maginn and deriving its name from

Ambrose's Tavern. Beginning in 1822 as joint efforts by Wilson, Lockhart, and Maginn, they were gradually carried on as a *causerie* on the topics of the day, until 1835, by Wilson under the pseudonym of " Christopher North ". *The Recreations of Christopher North* followed (1842); with *The Trials of Margaret Lindsay* and *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life* (both of little value) the list of his books is complete. Wilson had a fluent, noisy style, full of warmth and geniality (if he happened to be genial), with great power in the ornate prose he preferred.

William Maginn (1793-1842) was an Irishman of erratic genius and character who is caricatured in Thackeray's Captain Shandon. His humour was enjoyed at the time, and he secured a reputation as a critic which nothing he wrote can be said to justify. He had, however, a flair for sensational journalism, and joined heartily in the " rabid performances " of *Blackwood's*, remarkable among which are Wilson's attack on Coleridge's *Biographia Liter aria* and Lockhart's *The Cockney School of Poetry*, aimed chiefly at Keats. On the positive side we must credit *Blackwood's* with sustained support for the Lake Poets. The first really enthusiastic criticism of Wordsworth appeared in it, from Wilson's pen.

Among Maginn's more useful activities was the founding, with Hugh Fraser, of *Fraser's Magazine*. Here his gift for attracting contributors gathered round him the talents of Coleridge, Thackeray, Southey, Carlyle (whose *Sartor Resartus* almos brought

the magazine to financial ruin), " Barry Cornwall", Ainsworth, Hogg, and the witty " Father Prout" (Francis Mahony). Mahony's justly celebrated essays were later issued in book form as *The Keliques of Father Prout* (1836). Perhaps his best-known verse is *The Bells of Shandon,* beloved by many thousands of Irishmen. Incidentally one of the minor curiosities of literature is his version of this song in a variety of languages, including ancient Greek. Seekers after the curious may be tempted to look for similar felicity and skill in the unknown work of another priest, as unlike Mahony in character as he was similar to him in gifts, the Cistercian priest, Alexander Quinlan. The feat of *The Bells* will be found equalled in Quinlan's Latin version of *Father O'Flynn,* where the " Donegalissime, Pater O'Flynn" is an epitome such as Mahony rarely achieved.

Maginn's end was what might have been expected. Not long after making *Fraser's* a success, his human weaknesses carried him to a premature death.

The *London Magazine* ran from 1820 to 1829. Often under fire from the *Edinburgh,* which dubbed it " Cockney ", it was an excellent example of independent journalism and was the organ for many famous writers. Its first editor, John Scott, was challenged to a duel by Lockhart. The meeting was abandoned but, one of Lockhart's friends deeming himself offended, a fresh challenge was issued by him. The result was a duel in which Scott was killed. Keats' acsociation with the magazine was enough to

make the *Edinburgh* its enemy. Another contributor was Lamb, who printed some of his *Elia* essays in it; Thomas Hood and Hazlitt also wrote for it; Miss Mitford wrote for it some of her finest prose. In spiteof his association with other journals, De Quincey also wrote for the *London.* Indeed, it was this magazine which introduced both Lamb, and De Quincey to essay-writing. Its main interest for us is that it was the chief journal for those Romantic writers who lived in London.

The gradual disappearance of politics from the reviews and magazines will have been noticed. At the founding of the *Edinburgh,* Lockhart had said to Scott, " The *Review,* in short, has but two legs to stand upon. Literature no doubt is one of them; and its right leg is Politics." Within his lifetime the right leg also became literary. Indeed, the early acrimonies and political conflicts were so lessened that, apart from leaving the editorship of the *Edinburgh* for that of the *Quarterly* in 1825, Lockhart wrote a good deal for the *Edinburgh,* not a little for *Blackwood's,* and occasionally for *Fraser's.*

Chapter Six

History and Social Politics

(i) **Introduction**

AN age of Romanticism seems at first sight to favour such a study of the past as would stimulate historical research, and in the long run it certainly does so.

Yet the epoch is an arid one in historical literature; the promise of Gibbon's age has not been redeemed; and historical literature makes no great move till we come to Macaulay and Carlyle.

How are we to reconcile these comparatively tenuous results with the historical stimulus so clearly given by the great Romantic writers ? The reply is that the best historical work of the time is not to be found in its formal histories but in its romances, its poems, its books of travel. In the African travels of Mungo Park, and the Arctic explorations of Parry, the historical novels of Scott and his many followers, the Eastern romances of Maturin, the Spanish verse of Southey, we shall best see the new interest imparted to history by Romanticism. Spain, Germany, Italy, Greece, Persia, are no longer merely geographical names to the ordinary reader; they are centres of life, thought, and inspiration. Yet if, compared with other departments of literature, the roll of names in

direct historical research is not imposing, it is none the less useful and influential; if we have no names to compare with Michelet in France and Niebuhr in Germany, yet such men as William Coxe, William Roscoe, John Lingard, and Henry Hallam did useful spade-work, along sounder lines than did the gefieration preceding.

