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PIOUS OPINIONS

PIOUS OPINIONS

BY

CHARTRES BIRON



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PREFACE

THESE essays in literary appreciation I offer rather as a species of conscience money—an attempt, however small, to make some return for so much value received.

However inadequate they may be, I am consoled by the reflection that that form of belated tribute is apt in general, so I am given to understand, to fall short of full acquittance. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking my friends, Mr. W. L. Courtney and Mr. Leo Maxse, for their kind permission to reprint such of these papers as have appeared in *The Fortnightly* and *National Reviews*. "Dr. Johnson and Women" and "A Victorian Prophet" were published in *The Fortnightly*. The others, with the exception of "Immortal Talk" and "Wilkie Collins," in the *National*.

CHARTRESBIRON.

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PIOUS OPINIONS

" CLARISSA HARLOWE "

THE curious will find in St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street, a tablet with the following inscription : " He enlarged the knowledge of human nature and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue." It is signed all over. As Macaulay said on another occasion, " Sam Johnson or the devil." Although we remember a famous refusal to disgrace the walls of Westminster Abbey with an English epitaph, St. Bride's, Fleet Street, is not Westminster Abbey, nor is Richardson Goldsmith. Still, no one had a better right than Johnson to provide his friend's epitaph. The sturdy lexicographer's downright admiration for Richardson's novels is one of those stimulating surprises which make his character of such unceasing interest. We can only wonder with Boswell to learn that by comparison Fielding was " a blockhead " and " a barren rascal," and that there is " more knowledge of the heart in one Letter of Richardson's than in all *Tom Jones*" But Johnson was always a moralist. In his heart he probably thought with Colonel Newcome that Tom Jones was rather a low fellow : and though Richardson made the passions move, in his chaste pages Virtue always kept a firm eye on them.

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In the preface to *Clarissa Harlowe*, Richardson is at pains to point this out:

" But it will be proper to observe, for the sake of such as may apprehend hurt to the morals of youth from the more freely written letters, that the gentlemen, though professed libertines as to the female sex and making it one of their wicked maxims to keep no faith with any of the individuals of it who are thrown into their power, are not, however, either infidels or scoffers."

Seduction tempered by orthodoxy is, it would seem, their lover's creed. And the author points out with pride :

" On the contrary, it will be found in the progress of the work that they may often make such reflections upon each other, and each upon himself and his own actions, as reasonable beings might make who disbelieve not a future state of rewards and punishments and who one day propose to reform."

And one of whom, he points out with triumph, is " actually reforming."

Lovelace himself makes an even more singular pica for consideration. He urges in extenuation in a letter to his friend Mr. Belford that he always wears mourning for his discarded victims when they die. It reminds one of Dr. Johnson's excuse for his pious friend Mr. Campbell, who in spite of his piety had not been inside a church for many years, " but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat : this shows he has good principles." Belford, indeed, becomes most edifying as the book progresses—not that this implies any sudden conversion—and is chosen in the end by Clarissa to act as her executor. Under his influence even Lovelace's camp-followers, Mowbray and Tourville, reconsider their position and prepare for an old age of comparative decorum, after taking the precaution to make it fairly tolerable by sinking what

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

remained to them of fortune in annuities—a delightful incident showing the man of business was not altogether lost in the moralist. It is one of those curious touches of realism by which Richardson's books remain alive. Richardson was a mixture, more usual than is often thought, of the bourgeois and the artist. He always preferred to reconcile God and Mammon if he could. In his books every one has plenty of money and lives very well; rank is duly recognised. Virtue, in spite of its commanding force, is none the worse for being suitably rewarded.

A nicer Pamela might not have been so grateful to her master for marriage when through a good many volumes he had obviously and very nearly effectively sought her companionship on less exacting terms. But to the author the position presents no difficulty. Pamela was a good girl; she had brought off a good thing and there was an end of it. Not merely lucky herself, she serves to show the way to others in like case. Such may be the rewards for virtue in house-maids. But from Pamela to *Clarissa* was a giant's stride. The artist soul had burst its bourgeois bonds. The writer of *Pamela* was quite capable of ending Miss Harlowe's story happily. To the Richardson of the later work such a blunder was impossible.

Every live author has his following, often devout in inverse ratio to their numerical strength. People have been found, apparently of sound judgment, who claim to like *John Inglesant*. Do or could people read Richardson nowadays? The modern writers of passion—drawn in general, it is said, from the ranks of decayed governesses—presumably supply a considerable demand. And then they do not worry much

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about virtue; their passions are given a freer hand. Still; no writer has more enthusiastic or devoted admirers than Mr. Henry James, and of his later works, as of Richardson's, it might be said :

" If you were to read him for the story your impatience would be so much fretted you would hang yourself. You must read him for his sentiment and consider the story as only giving occasion for the sentiment."

There is a curious resemblance between the two. One would like to know what that fastidious genius thought of his predecessor's work. The meticulous examination of Clarissa's motives in leaving home and her general conduct in the face of Lovelace's behaviour are exactly in the Henry James manner. It may weary you or may not; many find Henry James's works difficult, but the appeal is direct to any student of human nature, and in the end with both you realise finality : like a great work of art, there is nothing more to be said.

In the three thousand pages of *Clarissa* there is only one *motif*—the attack on Clarissa by Lovelace. Every incident is subordinate to this, and yet you can hardly find a word which has not some direct bearing on the actual crisis. This taking one situation and showing how it affects a certain group of characters brought in touch with it is Henry James's considered method of literary expression. In both, in the scientific sense of the word, the subject is exhausted. The reader is left with the sense of completeness : a problem successfully solved.

One of James's longest novels was devoted to the simple issue of whether a certain lady kept the furniture and appointments of a particular house.

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

What Maisie Knew is only a study from the inside of the *menage a trois*. One wonders he did not employ the letter form more ; it would have been exactly suited to that atmosphere of pervading subtlety in which his people move. In one respect the older writer has the advantage. Analytical as his books are, he is never obscure. Mr. James's style is apt to become a series of hints mainly about nothing. At times he seems to be trying to take mental snapshots in a twilight of ideas on plates he has omitted to change.

Clarissa is very long, probably the longest novel in the world. Written in a series of 537 letters, the tragedy fills eight volumes, containing 3,000 pages odd. The work was originally presented in seven volumes, but the indomitable author, feeling he had not done full justice to his subject, added another. Even that is followed by a conclusion of twenty-two pages and a further postscript of eighteen. The mere headings to the various chapters would make a tolerably long novel and are composed with a stimulating ingenuity.

" An account of his ipecacuanha plot—Instructs Dorcas how to act— Surprise and terror—Monosyllables and trisyllables to what likened— Politeness lives not in a storm—Proclamation crisis—The lady now, he sees, loves him—Her generous tenderness for him—He has now credit for a new score—Defies Mrs. Townsend."

And again :

" The lady frightened out of her bed by dreadful cries of fire—She awes him into decency—On an extorted promise of forgiveness he leaves her—Repenting, he returns, but finds her door fastened—What a triumph has her sex obtained by her virtue ! but how will she see him the next morning, as he has made her promise !—Exults in the puzzle he has given her."

No sensational novelist of the bookstalls could be more provocative. An unscrupulous reader of the book

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' " for the story," instead of hanging himself, might confine his attention to these arresting summaries.

The letter form is defended by the author as being more suited to " instantaneous descriptions and reflections," and also " much more lively and affecting " in representing the style of those writing in the height of a present distress. All his novels were composed in this manner ; it certainly adds directness and actuality. For a long narrative the method has the disadvantage of involving a great deal of repetition, as the same incidents are described by the different writers.

In a humorous work like Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* this may be an advantage ; it gives the author an admirable opportunity for comic effect and development of character by showing how differently the same situation affects the different actors. But in a serious narrative the method becomes undoubtedly tedious. In the one case the humour is helped by the letters ; in the other the story develops in spite of them, and develops very slowly. But in those spacious Georgian days people wanted long novels ; there was no hurry. It was a time of long evenings in country houses when there was no bridge and even whist was longer.

Macaulay, one of Richardson's warmest admirers, admits you have to be " infected by *Clarissa*" Then, if the inoculation took all was well. " If you have once read *Clarissa* and are infected by it, you can't leave it." He gives a specific instance :

" When I was in India I passed one hot season in the hills, and there were the Governor-General and the Secretary of Government and the Commander-in-Chief and their wives. I had *Clarissa* with me, and as soon as they began to read the whole station was in a passion of excitement about Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes and her

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

scoundrelly Lovelace. The Governor's wife seized the book, the Secretary waited for it, and the Chief Justice could not read it for tears. ..."

The process of infection varies with different constitutions : some will always be immune. It must be confessed that the story until Clarissa leaves home seems rather hesitating. Sir Walter Scott was strongly of opinion that the earlier letters should be abridged. It is not until after the escape that Lovelace's letters to Belford become frequent. They undoubtedly relieve the monotony of Clarissa's. Richardson is very ingenious in avoiding the usual pitfall of writers who use the epistolary method. He manages, on the whole, to keep the letters short within the bounds of plausibility. Clarissa's may at times seem unduly long and numerous. An impatient reader may wish she would make up her mind quicker; but then Richardson is not for the impatient.

When the occasion demands it no one can be more terse than Richardson. When Lovelace triumphs his note of savage exultation is terrific : " And now, Belford, I can no further. The affair is over. Clarissa lives and I am your humble servant, R. LOVELACE," That eccentric genius Haydon writes of this letter in his autobiography :

" Except by *Clarissa Harlowe* I was never moved by a work of genius as by *Othello*. I read seventeen hours a day at *Clarissa*, and held the book so long upleaning on my elbows in an armchair that I stopped the circulation and could not move. When Lovelace writes, ' Dear Belton, it is all over and Clarissa lives,' I got up in a fury and wept like an infant and cursed and d——d Lovelace till exhausted. This is the triumph of genius over the imagination and heart of its readers."

A fine appreciation, if based on an incorrect quotation.

The character of Clarissa is perhaps the most amazing

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picture of a real woman in literature. How far her creator understood her is a fascinating problem. It is fairly clear that the Clarissa of her full development is not the heroine he originally intended to draw. She gets out of hand and insists on becoming human. Whether the artist was too much for the bourgeois or Clarissa was too much for both is a matter of doubt.

With all the great writers of creative fiction their characters are apt to assume an independent existence and insist on going their own way. Thackeray complains of this more than once. Balzac's characters, to use a vulgarity of the moment, go on anyhow on the least provocation. He makes one of his characters say:

" Janus cri le mythe de la critique et le symbole du genie. Qui de nous pourrait prononcer entre Clarissa et Lovelace, entre Hector et Achille ? Quel est le heros d'Homere qu'elle fut l'intention de Richardson ?"

The conventional side of Clarissa is that of the ideal woman, the sport of circumstances, the victim of an unscrupulous villain. This undoubtedly was Richardson's original conception. But from this cold perfection something much more interesting and much more vital evolves. The real tragedy of Clarissa's story is not her betrayal by Lovelace but her dual nature. With her strange sense of family duty and her rigid standard of personal conduct, she had another side. Her very austerity was protective. She was conscious of a smouldering temperament. Physically she is attracted by Lovelace, at first unconsciously, while his character and reputation repel her. She is young, slightly priggish, very emotional, with a tendency to hysteria : intellectually purity itself. Like so many

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

of her kind, she relies unduly on her strength of character to extract herself from dangerous situations. The first step has no fears for her ; she feels she can always draw back. She has a pride in putting her principles to the proof. And yet she confided in Miss Howe, in a moment of self-intuition, that "preaching and practising required quite different talents, which when united in the same person made a saint."

Was Clarissa a saint or was she a woman ? About the answer there can be no doubt to a real student of her story. She was an instinctive saint betrayed by a temperament. Then comes the more interesting problem : Did Richardson realise this ? My own view is, he paid the penalty of a real creation. Clarissa's temperament to him was like Frankenstein's monster ; it got out of hand. At times I fancy Richardson's feelings must have been rather those of the hen when it sees the ducklings taking to the water. It will be remembered that Lovelace was introduced to the family as a suitor for Arabella, Clarissa's sister. Arabella, described even by the kindly Clarissa as having " a fat, high-fed face," refuses Lovelace, who, much to her chagrin, takes no for an answer and transfers his attentions to the more attractive Clarissa. The brother Harlowe is a bitter enemy. Arabella joins forces with him, poisons the mind of the Harlowe family against Lovelace, and endeavours to force Clarissa into a marriage with the odious Mr. Solmes. How admirably Richardson presents Solmes to us : " His pockets are continually crammed with keys—and if it be wine, he always fetches it himself." What author in so few words ever better depicted a detes-

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table personality ? From that moment we are all against him. This plays into Lovelace's hands. Clarissa begins by allowing herself to be drawn into a secret correspondence. She persuades herself that it was in order to restrain his fiery nature from resenting " the indignities he received and were daily offered him." The duel between Lovelace and her brother makes the excuse plausible. Shrewd Anna Howe has a clearer vision and warns her.

" You are pleased to say—and upon your word too !—that your regards (a mighty quaint word for affection) are not so much engaged as some of your friends suppose to another person. How much, my dear ? Shall I infer ? Some of your friends suppose a great deal. You seem to own a little. . . .

" For a beginning Love is acted by a subtle spirit, and oftentimes discovers itself to a bystander when the person possessed (why should I not call it possessed ?) knows not it has such a demon ; and, further, you say what preferable favour you may have for him to any other person is owing more to the usage he has received and for your sake borne than to any personal consideration. This is generously said ; it is in character. But oh, my friend, depend upon it : you are in danger."

She was, but her more dangerous enemy was not Lovelace, but herself. Anna Howe, for all Lovelace's boasts, would have been assailed in vain. Clarissa's assumed sense of virtue led her into risks the nature of which she had not anticipated. In the crisis she hesitates and hardly realises why. She feels the sport of some impulse foreign, at any rate, to her experience, if not to her nature. The demon is at work. Her dual personality is at war with itself. Can she reconcile precept and practice ? Is she the saint of that unique combination ? She does not play with fire but she risks it. She places herself in a false situation which she thinks she has force to meet. She provokes a siege the garrison could have sustained except for

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

treachery from within. If this is the true Clarissa all the difficulties in the book disappear. It explains not merely her beginning, which is intelligible on other grounds, the clandestine correspondence but continuing it. Except upon this basis it is impossible to understand her meeting Lovelace at the gate. She believes she can confront him with security. When she meets him she has no intention of leaving, so she thinks. His device is a very shallow one, yet it turns the scale ; and before she quite realises what she is doing she has gone. How does Lovelace describe it ?