In Social Politics there is more to be said. The age is peculiarly rich in speculative thought bearing upon political problems. Godwin and Paine try to impress upon English life the democratic theories of the French Revolution; Cobbett gives articulate expression to the cause of the agricultural poor; Bentham clarifies the confused medley of our jurisprudence; while Ricardo, and his rival Malthus, view economic conditions from a fresh and vigorous standpoint. Incidentally, also, the scholarship of Sir James Mackintosh and the critical genius of Samuel Taylor Coleridge add materially to the political theorising of the time, from a more conservative point of view.

(ii) History

William Mitford (1744-1827) has been hailed as a pioneer of Greek studies. Perhaps his chief claim to remembrance lies in the fact that he provoked Grote to write his big work by his *History of Greece* (1810).

A certain liveliness of style gives interest of a kind to his work, which served to bridge the span between the great historians of the type of Gibbon and the Victorian school of history that starts with Macaulay.

William Coxe (1747-1828) helped, by his ungrudging industry among the archives of Vienna, to provide us with the history of the Hapsburgs. His *History of the House of Austria and Memoirs of the Kings of Spain and the House of Bourbon* is still serviceable as a reference book, though largely superseded as a constructive history.

A more interesting figure is William Roscoe (1753-1831). He made good use of the Italian archives in his *Life of Lorenzo de Medici;* and in so far as he deals with art rather than the social and religious life of the time he proves a good guide.

John Lingard (1771-1851) was a Catholic professor, and it says much for his judicial manner that he succeeded in writing a *History of England* that could annoy only the extremists. It is really an admirable piece of work; not merely fair and generous in temper, but vivid and interesting. His views are stated with breadth and moderation, and with a real attempt to get at original sources.

Henry Hallam (1777-1859) was judicial by nature, as Lingard was by design, and his scholarship was greater than that of the contemporaries of whom we have been speaking. He was a keen student of the politics of his time, though never a politician; and his clear and cool presentment of history exhibited all the virtues as well as the accompanying defects of the trained lawyer. His *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (i 818) is an admirable piece of historical erudition and sobriety; while his *Constitutional*

History of England (1827) still remains as a valuable storehouse for the modern historical student. In tone and temper he reminds one more of the age of " common sense "; but in his study of original documents he shows that curiosity about the past which is one of the characteristics of Romanticism.

No record of Hallam's work, however brief, can ignore his *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries* (1837-39), a scholarly digest of the thought and culture of the West. The soberness of style and the coolness of manner that offend some full-blooded readers incline one to do less than justice to a work that has many solid merits. The chief defect of the book lies in its arbitrary arrangement of subject matter and in a certain dryness of treatment. It lacks perspective, and this, in an introduction, is a weighty drawback. But it is fair and scholarly, and in the treatment of more purely intellectual matter, valuable and interesting.

To rank Robert Southey as a historian, on the strength of his *History of Brazil* (1819) and his *The Peninsular War* (1832), would be a mistake although they deserve mention because of the prose in which they were written. Among his biographies, however, we may make place for his book on Nelson, which, appearing in 1813, is one of his masterpieces. Avoiding with the greatest care every unusual word, sticking closely to the plainest language, Southey builds up a prose most difficult to define in positive terms. It is easier to say that it is perfectly adapted to hie purposes

and free from fault. Vague as this criticism may sound, it is high praise—a fact which will be realised by anyone who has tried to write a prose which shuns the ormte and must be successful by a perfection of plain style.

Other writers of the time deserving mention as historians are Sir William Napier, whose *History of the Peninsular War* (1840) is vivid in presentation, and Henry Hart Milman whose *History of the Jews* (1829) is still popularly reprinted. It was followed by a history of Christianity and a history of Latin Christianity.

(iii) **Social Politics**

(a) *Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Paine, Cobbett*

William Godwin, the friend and inspirer of Shelley, was born in 1756, and for a few years did work as a Nonconformist minister. His religious interests soon waned and he turned to literature, where he achieved no insignificant position among the writers of the day as a novelist, and a very high one as a political thinker.

His first important book is the *Enquiry concerning Political Justice,* directly inspired by the French Revolution. Anarchistic in theory, it yet deprecates violence. In his remarkable novel *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) Godwin pursues his favourite ideas, the tyranny of government and the beneficence of reason, but his story interests far less for its crude philosophy than for the undoubted power he showed in conducting a tale and arresting the reader's imagina-

tion by its picturesque appeal and happy inventiveness.

Two years later a volume of *Essays on Education, Manners, and Literature* added to his political notoriety if not to his literary reputation. In 1797 he married Mary Wollstonecraft. His second novei, *St. "Leon,* appeared in 1799, and dealt with ordinary human passions in extraordinary situations, A painstaking and, in some ways, useful *Life of Chaucer* followed in 1803 ; and his third novel, *Fleetwood,* in 1804.

None of his later writings, many and diverse as they were, approach the earlier in intellectual vigour or artistic skill. His experiments in the drama were dismal failures, his ambitiously planned *History of the Commonwealth* (1824-28) proved greatly beyond his powers, though the subject interested him intensely, and he spared no trouble over the work. But he lost himself in details and the work has no perspective.

Cloudeslej (1830) is the weakest and poorest of his novels.

Godwin's dialectics may seem absurd to us today, who have no belief in the manufacture of saints out of syllogisms, but the idealisation of reason, the glorification of individual freedom, involved in Godwinism, had its attractive and suggestive side. That it should have appealed to Shelley as strongly as it did is not remarkable, when we recollect the abstract, metaphysical trend of the poet's mind.

Godwin's influence upon his age is undoubtedly a powerful one, and even Wordsworth's Mer work

shows traces of it. To the general reader he will appeal more on account of his fiction; the influence of his doctrinaire romances affected the next generation of story-tellers, notably Bulwer Lytton.

Mary wollstonecraft was fully as vigorous and influential a tliinker in her way as Godwin, and was certainly a more striking personality. Born in London, in April 1759, Mary's earliest years were spent in the neighbourhood of Epping Forest. Later on, she picked up a fragmentary education at some day school near Beverley in Yorkshire, where the family migrated in 1768—for restlessness was always driving her parents to seek better luck elsewhere.

Later on she started a school, and if her intellectual qualities were not great, what is more important, her power of sympathetic discernment and intelligent guidance were considerable.

An introduction to the gruff, golden-hearted Johnson might have been productive had it not taken place during the last few months of his life. As it was, his kindliness and friendly interest served to provide Mary with one of her few gracious memories of our sex. Another Johnson, a publisher, then came into her life. He had been struck by her mental powers and remarkable personality, and offered her work. Under his auspices she learned French and German, made translations, read and reported on them, and wrote several original works, including her famous *Rights of Women.* Practically all her money was absorbed by her needy relations; had it not been

for this constant drain upon her earnings she would have at least been able to live in comfort. Fuseli, the celebrated Swiss painter, took a great interest in her at one time, and she felt more than a passing affection for him. However, he was already married, so to put him out of her mind she went across to Paris. Here she met Gilbert Imlay, a former American captain, and a man of letters in a small way. With him she fell deeper in love and at the outset the affection seems to have been a mutual one. But Imlay was of the type of man who loves and rides away; he was not only a thoroughly bad lot, but he was a weak and contemptible creature, and nothing but tragedy could have resulted from a woman of Mary's temperament putting all her happiness into this man's hands. She had no belief in marriage as a legal institution, and was content to live with him, though it was quite clear she considered the bond between them as sacred as the marriage bond. After he had left her for another mistress, as she soon discovered, her agony of spirit was for a time overwhelming. But force of character and her innate vitality carried her through the ordeal, while the story of her courtship and marriage to Godwin, despite its lack of romance, had its agreeable and comforting side. The marriage was somewhat like the marriage of Charlotte Brcnte; it brought her into a haven, though not the haven of her dreams, and just as it seemed to assume some measure of happiness, was destroyed by death. She died at the age of thirty-eight, after giving birth to a girl (after-

wards Mary Shelley), cut off in the maturity of her powers.

Mary Godwin's real contribution to literature is the *Vindication of the Rights of Women,* and its originality can best be understood when it is read in the light of that time and not in the light of today. There is little charm in the writing, but the force and cogency of much of the reasoning are undeniable; and its courage amazing.

The *Letters to Gilbert Imlay* show the passionate intensity of her nature, and are vastly preferable to the carefully prepared *letters from Sweden, Norway and Denmark.*

Her two experiments in fiction, *Mary* and *The Wrongs of Women,* show clearly that she had not the making of a novelist.

Thomas Paine, born in 1737, was the son of a Quaker staymaker in Norfolk. This Radical firebrand was by turns staymaker, sailor, schoolmaster, exciseman, and tobacconist. It was as exciseman that he first appeared in print, pleading for an increase of wages (1772). In 1774 he went to America, and in his pamphlet, *Common Sense,* published two years later, argued powerfully for absolute independence. He took active part in the revolution and was rewarded by Congress with the post of Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. During this strenuous time he did a good deal of pamphleteering with the object of inspiring the rebels, and subsequently went on a mission to France, obtaining, in 1781, a public

salary for his political services. In 1787 he came back to England and a few years later published a spirited reply to Burke's famous *Reflections upon the French Revolution.* This book, *The Rights of Man,* of which a million and a half copies were sold, became o.ie of the most popular works of the day, appealing to the average man much as *Political Justice* appealed to the thinker of the day. It brought trouble to many concerned in its dissemination. Paine himself avoided difficulties by running off to Paris, where he was elected as Deputy of Pas-de-Calais to the National Convention. He angered the Robespierre party, however, by offering " an asylum in America " to King Louis XVI. Paine was thrown into prison, where he remained for nearly a year, being liberated on the request of the American Minister.