" Her emotions were more sweetly feminine after the first moments, for then the fire of her starry eyes began to sink into a less dazzling langour. She trembled : nor knew she how to support the agitations of a heart she had never found so ungovernable."

Then comes the reaction. She admits her rashness, and, as she says : " What moves me more is that he has as great a confidence in my weakness as I had in my own strength." This is the history of their lives. On the one side rashness, founded on principles admirable in themselves but in practice confused and crumbling. Her confident inexperience matched against the tactician of too many victories—the confidence of vicious experience. From that moment her fate is sealed; it is as inevitable as a Greek tragedy.

The incidents at Mrs. Sinclair's house have often been criticised as impossible. How, it is asked, was Lovelace able to keep in imprisonment a young lady of Clarissa's condition in the world ? The answer is very simple. Clarissa chose her lodging herself. It never occurs to her that she is walking into a trap set by Lovelace. The arrangement suits her mood. For a time reconciliation with her family is hopeless. At

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the same time, she does not wish to commit herself finally to marry Lovelace by taking refuge with his family. She is at once attracted by the man and repelled by the libertine. In her distraction she is not unwilling to stay where she is, marking time until the return of Colonel Morden may place her in a position of independence and safety. Having placed herself in a false position, she still is confident in her defensive. It is not until the incident of the fire that she realises not merely her lover's intentions, but her own danger in a crisis. For the first time this weakness reveals itself. Off her guard, against her judgment and inclination she is betrayed into showing feeling for the man. Faced with his most outrageous advances she appeals to him as " dear Lovelace," a point the libertine does not fail to note. Then comes the aftermath. In horror at a danger greater than Lovelace dreamed of, she escapes to Hampstead. He gets her back into his power by the basest of stratagems ; yet this device would have failed if Lovelace the man had been as repugnant to her as she thought. Even then somewhere in her mind an idea of reconciliation must have been lurking, or why did she play into his hands by consenting to put herself at last under the care of his pseudo-relations.

Unless this be the true reading of Clarissa's character many of her letters are mere hysteria. Why such distress at a rupture with a family who treated her so ill ? Why all this horror and remorse from a victim so innocent except that she felt there was something in her nature that, if not in any sense responsible for the tragedy, yet had helped to make it possible ? It will be remembered Lovelace drugs her, but it is doubtful

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

whether she becomes unconscious. In a terrible letter she writes : " I remember I pleaded for mercy., I remember that I said I would be his—indeed I would be his—to obtain his mercy "—just as her earlier appeal had been to " dear Lovelace." It is this haunting suspicion that makes her write to her mother—a mother who, with all her faults, was an affectionate mother—so remarkable a letter.

" Wherefore, on my knees, my ever-honoured mamma (for on my knees I write this letter), I do most humbly beg your blessing : say but in so many words (I ask you not, madam, to call me your daughter), ' Lost, unhappy wretch, I forgive you ! and may God bless you ! ' That is all."

This is not the intelligible language of an immaculate saint ; rather the morbid and overstrained expression of a self realised too late. She never forgives herself. It is the explanation of all her subsequent conduct. The humiliation makes any suggestion of marriage impossible. It is this that breaks her heart. She can forgive herself as little as Lovelace.

Richardson, who in almost every other relation of life was the embodiment of the complete bourgeois, could be the supreme artist on occasion. He saw the tragedy and saw it inevitable. Only a real artist could have resisted the pressure brought to bear. He complains :

" But how I have suffered by this from the cavils of some, from the prayers of others, from the entreaties of many more to make what is called a happy ending ! Mr. Lyttelton, the late Mr. Thomson [the distinguished poet of *The Seasons*'], Mr. Gibber, and Mr. Fielding have been among these."

It is interesting to note that Fielding, who ridiculed Pamela, respected Clarissa. *Joseph Andrews* may have had an effect OP *Clarissa Harlowe*. But Richard-

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son knew that a happy ending was impossible, and Clarissa dies. For a happy ending the whole story would have to be recast as a comedy. Lovelace, tired of his pursuit of Clarissa, should turn to Miss Howe for consolation. Anna, always bored with Hickman, should marry Lovelace. She would be quite equal to keeping him in order, and poetic justice would be satisfied with the disrating of the dashing Lothario to the henpecked husband. Hickman would console himself with Clarissa, to whom his serious nature and excellent principles would make a special appeal.

Richardson would have done it very well. It is a great mistake to think he had no humour. Miss Howe's letters are full of fun. Even when poor Clarissa is dying—and she takes a very long time about it, almost two volumes !—the gloom is relieved by the introduction of Mr. Brand. He is a clergyman worthy of Miss Austen ; in fact, he has a strong family resemblance to the excellent Mr. Collins. All his letters are excellent and display a real sense of comedy. But in the story of Clarissa, written as it is, no compromise would be sincere. It was artistic sincerity that made his works so popular in France. Diderot would not even admit that he was tedious. He defends him from this charge by the true defence for all time of Realism.

" They are commonplace," say you, this is what we see every day.' You are wrong; it is what happens every day before your eyes without your ever perceiving it. ... It is upon this multitude of little things that illusion depends : it is very difficult to imagine them ; it is harder still to reproduce them."

Whatever may be said against Richardson, he was the first and one of the greatest—come say the greatest

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

—of realists. **His** knowledge of the female heart was founded on experience. As a young man he used to write the love-letters for his female acquaintance, which was considerable.

" Young women, unknown to each other, having a high opinion of my taciturnity, revealed to me their love secrets, in order to induce me to give them copies to write after, or correct for answers to their lovers' letters ; nor did any of them ever know that I was the secretary to the others."

This may explain his women, and even the humour and charm of delightful Miss Howe. If only Clarissa could have taken her advice—married Lovelace and looked after the settlements ! Her personality is one of the most attractive of all women in fiction. The devotion of so human a girl to Clarissa was largely due to her perception of the real warmth of affection underlying her superficial austerity. All through she sees the danger. She is the only person in the book who understands the real Clarissa. Her warnings are in vain. Clarissa, though she fears her own nature, never realises it till too late ; it took another woman to do it.

Richardson's success with Lovelace is more remarkable. It was not an easy task. The conventional lady-killer of romance is apt to be a dull fellow; but with Lovelace one feels the attraction. With all his villainy, he is not wholly bad ; he strikes one as rather the spoilt child of his *bonnes fortunes*. The career of frightfulness against the sex in consequence of an early disappointment smacks of melodrama, and some of his stratagems seem rather far-fetched—as, for instance, the plan for revenge on Miss Howe, in which a yacht, the Isle of Wight, and a widowed aunt and combined

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in rich confusion. Nor is it easy to believe that any human being, even with a turn for intrigue and a substantial grievance against a "Quality jilt," would devote the time and trouble Lovelace does to his amours, and, what is even more astonishing, find a company of boon companions to assist him. His final crime was no part of his original design ; it is a gradual development, as inevitable to a man of Lovelace's temperament faced with the circumstances as Clarissa's fate to her. He drifts, if only too willingly, into villainy, as Clarissa drifts to disaster. The real moral that the author points is to show how far a man not wholly bad may be carried once he adventures on the slippery slope of passion. The effort to reconcile his action with some decent scheme of conduct makes Lovelace even worse than if he had been frankly amoral. He resents Belford's lack of sympathy and is always trying to win him back. "I am *not* the savage which you and my worst enemies think me," he protests. No rake was ever more firmly persuaded that he was a good fellow at bottom. His last phase is only provoked after discovering Miss Howe's scheme to rescue Clarissa with the assistance of Mrs. Townsend and the English Navy. There is a touch of pique in it. His remorse is genuine, as also his desire to make such amends as he can by marrying Clarissa. Indeed, marriage was always part of his scheme. The idea was ever present in his mind that he puts in one of his letters :

"But with all this dear creature's resentment against me, I cannot for my heart think but she will get all over and consent to enter the pale with me. . . . There is now but one man in the world whom she can have and that is me."

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

Marriage is to put it all right. **He** writes :

" What force have evil habits on the human mind ! When we enter on a devious course we think we shall have it in our power when we will to return to the right path. . . . How am I hurried away ? Canst thou tell me by what ? Oh, desire of youth and desire of intrigue, how do you mislead me ! How often do we end in occasions for the deepest remorse what we begin in wantonness.

" Such considerations as these they are that support me against all apprehension of bugbear consequences."

Here the man is obviously sincere. This was the train of thought that made such a crime as his possible in a man of a naturally generous mind—that and the innate idea that all such questions of sex are merely an entertaining game in which the stakes could be limited and defined. Richardson's defence of him has this substance. He is immoral but not amoral. His letters show him an admirable sophist: he makes the worse appear the better cause and half persuades himself, and is anxious to persuade himself. Originally he is quite prepared to marry Clarissa. The opposition, of the family and Clarissa's horror of his reputation arouse his pride. Then he is an artist in dalliance ; he prefers, as he says, the chase to the prize. When he tricks her into a quasi-elopement the practised libertine cannot shut his eyes to the possibilities of the situation. The very character of Clarissa makes the position one of engaging interest. His conscience is always satisfied with the reflection that he will marry her in the end. He even takes credit for his readiness to enter into an obligation so naturally distasteful to himself. His remorse is genuine; he is sincerely anxious to make such amends as he can : but with all his knowledge of women, he never understands Clarissa. The hoiror and remorse of such an innocent

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victim to him are unintelligible. To him she has always proved inaccessible. His vile triumph, he complains, was but partial, a mere physical success. To the end he never realises that her agony of mind is due to the fact that there were moments when to one side of her nature the man in Lovelace made a direct appeal. Her tragedy was less emotional than he had ever imagined. Just as to a man of Lovelace's character the original innocence of Clarissa was unintelligible, so is her later development. He writes to Belford :

" What a happy man had I been with such an excellence could I have brought my mind to marry when I first prevailed upon her to leave her father's house I but then I have often reflected, how had I known that about blossoming beauty who would carry on a private correspondence and run such risks with a notorious wild fellow was not prompted by inclination ? "

He is astounded at her horror of what he calls " a mere notional violation." " Why should her heart be broken ? " he writes in indignant protest. " She really makes too much of it, takes it too much to heart." " Dear over-nice soul," he calls her. He cannot understand that it is because the inclination was there that she can never forgive herself or him. It is a perverse nightmare to the voluptuary who regards his own way as a matter of course. For long he refuses to admit the possibility of her death :

" It comes as a surprise and terrible shock. Ever since the fatal 7th of this month I have been lost to myself and all the joys of life. . . . When, oh ! when shall I know a joyful hour ? "

is a cry from the heart of the sentimentalist faced with cruel fact. However he lived, it may be said in his favour he died like a gentleman. " The luck is yours,"

" *Clarissa Harlowe* "

he cried to Colonel Morden on receiving the fatal pass.
" Let this expiate " are his last words.

So ends the great book. A great book surely, not merely in a geometrical sense. It surely fulfils the test of the distinguished writer who has been mentioned already in connection with Richardson, Mr, Henry James :

" The success of a work of art to my mind may be measured by the degree to which it produces a certain illusion: that illusion makes it appear to us for the time that we have lived another life, that we have had a miraculous enlargement of experience."

A curious echo of Johnson's epitaph. For once " a lapidary inscription " might have been on oath.

EVELYN OF WOTTON

EVELYN'S *Diary* has always suffered in popular estimation by comparison with the less discreet intimacies of Pepys. It is only natural. The failings of poor human nature make better reading than its virtues, and indiscretion is the salt of reminiscence. How little is known of some of our greatest benefactors ! Few of those who have found a source of perpetual enjoyment in Pepys' *Diary* know even the name of the man to whose curious industry we owe all. The worthy representative of a great name, the Rev. John Smith, it was who devoted twelve to fourteen hours a day for three years to unravelling the cipher, that treacherous confidant, of the real Pepys. The ingenious decoder should have been made a bishop, or at least a dean, but was fobbed off with a country living in Hertfordshire, and even that preferment was only obtained from Lord Brougham by the Unitarian importunity of Miss Harriet Martineau.

Yet the comparison of Evelyn's stately record with the Rev. John Smith's discovery is unfair. The one is the more amusing because it is the more personal. The other is interesting—to many more interesting—but is never scandalous. In peaceful Wotton there were no secret chambers, but one may doubt whether Pepys would have been so entertaining if he had had any idea that his confessions would be published to the world. Candour in cipher is a much more possible virtue.

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Though not so voluminous, Evelyn's record covers a much longer period, from 1624 till 1706—the last entry is a few weeks before his death at the age of eighty-five. Pepys left off writing after nine delectable years, and, unfortunately, just at a moment when he had established his reputation by his brilliant speech in defence of the Navy Board before the House of Commons and the future was rich in promise. So merely from an historical point of view the austerer diarist has the advantage.

No two men could have been less alike—Evelyn, one of the great gentlemen of all time, the one man who would seem to realise to the full Aristotle's ideal of the perfect mean ; Pepys, the bourgeois, with all the good qualities, so numerous, and most of the faults, so venial, of the type. Both were successful, but Evelyn started at the top of the ladder and sat there, while Pepys had to climb its slippery rungs. Yet, oddly enough, had their positions been reversed, it may be doubted whether either would have done so well.

One can hardly picture the fastidious gentleman scheming and elbowing his way through the mob, while his friend's failings were precisely those which might have made him only one more ornament of a dissolute if agreeable Court.

What shocked Evelyn would have delighted Pepys. On the famous occasion when Evelyn, walking through St. James's Park with Charles II., "both saw and heard a very familiar discourse between the King and 'Mrs. Nellie,' as they called an impudent comedian, she looking out of her garden at the top of the Wall, and the King standing in the grass walk underneath it," Evelyn writes?," I was heartily sorry at the scene ";

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but it is to be feared that Pepys' regrets, had he been present, would rather have been that he was not in the royal shoes.