Part of Paine's *Age of Reason,* a vigorous plea for Deism as against Christianity, was written at this time, and alienated a good many of his friends. After his release he attacked Washington as a man of affairs, and showed general bitterness towards America for its acquiescence, as he deemed it, in his lengthy imprisonments. On his return to America in 1802, he was welcomed by a few but shunned and execrated by the many. His combative spirit, sharpened with age and opposition, was constantly involving him in some political or religious wrangle. Recklessness of living led to financial impoverishment, and in 1809 he died at New York.

William Cobbett, born at Farnham in 1762, was

the son of a farmer and the grandson of a farm labourer.

He grew up a sturdy, honest Saxon yeoman with a passior for adventure that found numerous outlets. He tried the Navy, then the lawyer's office, and became a soldier at twenty-three. In this capacity he showed his natur?! combativeness by attacking the abuses of army administration; then exhibited his thirst for change by going to America, where he married a girl he met in New Brunswick. He was better able there to express his strong Radical views without interference, and this he did for the next eight years, in fine racy English, under the *nom-de-plume* of " Peter Porcupine ". This name had been flung at him for obvious reasons and he accepted it without demur.

At last, finding himself involved in libel suits, he crossed the water again, and was eagerly sought after by the Tories, who saw in his partisanship and powerful pen a possible source of strength. But he was not to be bought.

The famous weekly journal, *The Political Register*, was in its inception a Government organ (1802), but Cobbett's independent spirit soon asserted itself. He was free and impressionable, but that did not stay his pen, and after the war he came to the help of the Radicals in his plea for constitutional reform. He was now a great political force and a popular personality, especially in the Midlands and North of England.

The Government at this time were taking strong and arbitrary measures to suppress political meetings, and

to escape imprisonment without trial he went across to America again, continuing to write from there. On his return to England in 1819, three months after the Peterloo Massacre, he was received with gr^at enthusiasm. Among the measures he advocated were—a free Press, right of public meeting, abolition of the game laws, and parliamentary reform. He was returned for Oldham in 1832. To the last he retaineu his love of the country and country life, and never lost sight of the lot of the agricultural labourer, whose cause he espoused with the same pertinacity as Francis Place did that of the town artisan. In 1835 he fell ill, but despite diminishing strength he wrote and worked to the very last.

Cobbett was an extraordinarily prolific writer, his writings occupying about fifty volumes; he touched on history, politics, economics, religion, grammar, cooking, gardening, and art. Dogmatic and egotistical and insular he may be, but the remarkable thing about his work is not that it is sometimes wrong-headed but that he is so often suggestive and illuminating. For he had a strong and keen intellect, passionate humanitarian sympathy, and a rarely excellent command of fine, racy English.

His writings include thirty volumes of *The Weekly Register*', twelve volumes of " Peter Porcupine " 's lucubrations, and two volumes of *Rural Rides*—delightful pictures of rustic life.

In all his work he is frankly the partisan with grievances to air and wrongs to redress. JVany of his

papers are nothing more than vigorous tracts with titles that certainly strike the eye—e.g. *A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats, A Kick for a Bite.* His prejudices are most entertaining.

Among his " imperfect sympathies ", to borrow Lamb's phrase, are Poverty, Potatoes, Scotsmen, and Tea. He sturdily upheld a purely agricultural society and preached the gospel of work with as much energy as Carlyle. The Utopia he fashions is a homely, domestic one : an early marriage, plenty of beer, good, warm clothes, and a well-furnished house. Add to these advantages an established Church that looked after the poor, a militia to defend the country, and uniformity of taxation, and you have Cobbett's ideal of what English life might be.

The savour has necessarily departed from much of his political pamphleteering, though it remains to show us how doughaly he could fight. But Cobbett does not depend on these for his posthumous fame, and in his *Rural Rides* and his *Advice to Young Men and Women* there are many passages of striking sense and genuine poetic feeling that may be read with pleasure and profit today.

The man who wrote *Rural Rides* had a clean, sweet imagination; and the author of the *Advice to Young Men and Women* good common-sense and integrity of purpose.

(b) *Adam Smith* (1723-90)

Adam Smith was a posthumous child, born at Kirkcaldy, and with difficulty recovered frorr gipsies during infancy. His life is surprisingly full of unexpected and wholly irrelevant facts such as these. At Glasgow University he studied under the mild Dr. Francis Hutcheson, author of several respectable books of moral philosophy. Leaving Oxford, Smith was five years later appointed to the Chair of Logic at Glasgow, a post he later exchanged for the Professorship of Moral Philosophy, in which he laboured until, in 1759, he published the *Theory of Moral Sentiments.* Five years later he became tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch and went to France with his pupil. On his return he gave all his energy to the writing of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* which appeared in 1776. Adam Smith spent his remaining years in Edinburgh, greatly respected, revered for his vague and amiable presence, loved for his absent-minded misadventures, which became a legend around him.

Smith's ideas were revolutionary at the time. He stripped from the idea of wealth the materials which were associated with it, and showed it to consist of the goods men use. He said that it is derived from the labour men produce. He then examined labour itself. His main conclusions may be said to be Free Trade and *laissez-faire.*

His first conclusion reversed the Mercanrle Theory

on which British policy had long been founded, for its main tenets were that coinage is wealth, so that Protection must be enforced to prevent the flow of wealth from the country in exchange for goods, and that staple foods Lhould be produced at home. By his new definition of wealth, Smith demolished the argument in favour of Protection and, by pointing out that free exchange of trade was beneficial, he brought theory into line with the practice by which, under necessity, England had become a corn-importing country.

In his examination of labour, Smith held that each country and each part of every country are naturally fitted for the production of something which cannot be better produced anywhere else. Therefore any interference with such production must be harmful. In brief, he totally condemned any governmental act which might interfere with, or even control, anything to do with labour. The application of this *laissez-faire* theory to wages, with consequent misery to the the workers whom the Combination Acts prevented from forming into Trade Unions, was an evil not wholly to be attributed to Smith. In this particular instance it is of interest to note that, while the theory was the basis of those Acts, it was also the foundation on which Francis Place won his fight against them. For, as they were said to be justified as a means of preventing Unions from interfering with labour conditions, so Place pointed out that if the Acts were repealed, labour would be free to adjust itself to the needs of the community.

Adam Smith's style was admirably suited to his purpose. Unimpassioned, clear, untinged by any excess of feeling, quick in movement, his prose may be said to be worthy of the eighteenth century. There may not be in *The Wealth of Nations* a great deal tw attract the student of literature, but the book does contain prose which may be profitably sampled for a few occasional pages.

(c) *The Utilitarians*

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) was a child prodigy whose parents kept all amusing books from him and set him, at the age of six, to Greek, French, and Latin. By way of light reading he browsed in Burnet's *History of the Earth,* Cave's *Lives of the Apostles,* and Stow's *Chronicle.* His career at Oxford was undistinguished, and his entry to Lincoln's Inn served only to horrify him by the charges demanded of suitors.

In 1776 he published his *fragment on Government,* which was followed by a translation of a book on chemistry and in 1787 by a characteristic *Defence of Usury.*

While engaged on these works he was cultivating the friendship of Francis Place and, more importantly, of James Mill, who was a colleague of Thomas Love Peacock in the East India Company. Mill's mind was similar to Bentham's, in that it had the clearest perception of certain principles and was able to command a vast array of facts by way of proof and illustration. Moreover, his sympathy with Bentham's

ideas was so deep that he readily co-operated in the author's highly individual method of composition, which was to write out his ideas and to leave to his colleagues the task of piecing the fragmentary manuscripts together.

In this way Mill laboured on *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), while Bentham busied himself with a variety of schemes, including plans for the cutting of the Isthmus of Suez and a Panama Canal, and the founding of the *Westminster Review* in 1824. Mill worked on so that *A Table of the Springs of Action* appeared in 1817. His son, the celebrated John Stuart Mill, edited the five volumes of *The Rationale of Evidence* (1827).

Among Bentham's schemes was one for the control of convicts on humanitarian lines, chiefly through the building of circular prisons in which the prisoners could be under constant inspection. The Government was deeply impressed by the plan Bentham drew up for the construction of such a "Panopticon". When it dropped the scheme in 1813 Bentham was awarded compensation which enabled him to buy Ford Abbey, in Dorsetshire, where he lived until 1818. He then returned to his residence in London, where he died, June 6, 1832.

Bentham's writings are so various that a summary of his main statements is difficult. One of his early reactions was against the law. He had recoiled from its profession and he objected to its principle. His *fragment on Government* is really an adverse criticism of

Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* which had completed publication twenty years earlier. Bentham objected that laws cannot ensure material happiness, especially as English Law was illogical and heterogeneous. He therefore sought some principle to replace it. This he found in the famous dictum that, "It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong ". Usually ascribed to Bentham, the principle was first taken by Priestley from Beccaria's *Crimes and Punishments;* Hutcheson used it in 1725, for the Scottish philosopher is rightly regarded as a forerunner of Bentham, who founded his whole theory on it and popularised the phrase.

By material happiness Bentham meant protection from violence and fraud, with freedom to develop such individual propensities as are compatible with a like development by our neighbours. This happiness he stated to be obtainable by the observance of the " utilitarian " principle which he applied universally.

The idea of " utility " he had taken from David Hume, but he differed from Hume in seeking a quantitative utility rather than a qualitative; he sought " good " (which he defined as a balance between pain and pleasure) for the greatest possible number. He asserted that if this objective were secured, each individual would necessarily find himself possessed of the greatest good and material happiness any one man can attain.

There is no occasion here to discuss this principle.

Its more detailed appplication may, however, be mentioned. The principle of utility led to two derivative ideas. One was the extension of individual liberty; the other was political equalisation. In pursuit of the first, he attacked everything which could restrict Kee Trade and committed himself to the *laissez-faire* policy of trade and labour. In developing his second point, Bentham said that every man should be counted as one man, and no one should be reckoned to be more than one man. Thus he was bound to support the movement for parliamentary reform and for a democratic Parliament.