That the two should have been such good friends was enormously to the credit of them both. When Pepys dies, Evelyn writes : " This day died Mr. Sam Pepys, a very worthy, industrious and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the way in which he had passed, through all the most considerable offices, Clerk of the Acts, and Secretary of the Admiralty, all of which he performed with great integrity."

Those who are disposed to belittle Pepys should remember his loyalty, a very rare virtue of that, or, indeed, of any day. Evelyn tells us, " When King James II. went out of England, he laid down his office and would serve no more, but withdrawing himself from all public affairs, he lived at Clapham with his partner, Mr. Hewer, formerly his clerk, in a very noble house and sweete place, where he enjoyed the fruit of his labours in greater prosperity." One is glad to hear, " He was universally beloved, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skilled in music, a very great cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation." Only ill-health prevented Evelyn, who was then eighty-three, being one of the pall-bearers at the funeral.

One quality they both possessed in no small degree, and one invaluable to a diarist. They were both " curious persons." To Evelyn nothing came amiss, from a woman who had had twenty-five husbands, to the invention of the taximeter, then called a way-wiser (a much pleasanter name), which was attached to

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Mr. Blount's coach " exactly measuring the miles and showing them by an index as we went on." Nor is he above going to see the famous rope-dancer, " the Turk," and no one was more gratified when the ingenious Mohammedan stood on his head " on the top of a very high mast " ; and when he sees the hairy woman he takes care to learn that " she had one child that was not hairy, nor were any of her parents or relations." He gets Prince Rupert to show him how to grave in " Mezzo Tinte " ; Sir Kenelm Digby tries to convert him to the transmutation of metals, but is pronounced " an errant mountebank " for his pains. At the age of eighty-one he goes to see " a child-boy who had about the iris of one eye the letters of *Dens meus*, and of the other *Elohim*, in the Hebrew character. How this was done by artifice none could imagine, his parents affirming he was so born." This eye story seems more curious than credible, yet the Comtesse de Boigne, in the third volume of her entertaining *Memoirs*, tells us she saw in the year 1828 a little girl of two years old with bright blue eyes, of which " the iris was composed of little filaments forming white letters on a blue-black ground, placed round the pupil and making the words Napoleon Emperor.' The word Napoleon ' was equally distinct in either eye; the first letters of the word ' Emperor ' were indistinct in one eye, and the last letters in the other." And one should not forget his humorous account of Sir Richard Bulkeley's invention, the chariot that could not be upset, which, in spite of its stability, involved certain inconveniences, such as : " It would not contain more than one person : was ready to take fire every ten miles, and being¹ placed and playing on no fewer than

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ten rollers, it made a most prodigious noise, almost intplerable."

With all his accomplishments there was nothing of the pedant about Evelyn. His strong affections and his sense of humour kept him human under a load of virtues that would have made many another intolerable. Let us always remember that delightful picture of Evelyn given by Pepys after the news of Lord Sandwich's victory over the Dutch : " This news do so overjoy me that I knew not what to say enough to express it, but the better to do it I did walk to Greenwich, and there, sending away Mr. Andrews, I to Captain Cooke's," where among others he finds Evelyn. " The receipt of this newes did give us all into such an extasy of joy that it inspired to Sir J. Minnes and Mr. Evelyn such a spirit of mirth that in all my life I never met with so merry a two hours as our company this night was." Among other humours, Evelyn's contribution was " Repeating of some verses made up for nothing but the various acceptations of *may* and *can*, and doing it so aptly upon occasion of something of that nature and so fast, did make us all die almost with laughing," with the agreeable result that Pepys records this as being " one of the times of my life wherein I was fullest of true sense of joy "—and Pepys was a discerning hedonist.

A generous friend, Evelyn even went so far as to lend his books and manuscripts, with the usual results. A Scottish Duke borrowed many, and with the acquisitiveness of his race omitted to return them. Bishop Burnet, who ought to have known better, borrowed more for his *History of the Reformation*, and kept them on the pretence that they Lad been lost by

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the negligence of the printers ; others were borrowed by his friend Pepys, and, sad to relate, are now in the Pepysian Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge.

No one was more popular. He had friends in every camp. It was this, combined with a certain natural shrewdness, that enabled him to live serenely through a civil war, four troubled reigns, a restoration, a revolution, and die comfortably in his bed during the peaceful times of Queen Anne. One of the early entries made after his tour in the Netherlands relates how, on November 12th, 1642, at the Battle of Brentwood, he was on the King's side. Coming in " with my horse and armes just at the retreat, but was not permitted to stay longer than the 15th, by reason of the army marching to Gloucester, which would have left both me and my brothers exposed to ruine, without any advantage to His Majesty." That was his point of view. It was not ruin he minded so much as purposeless ruin. After all, there is no virtue in self-sacrifice if nothing can be gained by it, an obvious fact which is often forgotten in criticising the actions of others. His attitude to the great struggle was very much that of his contemporary, Selden. Both were politicians, both philosophers, but in each the philosopher outweighed the politician. " Wise men say nothing in dangerous times," either might have said. To both the vulgarity of strife was repellent. Each sought relief in the same way. Selden left public life, Evelyn left England.

While Evelyn was always a King's man, his loyalty was not of " the King right or wrong " sort. He records his sympathy with the deserted Strafford. " I beheld on Tower Hill the fatal stroke which

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severed the wisest head in England from the shoulders of- the Earl of Strafford." Of the Civil War he writes from time to time, the more securely, " nobody knowing of my having been in His Majesty's army." He describes such of the campaign as he saw with a detached air, and varies his military observation with a little quiet sightseeing. " I went to Chichester and home the next day to see the siege of Portsmouth, for now was that bloody difference between the King and Parliament broken out which ended in the fatal tragedy so many years after." And then : " From thence I went to South'ton and Winchester, where I visited the castle, school, church and King Arthur's Round Table, but especially the church and its Saxon Kings' Monuments, which I esteem a worthy antiquity." This is hardly the language or conduct of a fanatical Royalist. One gathers he is not sorry to be out of it. " I went to London, where I saw the furious and jealous people demolish that stately crosse in Cheapside."

To this he prefers the peace of Wotton, where he finds " agreeable distraction. Resolved to possess myself in some quiet if it might be, in a time of so great jealousy, I built by my brother's permission a study, made a fishpond, an island and some other solitudes and retirements at Wotton." Still, he sent his black *manege* horse and furniture to " His Majesty, then at Oxford " ; but to be just to Evelyn, his attitude was not due to prudence so much as disapproval of the King's policy. But, at the same time, he had no sympathy with the other side. Travel seems the best escape from the dilemma. At home it became every day more difficult to avoid being drawn into one of the

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two parties, with neither of which was he in full sympathy. So, "The covenant being pressed,, I absented myself, but finding it impossible to evade the doing very unhandsome things, and which had been a great cause of my perpetual motions hitherto between Wotton and London, I obtained a license of His Majesty, dated at Oxford and signed by the King, to travell again."

Evelyn's whole attitude towards the Civil War throws a curious light upon the history of the period. The struggle as revealed in the *Diary* seems to have been much less general and far less strenuous than one is apt to suppose. People come and go and live their lives very much as usual, apart from the actual fighters, and even they are only intermittently combative. The whole business strikes one as being more an affair of politicians than a national contest. The horror at the execution of the King would appear to have arisen less from the actual execution than from a feeling that so drastic an act was out of proportion to the necessities of the case. This view must have appealed to a nicely balanced mind like Evelyn's, and he exchanged without regret the interests of travel, which were absorbing to a man of his temperament, for the turmoil and distraction of a contest in which his sympathy and judgment were divided. An unkindly critic might call him a Trimmer; but he would have been fairly entitled to have followed Halifax's example and claimed it as a title of honour, adopting his famous defence: "Everything good turns between extremes ; the temperate zone turns between the climate in which men are roasted and that in which they are frozen. The English Church turns between

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the Anabaptist Madness and Papist Lethargy—the English Constitution turns between Turkish Despotism and Polish Anarchy. Virtue is nothing but a just temper between propensities, any one of which, if indulged to excess, becomes vice." The Whig historian's summing up of Halifax's character contained much that might have been written of Evelyn : " His taste refined, his sense of the ludicrous exquisite, his temper placid and forgiving but fastidious, and by no means prone either to malevolence or to enthusiastic admiration," gives us the very man.

So Evelyn went on his travels, and if the Stuarts lost for the moment a supporter, the world gained for all time an account intimate and fascinating of the Europe of the day. He was away four years, and no traveller ever made better use of his time. He describes himself as " very pragmatICAL," and like a wise man does not disdain the aid of a " sightsman "—" for so they name certain persons here who get their living by leading strangers about to see the city "—and sees all there is to see. His powers of description are remarkable, and have the great quality of making the reader wish he were there. He voyages from Cannes, then " a small port on the Mediterranean, touching at the islands of St. Margaret and St. Honore by Antibes and Nice, and lying the night in Monaco harbour and sailing by Menton and Vintimiglia past St. Remo, with Corsica just in view." Near Genoa they encountered bad weather and were nearly shipwrecked, until, " as we were weary with pumping and laving out the water, almost sinking, it pleased God on a suddaine to appease the wind, and with much ado and great peril we recovered the shore . . . from waence, the wind

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blowing as it did, might perfectly be smelt the joys of Italy in the perfume of orange, citron and jasmine flowers for divers leagues seaward."

Such was his introduction to Italy, and its joys never pall. Naples, Pisa, Rome, Florence, Vicenza—" This sweete Towne "—all held him fascinated. At Venice he sees the Doge " cast a gold ring deep into the sea " on Ascension Day ; " the desire of seeing this was one of the reasons which hastened us from Rome." What could be better than his picture of the Merceria, " which is one of the most delicious streets in the world for the sweetness of it " ?—and after describing the richness of its shops, to this add the perfume, apothecaries' shops and the innumerable cages of nightingales which they keep, " which entertain you with their melody from shop to shop, so that, shutting your eyes, you would imagine yourself in the country when indeede you are in the middle of the sea." It was before the penny steamers took the place of the nightingales. " It is almost as silent as the middle of a field, there being neither rattling of coaches nor trampling of horses." Amidst all the distractions of Venice he does not omit to notice the dress of the women and their high heels, so difficult to walk on that he suggests they were invented to keep them at home.

In everything we find the real spirit of the born traveller. One can only regret he is cheated of a visit to the Holy Land. " There being at this time a ship bound for the Holy Land I had resolved to embark, intending to see Jerusalem and other parts of Syria, Egypt and Turkey; but after I had provided all necessaries, laid in snow to cool our drink, brought some sheepe, poultry, biscuits, spirits and a little

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cabinet of druggs in case of sickness," this vessel was cojnmandeered by the State, " which altogether frustrated my design, to my very great mortification." At last the time arrives for his return, and he comes home by Milan in company with the poet Waller and one Captain Wray, " a good drinking gentleman," and a Mr. Abdy, " a modest and learned man."

At Milan they are a little nervous about the Inquisition. A tragedy does happen, but not of any theological significance. A Scotch colonel, of some position in the city, had the agreeable habit of asking, in spite of his nationality, all English travellers to dinner, whether he knew them or not. Seeing Evelyn and his friends, he sends his servant with the usual invitation, and an unfortunate result. " We had a sumptuous dinner, and the wine was so tempting that after some healths had gone about and we had risen from the table," the host insists on showing his stable of horses and riding one himself. In the result the horse rears and crushes the poor colonel, " a little spirited with wine " but still sitting him " like a centaur," against the wall. The next morning they find him " in very sad condition—an Irish Friar standing by his bed as confessing him, and other ceremonies used *in extremis*, for we afterwards learned that the gentleman was a Protestant, and had this Friar his confidant, which was a dangerous thing at Milan, had it been but suspected." But the poor colonel, whose name we never learn, was beyond the reach even of the Inquisition. " At our entrance he sighed grievously and held up his hands, but was not able to speake. After vomiting some blood, he kindly took us all by the hand and made sign he should see us no more, which made

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us take our leave of him with extreme reluctancy and affliction for the accident."

To the travellers, " the Inquisition being so cruelly formidable and inevitable on the least suspicion," it seemed prudent to move on. " The next morning therefore, discharging our lodgings, we agreed for a coach to carry us to the foote of the Alps, not a little concerned for the death of the colonel, which we now heard of, and who had so courteously entertained us." The Alps strike Evelyn as " strange, horrid and fearful craggs and tracts." Captain Wray was the troublesome member of the party. His dog, " a huge filthy cur, which had followed him out of England," hunts the goats and nearly gets them lynched by the peasants. His horse, which carried all their baggage, falls down the mountain-side, and his company was generally distasteful, as his father had been " in arms against His Majesty for the Parliament," but fortunately, at Geneva he falls in love with the landlord's daughter and remains in dalliance at that agreeable town.

A similar fate awaits Evelyn in Paris. He contracts a great friendship with Sir Richard Browne, His Majesty's resident at the Court of France, and sets his affections on a daughter, whom he subsequently married and lived happily with so long. In October, 1647, he returns to England to look after his private affairs. He bears the misfortunes of the King with philosophy. Distressed as he is at the execution of Charles, he writes of it with a curious aloofness. " The villanies of the rebels proceeding now so far as to trie, condemne and murder our excellent King on the 30th of this month struck me with such horror that I kept the day of his martyrdom a fast, and would not

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be present at that execrable wickednesse." Attending executions in these days appears to have been almost as much a pastime as attending funerals with some to-day. Evelyn seems to expect credit for his absence, but he is quite interested to hear "the sad account of it from my brother George and Mr. Owen, who came to visit me this afternoon, and recounted all the circumstances," and when he returns to Paris to see his wife, he is not above getting a pass "from the Rebell Bradshaw, then in greate power," although he describes him elsewhere as "that villain Bradshaw who condemned the King."

In 1652 he returns to England, and arranges with the help of Colonel Morley, an old school-friend, for his wife to join him. Apart from politics, England had its perils. When his wife lands, "being somewhat discomposed by having been so long at sea," she rests at "Tunbridge," while her husband travels on to prepare for her home-coming. Near Bromley, "riding negligently under favour of the shade," Evelyn is attacked by two cut-throats, tied to a tree and robbed. Fortunately, he had not much money with him, but what seems especially to have annoyed him was that his misfortune was due to his abandoning for once in his life the middle way. "I told them that if they had not so basely surprised me, they should not have had so easy a prize, and that it would teach me never to ride near a hedge, since, had I been in the midway, they durst not have adventured on me."

After the robbers leave him, Evelyn manages to unbind himself and continues his journey on his horse, which they had left him, as it "was marked and cropt on both ears and well known on that roade." With

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great good luck most of his property is recovered and the worst of the two villains is caught some two months afterwards. The kindly Evelyn was not anxious to prosecute : " I was summoned to appeare against him, and on the 12th was in Westminster Hall, but not being bound over or willing to hang the fellow, I did not appeare." In the meantime Evelyn received a petition for mercy from the father, " who was an honest old farmer in Kent." The criminal, however, was charged with other crimes and condemned, but for some unknown reason reprieved. But he was afterwards charged with some other crime, " but refusing to plead was *pressed* to death." So in the interval one assumes he had succeeded to the honest old farmer's estate in Kent. Although he saved this for his heirs and assigns, he deserved all he got, as Evelyn learnt that if it had not been for his companion, a younger man, the highwayman would not have spared our Diarist.

Once at home, until the Restoration he lives the life of a country gentleman, writing books and visiting his friends. Children are born to him—the affectionate nature of the man is revealed by the entry relating to the death of " my deare son Richard." He describes him " at that tender age a prodigy for wit and understanding, for beauty of body a very angel, for endowment of mind of incredible and rare hopes." This was not the mere partiality of a father, for at the age of two and a half we are told " he could perfectly read any of the English, Latin, french, or Gothic letters, pronouncing the three first languages exactly." At five " he had a strange passion for Greek," and wept when he was told that Plautus was too difficult for

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him, besides having a "wonderful disposition to mathematics" and yet "all life, all prettiness," and in despair he concludes the entry : "Here ends the joy of my life, for which I go ever mourning to his grave." Years afterwards he writes with equal feeling about the loss of his daughter Mary, who seems to have been no less gifted, but with all her accomplishments he recalls "Nothing was so pretty as her descending to play with little children, whom she would caress and humour with great delight." During the Protectorate there seems to be no doubt Evelyn was communicating with Charles, but with no definite idea of a restoration.

It is remarkable how undisturbed his existence was. Even when he is arrested with others on Christmas Day at Exeter Chapel for observing "the superstitious time of the Nativity," Evelyn, after being examined by Colonel Whaly, Goffe, and others from Whitehall, is allowed to go free, though "some they committed to the Marshall, some to prison."

He must have been well thought of by those in power. They were anxious to employ him in the public service. He was "summoned to London by the Commissioners of Sewers" : but "because there was an oath to be taken of fidelity to the Government as now constituted without a King, I got to be excused and returned home." Two days afterwards he sees "the superb funerals of the Protector," but with all its pomp, to Evelyn "It was the joyfulest funeral I ever saw, for there were none that cried but dogs." Once more he finds the nation "in extreme confusion and unsettled between the armies and the secretaries," so much so that he develops a scheme of a philosophical and

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mathematical college, in which people of reasonable minds are to find an intelligent retreat from a turbulent world. But events were moving quickly: on November 7th we find him publishing "my bold apologie for the King in this time of danger, when it was capital to speake or write in favour of him." Two editions were published, and on December loth he is approaching Colonel Morley, then Lieutenant of the Tower, and "in greate trust and power," to declare for the King. Colonel Morley prefers to "wait and see," leaving the matter to General Monk. In consequence, when Charles arrives the poor Colonel has to approach Evelyn with a view to obtaining a pardon. "I addressed him Lord Mordaunt, then in greate favour, for his pardon, which he obtained at the cost of .£1,000 as I heard. O the sottish omission of this gentleman ! what did I not undergo of danger in this negotiation to have brought him over to His Majesty's interest while it was entirely in his hands !"

Evelyn himself was in high favour at the new Court, not merely for his past services, which, as strenuous people are often apt to forget, were none the less valuable because they were discreet, but for himself. Charles was far too intelligent not to appreciate Evelyn's qualities. He is offered a commission, but accepts the more congenial position of a nomination as a Fellow of the Royal Society. Here his fertile and ingenious mind was of invaluable service. Nothing comes anr'ss to him—the anatomy of trees, how to cure fogs, garden architecture, the art of engraving, and a manual on dress. By his *Sylva* he placed us under a perpetual obligation by giving an enormous stimulus to the planting of timber in

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England. He was one of the commissioners to take care of the wounded in the Dutch War, and, like his friend Pepys, was not frightened from his duties by the plague.

In the midst of all these arduous labours he has time to discover Grinling Gibbons—"By mere accident, as I was walking neare a poore solitary thatched house in a field in our parish near Sayes Court—I found him shut in, but looking in at the window I perceived him carving that large cartoon or crucifix of Tintoretto." He tells Evelyn he lives this life in order to be able to work without interruption. He asks £100 for the cartoon, which contained over 100 figures, with a frame which his discoverer claims to be alone "worth the money, there being nothing in nature so tender and delicate as the flowers and festoons about it." Evelyn introduces him to Charles, and the Crucifixion is brought to Whitehall. Charles, with the good taste of the Stuarts, is much pleased with the work, and shows it to the Queen, who would have bought it, only after Charles had gone "a French peddling woman, one Mad. de Boord, who used to bring petticoates and fans and baubles out of France to the Ladys, began to find fault with several things in the works, which she understood no more than an asse or a monkey." Such are the ways of women. So the artist has to sell his work elsewhere for £80 ; but Sir Christopher Wren, then "His Majesty's Surveyor, Mr. Wren," promises to employ him and all is well.

Evelyn liked Charles—he describes him "debonnaire nor bloody nor cruel." His faults he reluctantly recalls in the famous passage, "I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming and all

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dissoluteness, and as it were total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening), which this day se'night I was witnesse of, the King sitting and toying with his concubines Portsmouth and Cleaveland and Mazarine, etc., and a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about twenty of the greate courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Bassett round a large table, a bank of at least .£2,000 in gold before them. . . . Six days after, all was in the dust! "

Evelyn thought James " a most sincere and honest nature, one on whose word one may rely, and that he makes a concern of what he promises to perform it," and hoped " that the Church of England may yet subsist." But it is not long before he is writing : " Much discourse that all the White Staff Officers and others should be dismissed for adhering to their religion. Popish justices of the peace established in all counties of the meanest of the people ; judges ignorant of the Law and perverting it, so furiously do the Jesuits drive, and even compel Princes to violent crimes and destruction of an excellent Government both in Church and State."

The account of the final downfall of James is a marvel of conciseness :

" 1688, June loth. A young prince born, which will cause disputes."

" 18th. Being the 1st day of term, the Bishops are brought to Westminster." The case is adjourned till the agth.

" 29th. They appeared : the trial lasted from nine in the morning till past six in the evening, when the jury retired to consider of their verdict and the Court

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adjourned till nine the next morning. The jury were locked up till that time, eleven of them being for an acquittal, but one (Arnold, a Brewer) would not consent. At length he agreed with the others. The Chief Justice Bright behaved with great moderation and civility to the Bishops. Alibone, a Papist, was strongly against them, but Holloway and Powell being of opinion in their favour, they were acquitted."

This entry is significant : " 2nd July. The two Judges Holloway and Powell were displaced." " 10th Aug. Dr. Tenison now told me there would suddenly be some greate thing discovered. This was the Prince of Orange intending to come over." Soon the people " are praying incessantly for an E. wind," while we see " the Jesuits hard at work to ferment confusion among the Protestants by their usual tricks." Evelyn writes a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury putting him on his guard. The Prince of Orange lands, and soon afterwards Evelyn sees " the King take barge to Gravesend at twelve o'clock, a sad sight. The Prince comes to St. James' and fills Whitehall with Dutch Guards."

Under William his most serious trouble was the result of having Peter the Great as a tenant. Poor Evelyn had let Sayes Court to Admiral Benbow, who, going to sea, sublet to the Czar, who was anxious to be near Deptford in order to study shipbuilding, but he was not a very desirable tenant. Evelyn's servant writes : " There is a house full of people and right nasty. The Czar lies next your Library and dines in the Parlour next your study. He dines at ten o'clock and six at night, is very seldom at home a whole day, very often in the King's Yard or by water, dressed in

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several dresses. The King is expecting them this day; the best parlour is *pretty* clean for him to be entertained in." Fortunately "the King pays for all he has," and eventually paid Evelyn £162 for dilapidations.

The *Diary* continues into the reign of Anne. To the last he keeps his interest in men and things, and his sense of friends and family. Almost the last entry is January 1st, 1706: "Divers of our friends and relations dined with us this day"—maintaining to the end the style of genial kindliness.

The *Diary* is one long lesson in the art of life by a supreme master. Well may Cardinal Grandison have said to Lothair, "Mr. Evelyn had a most accomplished mind; indeed, a character in every respect that approached perfection. He was *also* a most religious man"—a delightful Dizzy touch.

If his philosophy found it—

"Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis
E Terra Magnum, alterius spectare laborem,"

it was for the same reason as the poet:

"Non quia vexari quemquam est jucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis curear quia cernere suave est"

ST. SIMON

PROFESSOR SEELEY was no doubt right when he said the study of history should be scientific, and its object "not merely to gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present and his forecast of the future." Admirable though this theory may be, to many of us it may seem a counsel of perfection.

It is on record that Mr. Thackeray, when at work on *The Virginians*, the first volume of which is one of his most delightful efforts, went to the British Museum to seek material for his study of General Wolfe. "I don't want," he is reputed to have said, "volumes about his campaigns; I want something that will tell us whether he wore red breeches or not." There spoke the literary epicure. It is what we all want, if we were honest enough to say so. It is a pity the great historian of snobs never devoted his attention to one of its most subtle forms. There is no snob like the literary snob, and his self-imposed mission is to prevent plain folk reading what amuses them.

That there is some mysterious virtue in being seriously unreadable is his simple creed. The dignity of history is apt to become its pomposity, and is preserved only too often by ignoring its human side. This is what historical memoirs give us, and makes their reading most adapted for those of riper years.

For the young, if you please, the careless rapture of the novel, but for those who have seen something,

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at any rate, of what life is, the interest still remains of learning not merely what it was, but how it actually was lived. At this business of memoir-writing the French do much better than ourselves. National character is on their side. The shyness and reticence of our lives dull their record. Even Pepys had to disguise his agreeable qualities in a cypher. It was a long time before we were grudgingly allowed to enjoy a frankness still tempered by asterisks.

In what dismal volumes of reminiscence Bishops and Chief Justices reveal their virtues to a yawning world ! If only they would write a book for a change about what they have forgotten, what much better reading we should find. The French life and the French character, on the other hand, form a virtuous circle. They react favourably on each other. The gaiety and *sans gene* of the French character give the requisite qualifications for the task, while the intimate and frank conditions of their life provide the subject-matter ready to hand.

Then there is another reason. A novel is nothing without a heroine. Even *Vanity Fair* could only dispense with a hero. So memoirs are nothing without women. It is the female interest that makes French records so human and alive. In English history the influence of women has been nil. While this explains our national stability, it makes the story of it rather dull reading.

The interest of the *Du de St. Simon's* volumes is not surprising. No man has ever had so many of the qualifications for the task. Great intellectual powers, an independent mind, a mordant humour, and an intimate knowledge of the greatest Court of all time,

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were his. Many have possessed one or other of the gifts, some all; but St. Simon not merely possessed all these qualifications for the task, but added to them the even rarer one of indefatigable industry. His work is the record of events written at the time, and it has all the value of contemporary record. He begins his diaries in 1694 while in camp in Germany, and to add to and complete them was his pleasure for sixty years. He was no easy writer, amusing himself in old age with haphazard recollections of his youth. He garners his material day by day during his active life, and when grown old, in his rural retreat he arranges and re-arranges his material and shapes the mass into a coherent form. His character at first sight might seem a disqualification. St. Simon was a virtuous man in a dissolute age. Moral and religious, with an instinctive liking for an honest man.

So far from making his memoirs dull, those qualities add to their interest. A more vicious man might have written a duller book. To an ordinary man about the great Court, incidents that St. Simon examines with a detached and almost scientific interest would have seemed so much the obvious routine of a gentleman's life as to have been unworthy of serious attention.

The Cardinal Dubois was a much worse man than St. Simon, but his *Memoirs* are not nearly such good reading, even if they are genuine, which many doubt.

St. Simon's outlook on life was essentially aristocratic. He is responsible for the immortal story of the French nobleman who was sure that God would think twice before damning a person of his quality.

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St. Simon tells it as a joke, but one fancies in his heart of hearts he thought there was something in it. His view of aristocracy was rather that of the great political families of England. That the Government of the country was their especial duty and privilege was a proposition that to St. Simon admitted of no doubt, a view based upon the sincere belief that it was also the best form of government for the country concerned. He had no sympathy with the pleasure-seeking and dissolute nobles of the time. His affection and respect for the Regent is due to the fact that with all the Regent's faults he was a man of remarkable intellect and an admirable Minister when he gave his mind to affairs of State. We may perhaps be forgiven for preferring his judgment to St. Simon's, for his policy, against the latter's wishes, was strongly pro-English. The Regent was liberal and tolerant, with the religious tolerance of the sceptic ; St. Simon, aristocratic and anti-Huguenot, less upon religious than political grounds, for his views on the Jesuits are pungently expressed in his study of Pere Tellier. Yet both had the same aim in view—the restoration of prosperity to France, shaken by the wars and waste of life incidental to the enacting of a great King's part on the world's stage.