Even this short statement of his views is sufficient to explain the powerful influence he exerted during the early years of the nineteenth century. Whatever the defects of his theories when put to practice, he undoubtedly began that popular demand for adequate and efficient government which, within a few years of his death, began to alter the course of parliamentary rule.

Unable on every occasion to distinguish cause from effect, too ready to believe that all men are similar in kind and are highly intelligent, uninterested in history, and above all almost blind to abstract ideas, such as those of religion and art, Bentham necessarily suffered from defects in the premises from which his logic drew its conclusions.

His interest to us lies in his influence on the thoughts of men who were rejoicing in Romanticism. Certainly his literary style does not interest us, for it is

graceless even if it has the merit of directness, too technical even though it provided us with such useful words as *codification* and *international* and *utilitarian* in their modern connotations, and always too ready to explain itself by deceptively simple ta[1] ulations of thoughts and facts. Bentham's real significance in literature is found rather in his complete scorn of those social theories which won the sympathies of the Romantics. For him the Rights of Man were " nonsense on stilts". He believed that natural rights do not exist; man has rights, but they are given to him by law. The practical value of many of his ideas won people to the principles which he believed had given them birth. Thus he began to turn men's minds away from the thoughts and feelings from which the Romantic Movement was derived.

Among his followers must be mentioned one of his editors, Arthur Young, one of the ablest writers on agriculture, and Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), whose *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) created enormous controversy. In this Malthus defended himself by a second edition which was almost an entirely new book. Malthus attacked the idea that men or society can ever reach a stage of perfection. His main method of proving that such perfection cannot be reached was by showing that " the struggle for existence" (the phrase later used by Darwin and Wallace) depends for perfection on the balance between population and food supply. This he claimed can never be attained, since population increases by

geometrical progression and food production by arithmetical progression. That this hypothesis is unsound need not concern us. What must be noticed is that in Malthus we have another author of great influeace whose whole tendency is to lead his readers away from the Romantic ideals. It is interesting to note that Malthus' noted book appeared in the same year as the first edition of the *'Lyrical ballads.* The Romantic Revival, popularised seven years later by Scott's poetry, began to decline when the Utilitarian ideas attracted attention. The influence of Rousseau died before that of Bentham; the devotees of the French Revolution sickened as they saw the dawn of freedom give way to the noon-day of Napoleon's dictatorship; the stern necessites of life after the Napoleonic wars, and the fears of Jacobinism at home, made men think in terms of bread and wages and votes rather than about the sensuous delights of Keats, or the more austere natural influences of Wordsworth. The second great English Romantic period drew to its close.

Indeed, the Romantics themselves, not being shut away from the world, but taking a full share in its activities, entered into the new trend of thought. In 1817 David Ricardo published his *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation,* a book with theories later extended by James Mill in his *Political 'Economy* (1821). Ricardo was welcomed as a new Adam Smith, His book had no more enthusiastic admirer than Thomas De Quincey.

A new age had come, with new needs and therefore new interests. Twenty years had passed since the *Lyrical Ballads.* Only twenty years had yet to pass to *English Idylls* and the new approach to Nature which is Tennyson.

Chapter Seven

The Development of Publishing

BY the end of the eighteenth century the publishing trade had secured a definable position, of specialised service, in the making and distribution of books. Since few histories of English literature give a connected account of the trade, a short chapter may be devoted to it, by way of interest, apart from the light which the development of publishing throws on the conditions of authorship until they became stabilised in more or less modern circumstances early in the nineteenth century.

For a considerable time there was no definable function of publishing in the always complex business of book production. Caxton set up his printing press at the Red Pale, Westminster, in 1476, where he printed and issued books of his own authorship as well as works by Lydgate, Chaucer, and many other writers. Prior to this date the Stationers' Guild had secured its hall in Milk Street, where books were written out by hand for a penny or two per page or for special fees in the case of unusually ornamented texts. Many of the books produced by the Guild's copyists were sold in Paternoster Row, which, after having been the home of

makers of rosaries and devotional objects, had been occupied by various trades until it became exclusively a centre for book distribution.

The Guild was re-incorporated in 1557 by the admission of the Fraternity of Scriveners Three years later the Stationers' Company was ircorporated; all members of the book trade in London were required to be members and to register with the Company the names of any books in which they claimed property rights. Queen Elizabeth confirmed the Company's charter on condition that its members should print nothing which had not been approved by one of the archbishops, bishops, or others nominated for the censorship of the Press which this proviso established.

The number of printing houses set up now increased considerably; there were twenty-five before the end of the century, as well as presses at Oxford and other provincial centres. For instance, Richard Field of Stratford-on-Avon printed his friend Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594). The number of workmen employed was so great that in 1588 the Stationers' Company limited the size of an edition to 1500 copies, since the setting up of type for a further edition would make work for some of the unemployed journeymen.