The Due d'Orleans was spoilt, as a ruler, as much by his virtue as his vices. Whereas despots often refuse to say " Yes," the Regent could not say " No." He could hardly deny any one anything, not even himself. No one knew Dubois was a rascal better than his patron. One of his first acts as Regent was to promise his mother solemnly not to employ him in any capacity, but Dubois, intimate and persistent, becomes Arch-

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bishop, Cardinal, Prime Minister in easy succession, and as St. Simon says of Dubois :

"He never lost sight of his Prince, whose great gifts he perceived and whose great defects he knew so well how to put to profit."

In one of those arresting summaries with which the *Memoirs* are enriched, Dubois is described :

" His mind was very ordinary, his knowledge most common, his capacity nil. His appearance that of a ferret and a blackguard, and his utterances disagreeable, jerky, always hesitating ; his falseness was written in his face, his morals, unrestrained, could not be hidden."

Even if he was pro-English like his master, this can hardly be counted to him for virtue if, as St. Simon asserts, he was well paid by the English Government for his sympathy. " But you are damnable, and where is the other damned fellow who would consecrate you ? " was the Regent's view of Dubois as an Archbishop, which has an odd flavour of Lord Melbourne. " Oh ! " said the Abbe, " if that's all, the thing is done," and done it was.

In the early morning the poor Prince was at the mercy of his visitors, and as " they could make him agree to anything they wished, and sign anything even to his own injury," not unnaturally he had a good many. " This was largely the fruit of the suppers " in the Palais Royal. As a recent historian puts it: " He was as intemperate in his private life as he was temperate in his statesmanship." The poor Regent was too sleepy to understand and too crapulous to be bothered. Still, the Regent's good nature was not merely the easy good nature of the Egotist. He was at heart a kind and magnanimous man. One of his first acts was to release all the political prisoners from the Bastille. One victim had been imprisoned for

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thirty-five years. No one knew why. It was generally thought he had been sent there by mistake. When given his liberty he refused to take it, and was finally allowed to live there, and given food and lodging and as much liberty as he wanted.

He continued Madame de Maintenon's allowance and offered to increase it, knowing as he did she was his worst enemy, who was responsible for the codicil to the King's will, which, if upheld, would have destroyed his power and put him at the mercy of the Due de Maine ; and it was not only the tolerance of the sceptic which made him endeavour to improve the position of the Huguenots. For an indolent man he worked hard. All his convalescent morning was given up to public business, and his working day lasted till five ; but nothing was allowed to interfere with his suppers at the Palais Royal.

" The moment the hour came for their supper to begin, all was so barricaded against the outside world that no business could enter, and it was useless to try and reach the Regent."

Then " the company drank, grew heated, and said vile things at the top of their voices, and when they had made a great deal of noise and were dead drunk, they went to bed, and began it all over again the next day." St. Simon notes that even in his drunken moments no one ever learned anything from him, whether of much or little importance " about the Government or State affairs."

Fond as St. Simon was of the Regent, this was not his world. He pathetically tells us of his failure to make the Regent lead a respectable life, at any rate during Lent, but it was not to be. And the Regent was cruel enough to pretend to humour him, and then

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make fun of his efforts; but St. Simon takes it very well. There was a great deal to be said for St. Simon's view that a government by a strong King through, and assisted by, a responsible aristocracy was the best government for his country in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Democracy would have come in due time. St. Simon's prejudices against popular government were strong, but were based less on pride of birth than contempt of ignorance. It may be that if St. Simon's advice had been taken and the States-General called together on the death of Louis XIV. to consider the financial position of France, the Revolution might have been averted. What failed in 1790 might have succeeded in 1716. France was still loyal. The accession of the young King was hailed with acclamation. Until 1744 Louis was still *bien aime*.

It is clear from the *Memoirs* that the Due de Burgoyne was the man upon whom St. Simon relied to save the situation. If he had lived, the whole history of Europe might have been different. His theory of government that "a King is made for his subjects and not his subjects for him," must have seemed very revolutionary to the courtiers at Marly.

But St. Simon says :

" This grand and sacred maxim was so impressed upon his soul that luxury and even war were odious to him."

At his death—

" The consternation was real and general. It reached foreign court and nations, while the people wept for one who thought for their relief, and all France mourned a ruler who wished to reign solely to make her happy and prosperous. The sovereigns of Europe publicly deplored the loss of a Prince whom they regarded already as an example whose virtues would have made him their arbitrator and the revered and pacific moderator of the nations"

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Lecky, in pointing out the effects of accidents in history (a fascinating theory he discusses in the first volume of his *England in the Eighteenth Century*), certainly adopts this view.

" Even the changes of the French Revolution, prepared as they undoubtedly were by a long train of irresistible causes, might have worn a wholly different complexion had the Duke of Burgundy succeeded Louis XIV., and directed with the intelligence and the liberality that were generally expected from the pupil of Fenelon the government of his country."

As he points out :

" Profound and searching changes in the institutions of France were inevitable, but had they been effected peacefully, legally and gradually, and had the shameless scenes of the Regency and of Louis XV. been avoided, that frenzy which has been the most destructive product of the Revolution, and which has passed almost like a new religion into European life, might never have arisen, and the whole Napoleonic Episode, with its innumerable consequences, would never have occurred."

Words not without their lesson for the extremists of to-day.

Even the Regent, if he had had as much character as brains, might have been the man to do it. His early training and surroundings were too strong for him. The reckless mode of life, begun as a protest against a distasteful marriage into which he was forced by the illegitimate vanity of Louis XIV., became habitual. The corrupt aristocracy could lend no help. It had been the deliberate policy of Louis XIV. to destroy its political influence. There was this excuse for his theory of "*Uetat c'est moi*" that he had grown up in a France distracted by the civil wars of his turbulent nobles. Unfortunately, this policy inclined the King to adopt Madame de Maintenon's scheme for advancing* the position of his natural

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children, and so strike an insidious blow at the influence of the great families. Her curious infatuation for the Due de Maine made her encourage the King in every advancement of his bastards, as St. Simon preferred to call them, at the expense of the old nobility, and culminated in the codicil to the will which deprived the Regent of all power and placed him at the mercy of the Prince's faction. The Due d'Orleans' firm action in setting this on one side and reasserting his constitutional position was largely due to the admirable counsel of St. Simon.

St. Simon's greatest triumph was when at the Lit de Justice, the summoning of which he had supported himself, he heard the French nobles replaced in precedence over the King's natural children. His joy is almost ferocious.

"I meanwhile was fainting with joy. I even feared I might give way. My heart dilated to excess, could find no space to expand in. The violence that I did myself in order to let nothing escape me [*i.e.*, the discomfiture of his adversaries] was great, and yet this torture was delicious. I compared the years of our servitude when dragged into Parliament as victims we had many a time swelled the triumph of the bastards. I recalled the divers degrees by which they had mounted to their zenith on our heads. I compared these things with this day of law and justice. I thanked myself that it had been through me it was effected. I considered the radiant splendour of this hour in the presence of the King and that august assembly. I triumphed, I was avenged. I swam in my vengeance. I rejoiced in the full accomplishment of this most vehement and continued desire of my whole life."

The Lit de Justice was concerned with other matters. The intrigues of Parliament, fomented by the Due de Maine's party, the control of the young King's education, and, incidentally, according to St. Simon, the rescue of Law of the Mississippi bubble from being hanged. It was an ill jaoment for France

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when the Regent called in Law to restore its finances. Law seems to have been the eternal type of financier. His scheme was the simple one of issuing paper against credit instead of specie. As long as his credit lasted every one was rich. The boom was prodigious. The street in which the Mississippi bubble was blown had to be guarded by troops, so great was the press.

As St. Simon says :

" All heads were turned. Foreigners envied our luck and tried in every way to obtain a share in it. The English, so able and consummate in banks, companies and commerce, were taken in."

St. Simon, although he confesses his ignorance of finance, always suspected Law. His common sense refused to believe you could get something for nothing. Parliament, urged more by jealousy of the Court than financial austerity, passed the decree placing the whole of Law's Bank under its control, and placing Law himself in great peril. But even Law's finance was better to St. Simon than popular control. St. Simon was wise enough to see that if the States-General had been called in at the beginning of the reign to consider the question of the finances, whatever the result, the responsibility would have been shifted from the Regent, and much unpopularity spared the Court. It would have been a national and not personal responsibility.

As it was, the Regent preferred the fantastic schemes of Law, and the easy-going *rout*—if extravagant, never avaricious—became identified in the public mind as the author of the inevitable disaster. St. Simon, although he mistrusted his schemes, liked Law and thought him honest. Like all his kind, an extra-

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vagant optimist or a gambler, which, after all, is merely an optimist in action.

" Whatever Law's system was, he himself had the best faith in it. His personal interests never mastered him. He was true and simple."

So says St. Simon. Even when Law fled to Venice after the crash he writes :

" There was no avarice and no knavery in his make-up. He was a gentle, kind, respectful man, whom inordinate influence and fortune had never spoiled."

St. Simon gave an unsparing picture of Louis XIV. He sees him very clearly. A sentimentalist:

" Never man so tender to tears, nor so difficult to afflict, nor so quick to restore to his normal condition."

He resents the Duchesse de Burgoyne being confined because it interferes with his plans so crudely, that it surprises even the courtiers, but not St. Simon, who had " long discovered that the King loved and cared for no one but himself, and was for himself only till his dying day." When she died under such tragic circumstances, in spite of his real affection for her, before she was buried " he re-established his games in Mme. de Maintenon's apartment, wished the Salon to be as usual, and ordered the Due and Duchesse de Berry to hold public receptions and parties, with tables for different games for the whole Court! " When his various mistresses pass out of his life his interest in them ceases automatically. For him they existed merely in relation to himself. La Valliere lingers forgotten in her convent. He refuses to go and see the dying Madame de Fontanges. " Ah ! indeed, so the Marchioness is dead. I should have thought she would have lasted longer. Are you ready, M. de la Roche-

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foucauld ? I have no doubt after this shower the scent will be better. Let us start at once," was the royal comment upon Madame de Montespan's death.

The danger of a country being at the mercy of a sentimentalist, whose tears flow so easily, was shown by his promise to the dying James II., in spite of the Peace of Ryswick, to recognise his son as King of England, news of which was at once followed by the great alliance against France and Spain, and ultimately by his most disastrous war.

Unlike the Regent, Louis had plenty of character, but little intellectual power.

"His mind beneath mediocrity, but very capable of improving itself."

Owing to the deliberate policy of Mazarin and Anne of Austria, "he was scarcely taught to read or write," and he remained ever after so ignorant that "he never knew the best-known facts of history." In consequence, easily influenced, and obstinate when influenced. Flattery pleased him to such a degree that "the coarsest was well received, the basest with much relish." In fact, "it was only in this way that anything ever reached him."

We are told so often that democracies cannot make war ; it is comforting to read of the latter portion of his reign :

"Overwhelmed without by foreign enemies who played upon his impotence, for they saw it was helpless, and scoffed at his past glory. He found himself without resources, without ministers, without generals, because he had made and sustained them from pure liking and fancy and from the fatal vanity of choosing and training them himself."

Yet somehow through it all we get a picture of a great gentleman. ".Never," says St. Simon, "was a

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man so naturally polite," and his politeness was not merely formal. With what gracious dignity is marked his treatment of James II., who must have been a somewhat tedious beneficiary. We hear that when James II. and his Queen were at Fontainebleau with Louis, when the news came of the signing of the Peace of Ryswick, which put an end to their hopes by the recognition of the Prince of Orange, the King gave special instructions that the news should not be brought him if he were with them, and that there should be no peace rejoicing until their departure. It is true, as Thackeray points out, what is an ordinary act of duty in a citizen becomes a wonderful virtue in a King.

Louis throwing his cane out of the window "because he cannot strike a gentleman," who, in the person of Lauzan, was only asking him to keep his royal word, asking the old Prince de Conde not to fyurry because "one who has to carry so many laurels cannot walk fast," consoling a defeated General by reminding him : "*On n'est plus heureux a noire age*" may in judging the monarch be an inadequate answer to the ruin of his country, but in judging the man the test is different. There is a fine graciousness about it all.

St. Simon, disheartened in his efforts by Court intrigues, the opposition of affected interests, and the impossibility of getting the real facts to the ruling power, somewhere declares it is impossible ever to do any good in the world, but he admits if you could get at Louis he showed a spirit of equity, a desire to know the truth, and this even though he might be angry. "It was so to the end of his life." Consequently, we are

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told, " the Ministers took great care to inspire the King with a dislike to audiences." No one ever made a more edifying end. His advice to the little Dauphin was excellent: " My child, you are about to be a great King. Do not imitate me in the taste I have for building, nor in that I had for war. Strive, on the contrary, to have peace with your neighbours.' His remark to his valets is almost worthy of Charles II. : " Why do you weep ? Did you think me immortal ? I never thought so, and you ought at my age to expect to lose me."

If Louis was fond of war, at any rate he made it like a gentleman. In 1717 the King's equerry and his *entourage* were captured by a raid in the French territory. Beringhen was an old man, and in order to spare him the enemy let him drive part of the way to the frontier and allowed him to rest more than once. In consequence the equerry was rescued and the captors captured in turn. The leader of the raiders, Suetem, was presented to Louis, who praised him for having treated his prisoners so well, adding : " War should always be conducted honourably." Entertained by Beringhen, he had a great success in Paris, and after a short detention on *parole*, was allowed to return to his own country by an exchange of prisoners.

It was an age of chivalry in war. In one of the sieges of the Fronde the beleaguered Captain sent to ask what part of the camp the young King frequented in order to avoid firing at it. The fine answer was " everywhere." Ice is sent to the royal table from the citadel, and when the chef suggested the amount might be increased, the rejoinder is that as the besieged proposed to hold out for a long time this is

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impossible, or " they might not be able to keep up the supply." But if war was chivalric, this was largely owing to the influence and example of Louis. St. Simon's verdict is very likely the true one :

" He was born kind and just—God had given him the makings of a good King, perhaps even a great King."

Evil came to him from outside. However this may be, as a master of ceremonies he was unrivalled. From his childhood no one ever enacted the part of a King better. He was the Grand Monarque letter-perfect. Amidst all the misfortunes of the declining years of his reign there still was seen " that constancy, that firmness of soul, that external equanimity, that care to hold the helm so long as he could grasp it, that hope against hope through courage, wisdom and not blindness, that kingly bearing in all things of which few men indeed could have been capable." " It was this," continues St. Simon, " that won him the true admiration of all Europe, and that of his subjects who witnessed it. It was this that brought back to him so many hearts which his long, harsh reign had alienated."