It will be noticed that there is so far no sure distinction between printer and publisher. Anyone could register a manuscript, print it, or contract to have it printed for him, and dispose of the copies as best he could. By this time Old St. Paul's had become

a centre for the book trade. It seems to have been through this new centre that the division between printer and bookseller came about, for many retailers bought houses inside the walled yard of the cathedral and used part of their premises as shop property. Others bought or rented sheds built up against the cathedral walls, and there displayed their books. For some considerable time the position may be said to have been such that authors were their own publishers, printers were their own booksellers, and apart from these there were a number of booksellers who were not printers. The situation was confused by the existence of " pirate" printers or booksellers who secured copies of manuscripts, perhaps taken down in shorthand during the performance of plays, or secretly transcribed from the manuscript copies which authors often circulated among friends, and printed them for retail. Thomas Nashe, for example, complained that his *Terrors of the Night* had been through many such transcriptions before his printer got his own edition out. The existence of these unlicensed printers or editions was partly due to the Elizabethan custom of granting printing monopolies to favoured members of the Stationers' Company, a practice which exasperated other members into unscrupulous behaviour.

The method booksellers used to make known theij: lists has not yet been fully investigated. Caxton advertised, but this method lapsed for some 150 years after his death. Then the custom arose of mentioning items in Service-books. In 1595 Andrew Maunsell

issued his *Catalogue of "English Printed Bookes,* which was the first general catalogue of which we know. From about this time booksellers may have kept manuscript catalogues of works they handled. It became usual for them to do this after John Bill printed his own catalogue in 1617.

The provinces were supplied by the London book trade, which sent out its chapmen, and by their own presses. The first press set up in Scotland was that of Chepman and Myllar in 1608.

In 1586 an enactment of the Star Chamber increased the severity of the Press censorship by giving the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London power to control all printing presses. This was re-enacted in 1637, but the abolition of the Star Chamber in 1641 removed the censorship—a result probably unforeseen. Cromwell imposed it again in 1649. After the Restoration it continued in a new form, since the Licensing Act of 1662 forbade anyone to print without a licence. When this Act was due for renewal in 1695 it was allowed to lapse, and the long censorship was at an end. The effects on the book trade were most marked.

The first result was an enormous growth in the number of pirate publishers. The trade agitated for legal redress in the form of some Act which arould invest printers or booksellers with definite rights in their goods. When it was passed, as the first Copyright Act (1709), it created an entirely novel situation, for it gave rights in books to authors and no* to book-

sellers. For the first time an author was a real person with claims on the vendors and producers of what he had written. The Act awarded him rights in his book for fo'irteen years and, should he be alive at the expiration of this term, to him or his assigns for another fourteen years. Further, at the expiration of the final term, rights in the book did not pass to the bookseller or printer but became common property.

Thus it was in the reign of Queen Anne that the publisher—i.e. the man who invests his capital in buying an author's rights by agreement and in producing and distributing the book—came into existence. The growth was retarded by the fact that the Copyright Act was not binding in Ireland or in Holland. From these countries publishers sent cheap editions into the English market. This invasion was prohibited by a further Act in 1737.

The author was ro longer wholly dependent on the chance of the trade for remuneration or on the possibility of employment as a printer's corrector or reader for a livelihood. He now had rights to offer, so that the appearance of people willing to deal in those rights was automatic. We find that authors sometimes sold out their rights for one payment; sometimes the publisher made a further and voluntary payment in the case of an unusually successful work. Sometimes a payment was agreed for the first edition, with smaller payments for each subsequent edition. Again, authors occasionally sold half their rights in all editions, or even sold the first edition only, so keeping their

chance of striking a better bargain for the second should the book please the public.

There was a corresponding activity among the publishers, with the utmost benefit to literature, fo. it was now of advantage to them to combine in the publication of an important book. Thus the enormous *Cyclopedia Britannica* (1728) was a co-operative work, and Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary* had no fewer than thirty-six publishers. In this second instance we can also see the Copyright Act working well for the author—Johnson received £300 for revising a new edition, since this was technically a new work.

While the publishing trade was now settling down into its distinct divisions of author, printer, publisher, and bookseller, the reading public was growing and, of course, was being cultivated. The widening of University, College, and Grammar School education had been increasing the reading public for nearly 200 years when the early publishers set about the methodical expansion of their business. Potential readers were more numerous than ever in the busily talking, curious, and " up-to-date " eighteenth century, whose citizens seized eagerly tracts, pamphlets, murderers' confessions, the sixteen-page Corantos and similar news-sheets and, above all, prided themselves on literary taste.

Among these readers the publishers circulated their lists, secured the writing of favourable reviews in the new periodicals, fostered the " talk of the town " and,

most assiduously, sought subscriptions (usually through authors or booksellers on commission) for forthcoming publications. This last method was highly favourable to authors, far more so than we realise. When we read that a writer secured £100 by way of subscriptions, we may not be impressed until we ask ourselves how much an author today would gain by royalties from a sale of perhaps not more than 700 or 800 copies.