Whatever may be said against the Court, there is this in its favour—it was always religious. If an age of magnificent sinners, it was also an age of magnificent penitents. That gentle La Valliere should have made an edifying end was only natural, or that she who had least to regret should repent the most. But the tempestuous Montespan was a different affair.

It was long before she became reconciled to her fate. In her retirement she always hoped that Madame de Maintenon might be removed by old age and ill-health, but it was not to be. At last she put herself into the hands of Pere la Tour. " Little by

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little she finally gave almost all she had to the poor." She worked for them several hours a day sewing on coarse clothing, such as chemises and other needed articles, and it is quite pathetic to read :

" Her table, which she loved to excess, became most frugal, her fasts redoubled. . . . She wore perpetually bracelets, garters and a belt with iron spikes, which often made wounds in her flesh."

The Duchess of Portsmouth was converted, and became comfortably penitent on a suitable pension, which the Regent increased to 80,000 francs, in recognition of her services with the susceptible Charles II. Even Ninon de l'Enclos turned a new leaf as she approached eighty, Madame de Maintenon comes worst out of the picture. There was no repentance about that immaculate prude, if she had a hard life, success did not soften her nature. Oddly enough, her only real affection seems to have been for the children of Madame de Montespan, to whom she owed everything, whom she meanly supplanted. One hopes the story St. Simon tells is not true, yet it seems eminently characteristic. The dying Louis said to her that his one consolation in leaving her was the hope that at her age she would soon rejoin him. St. Simon declares that she was so annoyed that she left Versailles and refused to return, and had to be brought back almost by force. One is not so sorry as one ought to be to read that when Peter the Great wanted to see Madame de Maintenon at St. Cyr, and the poor lady went to bed to avoid him.

" The Czar entered her room, went to the windows, and pulled back the curtains, and after those of the bed, gazed at Madame de Maintenon at his ease, said not a word to her nor she to him, and without making her any sort of a bow, went away."

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No wonder " she was much astonished and much mortified," but as St. Simon shrewdly adds, Louis XIV. was no longer living.

Peter the Great had a great success in Paris. His simplicity and interest in everything charmed as much as his habits astonished.

" What he ate and drank at two regular meals is inconceivable . . . a bottle or two of beer, as much and sometimes more of wine, liqueur wine on that, and at the end of the meal prepared brandy half a pint, sometimes a whole pint."

But his suite did even better, " and were eating from eleven in the morning till eight at night; there was a priest, Almoner, who dined at the table of the Czar, and ate half as much again as any of them, which amused the Czar, who was fond of him very much" and at the Opera the Czar insisted on having beer brought him in his box. Even then Russia leant towards the French alliance. The Czar had a passionate desire to unite himself with France, and curiously enough was thwarted by Germany, acting through George I, who was in fear for his German States.

Another curious piece of history revealed in the *Memoirs* is that George was anxious to give up Gibraltar to Spain. Realising that the idea would give rise to considerable controversy, he arranged to conduct all the negotiations through the Regent. In order to maintain the strictest secrecy, Alberoni, the Spanish Minister, was not to be consulted in the matter. The Regent was to deal directly with the Spanish King. An order was to be signed by the King of England to the Governor of Gibraltar to hand over the fortress. A Spanish General was to march to Gibraltar under

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the pretence of exercising his men ; he was then to present the order and take possession. Unfortunately for the scheme, Alberoni found out that an emissary was on his way from the Regent to the King. Furious at the King being approached without his knowledge, he prevented their meeting, and the whole scheme miscarried—and Spain lost Gibraltar. " Such," adds St. Simon, " is the utility of Prime Ministers."

It was a cruel stroke of irony that the last ceremonial of so great a master of ceremonies should have been the reception in state of a bogus Persian Ambassador. Louis, flattered that his fame should have received such distant recognition, made much of the impostor. Shrewd St. Simon suspects him from the first.

" The suite seemed very wretched in every way. The so-called ambassador was greatly embarrassed and very badly dressed. The presents beneath notice."

In the end—

" No one but the King was duped."

It is gratifying to read that an Englishwoman was able to do something which was beyond the King's power with all his influence. Lady Shrewsbury, the wife of the English Ambassador—

" A tall, stout, masculine creature, middle-aged or past it, who had been handsome and pretended to be so still: very *decolletée* and full of affectations,"

refused to tolerate the French fashions—with some reason, as the head-dresses of the women were erections of wire and " all sorts of gewgaws " more than two feet high. " At the least movement the building trembled, and its inconveniences were great." Although the King could not endure these erections,

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they lasted for ten years in spite of him. But the Countess, " who talked loudly and much in very bad French," would have none of them.

" Her manners were those of a crazy woman, but her card-tables, her dinners, and her general familiarity made her the fashion ; "

and the head-dresses disappeared.

In his pages one hears of Voltaire, who was the son of St. Simon's notary, then known as Arouet, and exiled and sent to Tulle " for very satirical and independent verses."

It is a wonderful pageant.

If one realises the limitations of a Court, you also see its possibilities. Each view is full of interest, whether you picture the Roi Soleil with all his pomp of circumstances or without it: The " little lean, shrivelled, paunchy old man of five feet two " of the satirist is a matter of temperament.

At any rate, St. Simon has done this for you. You have seen the great man, as schoolboys say, " At Home," and have been introduced by a leading critic behind the scenes of the best-staged comedy the world has ever seen.

IMMORTAL TALK

THAT conversation may be immortal must seem as strange as a Struldbrug to an age in which that friendly art has almost ceased to exist.

We all remember the closing words of Macaulay's famous essay on **Dr. Johnson** : " What a singular destiny has been that of this remarkable man. To be regarded in his own age as a classic, and in ours as a companion. To receive from his contemporaries that full homage which men of genius have in general received only from posterity. That kind of fame which is commonly the most transient is, in his case, the most durable. The reputation of those writings which he probably expected to be immortal is every day fading, while those peculiarities of manner, and that careless table talk, the memory of which he probably thought would die with him, are likely to be remembered as long as the English language is spoken in any quarter of the globe."

The accuracy of this even the Moderns will hardly question. *The Rambler* pursues a lonely journey, *The Idler* appeals only to the student, and when, after the Abyssinian Expedition, Mr. Disraeli boasted in the House of Commons that he had planted the Standard of St. George on the Mountains of Rasselas, the country members could only wonder what he meant and hope it was nothing against the land. *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* still hold their own, and his *Lives of the Poets* may fairly

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claim to be included in the classic zone, but it is undoubtedly by his talk that Dr. Johnson lives in the minds of the majority. Talk, and the Dictionary, keep his memory green—they paid a mutual debt. His wonderful command and nice use of words owe much to his "long and painful voyage round the English language," while the store of knowledge which inspired the one explains the ease with which he completed the other. In every achievement the pioneer deserves praise irrespective of actual performance, but it is difficult to realise to-day the labour involved in the preparation of the first adequate dictionary. To compile a tolerable dictionary now is merely a question of industry, and yet one, and one very indolent man, did in three years what it took forty Frenchmen forty years to accomplish. Its author's boast, "Sir, that is the proportion—40 times 40 is 1,600; as 3 is to 1,600, so is I Englishman to 40 Frenchmen"—was justified, although looking at the singular lack of humour which characterises the detractors of Dr. Johnson, one wonders this has never been given as another example of the author's arrogance.

There is always good reading in a dictionary, especially for writers. It is so interesting to find out what the words we have been using all our lives really mean.

But it may be doubted if any dictionary ever contained so much entertainment as Dr. Johnson's, and Becky Sharp did one foolish thing in her life when she threw it out of the carriage window on leaving Miss Pinkerton's academy.

Who, except Lord Chesterfield, would not be grateful for such definitions *ds* :

Immortal Talk

" PATRON—A wretch who supports with insolence and is paid with flattery.

" OATS—A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

" EXCISE—A hateful tax levied upon excise and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.

" LEXICOGRAPHER—A harmless drudge.

" GRUBB STREET—The name of a street in London, but inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries and temporary poems.

" PENSION—An allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state-hireling for treason to his country.

" NET—Anything made with interstitial vacuities.

" STOCK JOBBER—A low wretch who gets money by buying and selling shares in the funds."

Very typical, too, is the sly hit at himself under the definition of " Bottle." " Bottle is often compounded with other words as ' bottle friend,' a drinking friend, * bottle companion,'" with its illustration from Addison : " Sam, who is a very good bottle companion, has been the diversion of his friends."

Who cares, after this, whether Dr. Johnson thought windward and leeward were identical, and did not know the pastern of a horse from its knee.

The charm of its definitions, and the aptness of the literary illustrations make Johnson's Dictionary one, at any rate, which will be always read for pleasure as well as instruction.

Although, if one wanted to give an instance of the author's lucidity one perhaps would not have chosen Boswell's favourite example of this explanatory virtue : " When the radical idea branches out into parallel ramifications, how can a consecutive series be formed of senses in their own nature collateral ? " but of its solid merit the Best proof is that after 150 years

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it is still quoted as an authority in the English courts of law.

But it is Dr. Johnson's talk that holds the field, and by talk the Doctor meant conversation. Monologue was never to his taste. He shone most in reply. As Tom Tyers, the vivacious son of the founder of Vauxhall Gardens, said of him : " He was like a ghost who never spoke unless he was spoken to." The interchange of idea by discussion was his conversational ideal. People who laid their minds to his were what he wanted. He complains somewhere:

We had talk enough, but no conversation ; there was nothing discussed."

The reason of his success as a talker is not at first obvious.

At times the captious may find the matter commonplace. The talk did not appeal to all his contemporaries any more than the man. Horace Walpole thought frankly " the poor man was to be pitied, he was mad, and his disciples did not find it out, but have unveiled all his defects and have displayed all his brutalities as wit and his conundrums as humours."

Sir Walter Scott tells us what Boswell's father, the dour old Scotch judge, thought of his son's travelling companion: " There's nae hope for Jamie, man, Jamie's gane clean gyte. What do you think, man ? He's off with the land louping scoundrel of a Corsican [I am afraid a reference to General Paoli], and whose tail do ye think he hac pinned himself to now, man ! A dominie ! Man ! an auld dominie who kept a school and ca'd it an academy."

To the foreigner his popularity has always been unintelligible. Taine finds him " a grumbling bear,

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with the manner of a beadle and the inclinations of a constable." As to his writing, " We yawn, his truths are too true. We already know his precepts by heart and wonder in all sincerity who could have been the lovers of *ennui* to have bought up 13,000 copies of his works." The only explanation is " that sermons are liked in England—that here men of reflection do not need bold or striking ideas, but palpable and profitable truths. It is not the novelty of the dishes, but the solidity and wholesomeness they seek; it is because they are insipid and dull that they suit the taste of an Englishman," and so Taine reluctantly understands why they took for a favourite " the respectable, but tiresome Dr. Johnson." While Taine, with the acuteness of a Frenchman, hits the mark, at the same time there is much that is unfair in his criticism. In the first place the interval between Johnson and Taine can hardly be measured in years. Thought had advanced with giant strides. The French Revolution was as much an intellectual as a material *bouleversement*; nothing was ever quite the same again. In his own time Johnson was certainly not regarded as a bromide. " In general you may tell what the man to whom you are speaking will say next; this you could never do of Johnson." This was the view of his friends. The paradoxes of many modern practitioners are mere nonsense. They are new and original, not because no one has been clever enough to think of them before, but because no one hitherto has been foolish enough to give them expression. That so much of Johnson's talk seems obvious now is a proof of its subtlety then. The good paradoxes of one age become the traisms of the next; in fact, every

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good paradox becomes a truism when it dies. Although there is plenty of agreeable paradox in Johnson's talk, it should be remembered that he was wise as well as entertaining, and therefore in general more humorous than witty, although he did say a second marriage was a triumph of hope over experience.

Still, his fun, as a rule, is humorous fun, reducing by ridicule things to their proper denomination with that sense of proportion that unites humour and wisdom ; for whereas wit is sometimes foolish, humour is always wise, and Johnson's humour is often a kind of thinking aloud, revealing the means by which he arrives at the conclusion so pre-eminently sane.

But after making every allowance the truth remains—he is English in grain. He is the one articulate Englishman. He may be right or wrong, dull or amusing, but it is England talking all the time. Johnson has put into words almost everything the average Englishman thinks. He is English in his tastes, his prejudices, his sturdy independence, his intolerant thought and tolerant action and, above all, in his common sense. "Common practical reason," the foundation of his philosophy, the only philosophy which has ever appealed to his countrymen, the utilitarian and pragmatic. He is a Squire Western with brains and education. When he wrote he was to a certain extent hampered by convention. He regarded Latin as the language of literature, and becomes stilted and even pompous. The author obscures the man : the true Johnson is not there. It is in his talk that the artist in him finds expression. With Samuel Johnson talk, and not the style, was the man.

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Its directness is often the secret of his humour. The unexpectedly obvious — which so often proves the real solution of a problem.

I remember being told by the late Charles Brookfield a story of Lord Tennyson. He arrived late at breakfast, holding out his watch with every expression of dismay, and saying : " It has stopped." Various suggestions were made to meet the difficulty, when a practical guest suggested winding it up, for it appeared the poet had omitted this mechanical stimulus. It was worthy of Dr. Johnson himself.

How finely this quality stands out in his famous interview with Goldsmith ! " I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and it was not in his power to come to me, begging I would come to him as soon as possible." One thing is at once done which some of us might have omitted. " I sent him a guinea and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was drest," for the doctor had been spending the morning in bed, as was his agreeable habit, " and found that his landlady had arrested him for rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived he had already changed my guinea and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him." Now comes the real Johnson touch. " */ put the cork in the bottle*" How simple, yet how admirable ! As a treatment for hysterical poets volumes could not say more.

We all know the sequel, how Goldsmith had " a novel ready for press," which Johnson took to a bookseller and sold for £60, no less a work than *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and the situation was saved.

But the " cork in the bottle " method is not complete.

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fined to poets. It symbolises his view of life ; he is always metaphorically putting the cork in the bottle and preventing any undue effervescence of the froth of life.

How this brings us back to reality !

" Depend upon it, that if a man talks of his misfortunes, there is something in them that is not disagreeable to him, for where there is nothing but pure misery, there is never any recourse to the mention of it."

And his grim reflection at Ranelagh on the struggle for happiness : " It went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle that was not afraid to go home and think."

His acceptance of the tragic fact, which every one at some time must have resented, that " All grief for what cannot in the course of nature be helped soon wears away, in some sooner, indeed, in some later—but it never continues very long."

And his famous demonstration in favour of free will.

" Sir, we know our will is free, and there's an end on't."

With great shrewdness he sees the real cause of the discontent of women.

" Women have a perpetual envy of our vices ; they are less vicious than we, not from choice, but because we restrict them ; they are the slaves of order and fashion ; their virtue is of more consequence to us than our own, so far as concerns this world."

Though essentially a literary man, he is conscious of the limitations of the literary life. " Every one thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier or not having been at sea."

BOSWELL : " Lord Mansfield does not."

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JOHNSON : " Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in a company of General Officers and Admirals who have been in service, he would shrink ; he'd wish to creep under the table."

BOSWELL : " No ; he'd think he could *try* them all."

JOHNSON : " Yes, if he could catch them ; but they'd try him much sooner. No, Sir ; were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, ' Follow me, and hear a lecture in philosophy' ; and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, ' Follow me, and dethrone the Czar' ; a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates."

But at the same time he sees through the glamour of war, and makes short work of the absurd theory that war is a good thing for the virtues it occasions. " A fire might as well be thought a good thing—there is the bravery and address of the firemen employed in extinguishing it. There is much humanity exerted in saving the lives and properties of the poor sufferers. Yet after all this who say a fire is a good thing ? " Nor is his good sense, like so many people's, merely for external application. How admirably he treats the clamour made by his enemies when he took his pension ! " Why, Sir (said he, with a hearty laugh), it is a mighty foolish noise that they make. I have accepted of a pension as a reward which has been thought due to my literary merit ; and now that I have this pension I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been ; I retain the same principles. It is true that I cannot now curse (smiling) the House of Hanover ; nor would it be decent for me to drink King James's health in the wine that King George

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gives me money to pay for. But, Sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover, and drinking King James's health, are amply over-balanced by £300 a year."

All this, however, while explaining his success, would hardly account for his perennial popularity. That the writing world should love him is inevitable, for, as far as I know, he is the only author of repute who ever beat a publisher, but why the rest ?

His is no posthumous popularity. He was the leading figure of a club which could reject a Lord Chancellor and a Bishop in one day ; the intimate friend not merely of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Burke and the *Hite* of the literary and political world, but the boon companion of men of fashion like Bennett Langton and Topham Beauclerk ; and this strange, almost uncouth personality still remains the most popular figure in English letters. No doubt intimacy has a good deal to do with it—without it affection is impossible, and Johnson had, in a high degree, what Robert Louis Stevenson calls " the gift of intimacy " ; but it is possible to know people very intimately and to dislike them very heartily. Intimacy is merely an atmosphere favourable to the development of feeling. It may force: it cannot create. The real reason is, the man is so essentially human. Like his friend Mr. Edwards, he may have set out to be a philosopher, but humanity keeps breaking in, and in nothing is he so human as in his failings and inconsistencies. Preaching early rising and laying in bed till noon. With " no passion for clean linen," yet puts on a lace coat and hat to support the dignity of letters when he attended the rehearsals of *Irene*. A hater of fops,

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but unable in his heart to deny the successful Wedderburn the enjoyment of the reflection of Lord Loughborough in a mirror. To Boswell "the majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom, awful melancholy and venerable " ; yet loves the young dogs of this age, and ready at three in the morning to have an all-night frisk with Bennett Langton and Topham Beauclerk, and then reproaches Langton with leaving them to have breakfast " with a set of wretched unideaed girls." As for Garrick, " he durst not do such a thing, his wife would not let him." Interested in everything. Even the *Pantheon*, if not worth half a guinea to see, means if you don't, " There is half a guinea's worth of inferiority in not having seen it." It is his humour to define hunting as ' the labour of the savages in North America, but the amusement of the gentlemen of England," only to be explained by the fact a man " feels his vacuity less in action than when at ease," yet he rides upon Thrale's old hunter " with much firmness," and is immensely gratified when told he rode as well " as the most illiterate fellow in England." Who can resist a philosopher anxious to lead a riot when Mr. Torre would not discharge his fireworks on a wet night, and ready to the end to roll down a hill, run a race with a pretty girl, or climb a gate with any one ?

As with his life, so with his philosophy. A material sceptic, yet with infinite spiritual faith, for " a fool will deny more in an hour than a hundred philosophers will prove in a hundred years." At times the expression of the philosophy seems grim and repellent enough, but like Swift, who hated human beings collectively, but loved them individually, hard though some of his

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generalisations may seem, in the application the man is too much for the philosopher. Johnson had graduated in a hard school; he had known what it was to want the relief of a dinner and the refuge of a bed, and he did not forget in the days of his prosperity that others had been in like distress. The idle complaints of the rich were to him foppish lamentations. He would have asked with Crabbe :

" Say ye oppressed by some fantastic woes,
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose,
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure
Which real pain and that alone can cure—
How would you bear in real pain to lie
Despised, neglected, left alone to die ?
How would you bear to draw your latest breath
When all that is wretched paves the way to death ? "

No one understood better than Johnson the great tragedy of the poor ; that in their lives there is no room for lasting sorrow. Of Lady Tavistock, who died from grief on losing her husband, he says to Mrs. Thrale : " She was rich and wanted employment, so she cried till she lost all power of restraining her tears. Other women are forced to outlive their husbands who were just as much beloved, depend upon it, but they have no time for grief, and I doubt not, if we had put Lady Tavistock into a small chandler's shop and given her a nurse child to tend, her life would have been saved—the poor and busy have no time for sentimental sorrow."

So with our friends : " We must outlive them or they us : no man would hesitate about the choice " ; and " no one eats a slice of pudding last because a friend is hanged; no one really feels for those who lose a child, parent, or friend. The unduly sensitive pay

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us by feeling." Splendid precept! but when we come to practice the warm heart of Johnson breaks in with results fatal to such imperial philosophy. When his wife dies he is found almost distraught with excess of sorrow ; poor and busy though he was then, he never forgets her loss. The only room in Gough Street he would use was a garret in which she had never been, and years afterwards he recalls the anniversary of her death with prayers and tears. When Thrale's son died it was to Johnson " one of the most dreadful things that happened in my time. I would have gone to the extremity of the earth to have preserved the boy."

Of Hervey, who was kind to him as a young man, he says, " If you called a dog Hervey I should love him." The thought of his friend, Dr. Bathurst, who died of a fever in Havannah, to the end of his life brought tears to his eyes.

Hannah More tells the following story about David Garrick and " The Club " : " Upon Garrick's death, when numberless applications were made to succeed him, Johnson was deaf to them all. He said, ' No, there never could be found any successor worthy of such a man,' and he insisted upon it there should be a year's widowhood in the club before they thought of a new election."

To no man that ever lived did friendship mean more than to this Draconian philosopher.

Undue stress has been laid upon the alleged rudeness of Dr. Johnson. It has produced an entirely wrong impression. Dr. Johnson was not merely a rude old man with bad table manners. One must appreciate this—the talk recorded is mostly intimate

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talk among intimate friends without prejudice, thrown out to provoke discussion in that contest of superiority "without which there can be no animated conversation." Most of this alleged rudeness has been taken far too seriously and is obviously only the Doctor's fun. You may read Boswell through and be hard put to it to find anything that any one with a sense of humour need have resented in these sallies adventured in what Sir Joshua Reynolds called "the gaiety of rhetoric." Fanny Burney says of him—and no one knew him better—"He was always indulgent to the young, he never attacked the unassuming or meant to terrify the diffident." In the rough and tumble of contest he may occasionally have been unconscious of his strength, but his own defence is best: "I look upon myself as a man very much misunderstood: I am not an uncandid, nor am I a severe man, I sometimes say more than I mean in jest and people are apt to believe me serious." To understand Johnson's theory of talk we should turn to his *Idler*. In paper 75 we may find his conversational ideal. In describing "Gelalleddin" he says: "I will show my wisdom by my discourse and my moderation by my silence. I will instruct the modest by easy generalities and repress the ostentatious by seasonable superciliousness"; and while the picture of the young man "amiable in his manners and beautiful in his form" may seem a somewhat flattering presentation, his "boundless curiosity, incessant diligence and irresistible genius, and his quick apprehension and tenacious memory, accurate without narrowness and eager for novelty without inconstancy" form a very fair picture of the original. And its justification is his own study

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of himself as Mr. Sober, paper 31 : " Mr. Sober's chief pleasure is conversation; there is no end of his talk or his attention ; to speak or to hear is equally pleasing, for he still fancies that he is teaching or learning something and is free for the time from his own reproaches."

Above all, we must not forget to discount Boswell. He had the literary temperament and people with that failing are never literal—you might as well expect art to be photographic. As he said to Hannah More : " He was not going to cut his claws or make the tiger a cat to please any one," but Boswell quite appreciated the tiger was the more picturesque animal of the two, and did not forget to make the most of the roar. Boswell himself realised this when he asked Fanny Burney's help at Windsor just before the *Life* was published.

" Yes, Madam; you must give me some of your choice little notes of the Doctor's ; we have seen him long enough upon stilts ; I want to show him in a new light. Grave I am and great I am and solemn I am and learned I am—all these he has appeared over and over. Now I want to entwine a wreath of the graces across his brow; I want to show him as gay I am, agreeable I am, pleasant I am."

A revelation only postponed until the publication of the *Diary and Letters of Madame Darblay*.

Probably no author has ever been treated with such ingratitude as Boswell. No one has ever been written about more and had less said in his favour. Macaulay, with " all the brutality of a Whig," set the fashion by calling him, among a good many other things, " servile and impertinent, shallow, pedantic, a bigot and a sot." Oddly enough no one ever seems to have considered

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any thanks due to the author of the most amusing biography in English. The simple truth about Boswell is, he lived too soon. He would have made an ideal editor of a halfpenny newspaper. He was the inventor of personal journalism. Had he lived to-day, instead of being in constant pecuniary difficulties he would have been a millionaire and in sensible danger of a peerage. We cannot be too grateful for what he gave us—but it was a cubist Johnson, with all the angles emphasised, which people will insist on treating as a photograph.

An intimate friend says of him : " I was upwards of twelve years acquainted with Dr. Johnson, was frequently in his company, talked with ease to him, and I can truly say I never received from him one rough word." Malone says : " I have been often in his company and never heard him say a severe thing to any one. When he did say a severe thing it was generally extorted by ignorance or extreme vanity or affectation." So with his table manners and social eccentricities of which Boswell makes so much. Bishop Percy says : " He ate heartily, having a good appetite, but not with the voraciousness described by Mr. Boswell, all of whose extravagant accounts must be read with caution and abatement." As to his slovenliness and general appearance, for many years he was shabby from necessity and not from choice, but after his pension his tailor declared he was an excellent customer. And to quote the Bishop again : " His countenance when in a good humour was not disagreeable. His face clear, his complexion good, and his features not ill formed, many ladies have thought they might not be unattractive When he was young.

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Much misrepresentation has prevailed on this subject among such as did not personally know him."

Macaulay is largely responsible for the bearish view of Dr. Johnson. In spite of his comments on Boswell, Macaulay always takes the *Life* as a serious and scrupulously accurate work and endorses the most extravagant accounts of the Doctor's appearance and manners. Fresh from Boswell " he describes him " gorging himself until his veins swelled and the moisture broke out on his forehead " ; his rudeness becomes " ferocious " to the receptive essayist.

In reading Macaulay on Johnson, one cannot help feeling the great Whig historian never quite forgave the Doctor for being a Tory. If Johnson " took care that the Whig dogs did not get the best of it," Macaulay is no less partial in his treatment of their old enemy. His most boisterous sallies are taken *au grand serieux*, but humour was never Macaulay's strong point, and without humour the real Johnson is a sealed book. " Campbell is a good man, a pious man ; I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years, but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat; this shows he has good principle/" is quoted in all seriousness to show the singular tests Johnson applied to his acquaintances, and Macaulay devotes a long passage to demonstrating the unsoundness of this particular one. A chance joke about Lord Charlemont and a snake is responsible for the extraordinary statement: ' Of foreign travel and history he spoke with the fierce and boisterous contempt of ignorance," in spite of the fact that for the age in which he lived, thanks to the Thrales, he was a considerable traveller, and, according to her:

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" loved the very act of travelling." What could be better than his advice to travellers—especially No. 5.

" Observe these rules :

" 1. Turn all care out of your head as soon as you mount the chaise.

" 2. Do not think about frugality; your health is worth more than it can cost.

" 3. Do not continue any day's journey to fatigue.

" 4. Take now and then a day's rest.

" 5. Get a smart sea-sickness if you can.

" 6. Cast away all anxiety, and keep you mind easy."

This last direction is the principal; with an unquiet mind neither exercise, nor diet, nor physic, can be of much use." And his test of travel applied in this instance to the Giant Causeway : " Worth seeing, yes, but not worth going to see " ; and so far from despising travel, did he not urge Boswell to visit the Great Wall of China, on the ground that by doing so " You would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence. That would be a lustre reflected upon them from your spirit and curiosity. They would be at all times regarded as the children of a man who had gone to visit the Wall of China " ? His praise of the lines on a church in Congreve's *Mourning Bride* is given as an instance of the absurdity of his literary judgments, although Johnson himself told Mrs. Thrale that he used to praise that passage only to tease Garrick when he tried his patience by his praise of Shakespeare, which was often more generous than discriminating. One can only be grateful that his observation : " A time comes in a man's life when

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he is in need of the repairs of the table " is not urged in further proof of a Tory's gluttony.