Indeed, the rapacity of the publishers, which the prints and scurrilities of the time allege, was mostly imaginary. Rogues such as fastened on Goldsmith certainly entered the publishing business as readily as they made their way into any other. On the whole, however, a careful comparison of authors' receipts in the first 100 years of publishing with the remuneration generally obtainable today shows that the "miserable" authors who starved in garrets were by no means as unhappily situated as we are led to believe.

Of detailed methods of the trade we are still uncertain. For instance, what was the exact relationship, if there was one, between printer, publisher, and bookseller? Formerly a printer could sell his own books, or buy books from other printers, or exchange copies of his own productions for works from other presses, so that his shop might display a variety of publications. But in the eighteenth century the publisher was not often his own printer. How, then, are we to understand the arrangement, not infrequently found or title-pages, by which one man printed for

another, while the book was sold by a third? It sounds like the modern arrangement, but it was not. There was some connection which we have not yet discovered.

The important fact in all this bustle is the ever-increasing size of the reading public, diligently encouraged by the publishing trade. Between 1725 and 1775 there were 300 publishers in England and Wales, half of them being in London. Of the provincial publishers, perhaps we should mention Thomas Gent, of York, who was an author, printer, publisher, and bookseller. Men of his spirit and initiative made the trade by their industry and honesty. Under their business activity grew the private reading circles which sprang up all over the country in this busy century—individuals combining to form reading groups for the purchase of volumes to suit their tastes. Thus there were clerical circles, medical circles, scientific circles, literary circles, all busily reading, borrowing, buying, circulating. And for fiction—the first circulating library was opened in London in 1740, and its example was quickly followed in other cities. Towards the end of the century there is the first sign of the parochial lending library, so that shortly after 1800 annual membership of a reading group could be obtained for a few coppers.

This tendency was encouraged by the publication of cheap editions. Retail prices of the eighteenth century are difficult to classify. On the average, we may say that a published play could usually be obtained

for about one shilling and sixpence (value of the time), a novel for two shillings and sixpence or three shillings per octavo volume of about 60,000 words (the size of this book); larger volumes of about 500 pages were often p iced at about five shillings. Better than this were the jeally cheap editions, such as the sixpenny parts issued by John Cooke, and the " Paternoster Row Numbers ".

The growth of the publishing business involved, we may note, the end of the patronage system. This continued until the close of the century, but it dwindled away as publishers were increasingly able to offer authors contracts more valuable than the sometimes uncertain and irregular support of patrons.

Of the famous early publishers there is space to do little more than give the tribute of mention to a few—to Dryden's publisher, Henry Herringman; to Dodsley, enterprising anthologist and founder of *The Annual Register* (1759); to Jacob Tonson and Bernard Lintot. And we must include that most ingenuous, pleasing, and afflicted man, Alexander Cruden, who has achieved a permanent celebrity not so much because he was the " Great Corrector" as through his *Complete Concordance to the Holy Scriptures* (1737). Among the booksellers must be mentioned Jamto Lackington, whose Finsbury Square shop, " The Temple of the Muses ", was for long one of the sights of London, and Thomas Davies, in whose shop a frightened and quickly astounded Boswell was introduced to Dr. Johnson.

Without delaying in the pleasant ways early publishing tempts us to follow (as we may do in the nine volumes of Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century),* we note only that in this century were founded the houses of the great Scottish publishers, the Foulis brothers, the Ballantynes, and Constable, as well as the London houses of John Murray and Longmans.

From here onwards the history of publishing has an interest chiefly its own. For our purposes we add only two facts.

One is that reading became even more widespread when the religious revival of the Wesleys and of the early nineteenth century, in the years before the great Education Acts, made the teaching of reading a good work. A spate of tracts, magazines, and books was produced for this additional market, which soon merged with the general reading prblic.

The other point of interest is the ending of the "paid" review. This was largely due to *The Athenæum* (1828) when under the editorship of Wentworth Dilke. The reviews in the periodicals were, as we have seen, often secured by the publishers in their own interests. In other cases the literary journals were strongly biased by party politics, so that we find Hazlitt believing that his works had been damned because of their author's radical views. Against this *The Athenaum* stood out, believing that book reviews should be impartial evaluations made without fear, favour, or prejudice. After a shaky

start it succeeded under Dilke, who, in this matter, published reviews of enormous length, illustrated by considerable quotation from the text under notice. Presently the public realised that here was an excellent approacl to a book, by which one could decide whether to buy it or not, and appreciated the wholly literary basis of the criticism offered. A taste for independent reviews was formed and the high standard set which we enjoy today.

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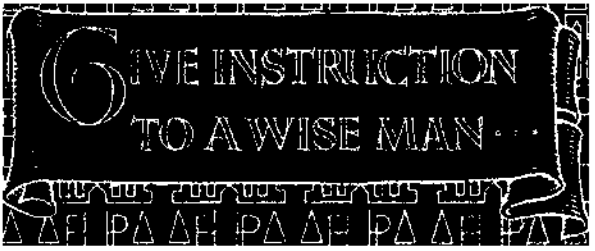
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