Such was Dr. Johnson. Whatever view we take this cannot be denied him—he survives the greatest test of character in that the more we know of him the greater not merely our respect, but our regard. Surely a great and good man ; and in nothing greater or better than his final inconsistency. No man ever feared death more. " There has never been a moment when death was not terrible to me." No man ever met it more bravely ; he fights it till the last. " I will be conquered ; I will not capitulate." His humour does not fail him ; his nurse " is an idiot, as awkward as a turn-spit and as sleepy as a dormouse." When he is told the battle is lost : " I will take no more physic, not even my opiates, for I ever prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded," and his talk, characteristic to the end, closed with a benediction.

A FAMOUS MAGISTRATE

A FEW years ago Scotland Yard turned its attention to literature, and was very much shocked. Prosecutions followed, and in the course of one of these inquiries the intelligent constable was asked, with the view of testing his critical qualities, whether he considered *Tom Jones* an immoral work. With all the courage of his anticipated conviction, he answered, " Yes." He was then asked whether he knew it had been written by a Bow Street magistrate. Good sense prevailed—the prosecution was defeated, and Scotland Yard returned to the more suitable occupation of thief-catching. The prosecution, at any rate, served two useful purposes. It taught the police to leave literature alone and reminded the public of what many of them had forgotten, that Henry Fielding in the course of his short but busy life, did admirable work as a London magistrate.

The improvidence of writers has always been a theme of reproach, and most unfairly. If a man lives from hand to mouth, even if the hand has a pen in it, he can hardly be blamed for spending money upon the rare occasions when he gets it. As a character says in *Bleak House* with excellent sense, " What is the use of living economically if you have not any money ? " It is only with an assured position that prudence, that unfriendly virtue, begins to make itself felt. Captain Booth is not far wrong when he says in *Amelia*, " You can receive favours only from the generous, and, to be

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plain with you, there are very few who are generous that are not poor."

We may be justified in doubting whether even wealth could have dulled the edge of Fielding's generosity, but, after all, the position he sought and obtained has never been rewarded with an excessive emolument, and in those days the most that such an office could bring in was about £500 a year, earned in such a way as to be intolerable to a man of right feeling. What Fielding wanted was not wealth, but enough to relieve him from the incessant anxieties of one who lives and maintains a family on his wits, even on such wits as those of the author of *Tom Jones*. His view of a comfortable fortune would nowadays seem modest, if not exiguous. When Amelia regained her money out of which she had been bubbled by her dishonest sister, on the interest of which she lived in complete happiness with a husband and six children, her entire fortune amounted only to some £10,000, although there was also Captain Booth's half-pay and the £2,000 "in plate and jewellery" he prevented Miss Harris taking to France.

That Fielding's thoughts should have turned in the direction of a magisterial appointment is not surprising. Through his mother he had legal connections. Sir Henry Gould, his grandfather on her side, was a judge of the High Court, and it was in his house that the future magistrate was born. At Eton he had formed acquaintance with many of the leading men of the day, upon whose interest he was entitled to rely. When he returned from completing his education at the University of Leyden, and found himself in receipt of an allowance of £200 a year from his father, he may

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well have looked forward to a serious attack on the legal profession. Unfortunately, there was a drawback to the allowance—for those days a generous provision, and that was the serious one that it does not seem ever to have been paid. In such case, the young man did as so many brilliant young men have done before and since, and turned to the quicker, if more precarious resource of writing for a living.

In those days the business of novel-writing had hardly begun, and the stage was the opportunity for intelligent youth in search of bread and butter. From 1728 till 1736 he wrote a great many plays, many of which were successful, but even as a playwright his principal distinction was legal, as his dramatic pieces were the direct cause of the censorship of plays by the Lord Chamberlain being introduced into the theatre, not, oddly enough, on account of their freedom, which was remarkable even in the eighteenth century, but their politics, which were intolerable to the Government of the day. This, and his marriage in 1735 to Miss Craddock, of Salisbury, turned his attention again to the law, and in 1737 he joined the Middle Temple, was called in 1740, and, like Arthur Pendennis, had chambers in Pump Court. There can be little doubt that he worked hard at his profession. He went the Western Circuit and the Wiltshire Sessions. But it was too late. Literature was in his blood. Law and literature may be nearly akin, but perhaps so nearly as to be within the prohibited degrees.

There is internal evidence to show that Fielding made a serious study of Law. His books are full of legal points, and two large MS. volumes dealing with criminal law were compiled by him and remained in

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his brother's possession when he in turn became a magistrate ; but no one who had enjoyed, as he had, the savour of success as a writer could tolerate the drudgery essential to practice at the Bar, and in 1741 *Pamela* provoked that most famous of all travesties, *Joseph Andrews*. It is remarkable that the poet Gray notices of the author : " He shows himself well read in stage coaches, country squires, and Inns of Court." But one can only hope the country justices depicted in that work were more the children of imagination than experience. Indeed, his future office had so far received but scant appreciation at his hands.

The name Justice Squeezum, the " Justice caught in his own trap," of *The Coffee House Politicians*, explains itself. His amiable theory is that " the makers of laws and the executors of them should be free of them, as the authors and actors are free of the Playhouse." Still, he meets his deserts at the hands of his brother, Justice Worthy, who points out that " he is the greatest of villains who hath the impudence to hold the Sword of Justice while he deserves the edge," and brushing on one side Squeezum's plea, " he is the greatest of fools who holds the Sword of Justice and hurts himself with it," promises to make a public example " of so great a villain." *The Coffee House Politicians* may be recommended to any one, except the censor, in search of amusement, and the most humorous part, the Coffee House Politician himself, is quite free from offence.

In the future magistrate's play with the engaging title of *The Debauchees, or the Jesuit Caught*, old Jourdain confesses his sins to Father Martin, " a black roll," as he very fairly describes them, ranging

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leisurely as they do from murder through the rest of the Decalogue. The climax of his villainy is thus revealed, "and yet what are these to what I have done since I commenced merchant? What have I not done to get a penny? I insured a ship for great value, and then cast it away. I broke when I was worth a hundred thousand livres, and went over to London. I settled there, renounced my religion, and was made a justice of the peace," in which capacity, he admits, "with the whores of Babylon did I unite. I protected them from Justice: gaming-houses and bawdy-houses did I licence, nay, and frequent, too. I never punished any vice but poverty." In *The Covent Garden Tragedy* Gallono says to Mother Punchbowl, a disreputable person, as, indeed, most of his stage characters were :

"Bridewell shall be thy fate. I'll give a crown
To some poor justice to transmit thee thither."

But while Fielding's plays must not be taken too seriously, Mr. Thrasher, who tried Captain Booth in *Amelia* is another matter. The book was written after his appointment. That eminent magistrate certainly had "some few imperfections in his magisterial capacity." His ignorance of law was his least failing. The fact that he was "never indifferent in a cause but when he could get nothing on either side," and that he had "too great an honour for truth to suspect that she ever appeared in sordid apparel," combined to convict the unlucky captain, who is dispatched to prison while "the Justice and the constable adjourned to a neighbouring ale-house to take their morning repast."

Fielding was appointed a magistrate in 1748. The

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publication of a volume of his miscellaneous writings and some political journalism helped him through the struggling years. In 1745 he started a journal called *The True Patriot*. It was published when the Pretender was almost at Derby, and did its best to influence public opinion against the rebels. It was succeeded, in 1747, by *The Jacobite Journal*, in which Fielding employed unsparingly his humorous power in ridiculing the Jacobite Party. Fielding's politics were perfectly honest. He was a sound, old-fashioned Whig, with a healthy dislike of foreigners and Papists, but their vigorous expression probably helped to obtain for him the position he sought. It may be doubted whether Fielding had studied the nature of the position very carefully. What he probably had in mind was a certain income which would keep him from actual want while leaving him leisure for his literary work. If not the realisation of the youthful ideal of his poem to Walpole :

" If you should ask what pleases best,
To get the most and do the least,
What fittest for ? You know, I am sure,
Pm fittest for a sinecure—"

as near to it as mature experience of an ungrateful world could in reason hope for. The actual emoluments were uncertain. His predecessor is said to have boasted of earning £1,000 a year, and the position seems to have been regarded as a lucrative one. Fielding would seem to have accepted this view without much inquiry and in ignorance of how the money was made.

It must have been a sad disillusion. He says in his *Voyage to Lisbon* : " My private affairs at the begin-

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ning of the winter had but a gloomy aspect, for I had not plundered the public or the poor of those sums which men who are always ready to plunder both as much as they can have been pleased to suspect me of taking. On the contrary, by composing, instead of inflaming, the quarrels of porters and beggars (which I blush when I say hath not been universally practised), and by refusing to take a shilling from a man who most undoubtedly would not have had another left, I had reduced an income of about ^500 a year of the dirtiest money on earth to little more than £300," and as he goes on to point out, this income had also to provide for his clerk. In addition he received a pension yearly out of the public service money, but, apparently, not a large one, as the opportunities of the position were apparently recognised by the tolerant authorities as legitimate. It was an age of "trading justices," the meaning of which was not that the justices took bribes, but that they were paid by a percentage on fees, and not by salary, and, therefore, the more they could increase the work the better pecuniary result for themselves. A more vicious system short of actual venality could hardly be imagined. It certainly did not tend to make the position either popular or respected, and it is to be feared that Mr. Thrasher in *Amelia* is hardly an exaggeration of the general idea of the magistrate of the period.

At the time of his appointment Fielding was no longer young, broken in health, and in sad want of fortune. It would not have been surprising if an easy-going man of the world, graduated in no prudish school, had accepted the situation with philosophy, and made of his new office as far as practical the

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lucrative sinecure of his early dreams. This was not Fielding's way, and it is to his eternal credit that he set vigorously to work as a reformer, and at great pecuniary sacrifice to himself managed in five years to raise the office from the mire. After all, he was only embodying the moral lesson of his books that the world is divided into goats and sheep—the good and bad. The man sound at heart does not become bad merely from occasional lapses : if his heart is in the right place he may be trusted to come right in the end. Tom Jones will never become a Blifil. With all Fielding's prodigality and moral elasticity, he preserved an innate sense of justice and a hatred of oppression, which made a system impossible to him which a smuggler citizen might have accepted without question. One feels that Blifil, from a pecuniary point of view, would have made a better business of it. The London the peace of which he was now called upon to preserve was in a parlous state. A discredited magistracy and a feeble watch were trying vainly to hold in check a turbulent and criminal population. The watchmen are described in *Amelia*: " Who, having to guard our streets by night from thieves and robbers, are chosen out of those poor old decrepit people who are, from their want of bodily strength, rendered incapable of getting a livelihood by work. These men, armed only with a pole, which some of them are scarce able to lift, are to secure the persons and houses of his Majesty's subjects from the attacks of gangs of young, bold, stout, desperate, and well-armed villains." As the author goes on to point out: " If the poor old fellows should run away from such enemies, no one, I think, can wonder, unless it be that they were able to make their escape,"

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Such was the only police force available in a city of close upon a million inhabitants. It was a time of riot, robbers, and highwaymen. If property was stolen, its late owners advertised for it, unblushingly stating that no questions should be asked. A sinister clan existed, of whom Jonathan Wild was the extreme example, who were in both camps. The heads of gangs of thieves, they kept on good terms with authority by occasionally betraying their subordinates, and made a double profit out of the public by first robbing them and then getting back for them at a price a portion of the property they had already stolen. Law was helpless. Fielding tells us: "Officers of Justice have owned to me that they have passed by with warrants in their pockets against men without daring to apprehend them, and, indeed, they could not be blamed for not exposing themselves to sure destruction, for it is a melancholy truth that, at this very day, a rogue no sooner gives the alarm within certain purlieus than twenty or thirty armed villains are found ready to come to his assistance."

Face to face with these conditions, Fielding proved himself an admirable magistrate. He dealt fearlessly and impartially with the individual criminal, and endeavoured to remove some of the causes which created this class. He had not been six months on the bench when he was chosen Chairman for the Westminster Sessions, where he delivered his charge to the Grand Jury which was so well received that it was published "by order of the Court and at the unanimous request of the gentlemen of the Grand Jury." It is certainly an excellent piece of work, containing

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much learning and good sense, and is one of the best expositions of the uses of that modest body which seems to spend most of its time in deploring its own existence. After this success his talents were employed in a more practical direction.

A three days' riot broke out in the Strand, beginning with a quarrel in a disorderly house, where a drunken sailor said he had been robbed, and ending in the wrecking and burning of two buildings and a portion of a third. Fielding, who had been away when the disorder began, on his return acted with great promptitude. While addressing the mob with great vigour from his house in Bow Street, he took the precaution to send for a sufficient force of the military to guard against the mischief spreading, and in twelve hours managed to restore the peace. The execution of one of the rioters named Bosavern Penlez aroused a good deal of controversy, and the Government of the day were severely attacked. Fielding had all the facts in his possession, and made excellent use of them. His pamphlet, *A True State of the case of Bosavern Penlez who suffered on account of the late riot in the Strand, in which the Law regarding these offences and the Statute of George III., commonly called the Riot Act, are fully considered*, was a complete justification as unanswerable as the rhetorical question of which it is an amplification : " When, by our excellent institution, the greatest subject, no, not even the King himself, can, without a lawful trial and conviction, divest the meanest man of his property, deprive him of his liberty, or attack him in his person, shall we suffer a licentious rabble to be accuser, judge, jury, and executioner, to inflict corporal punishment, break

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open men's doors, plunder their houses, and burn their goods ? "

The ordinary work of his Court must have kept him fairly busy. In February, 1750, it was stated in the Press that the jails in and about London were so full of felons and desperate rogues that " the keepers have not fetters enow to put on them, so that in some prisons two or three are chained together to prevent their escape," and in the same month the *General Advertiser* states that " Near forty highwaymen, street robbers, burglars, rogues, vagabonds, and cheats have been committed within a week past by Justice Fielding." Fielding was very sensible of the difficulty of obtaining evidence in street offences, and endeavoured to meet the difficulty by requesting by public advertisement all persons who have been robbed and their servants to attend " Justice Fielding at his house in Bow Street, to see if they could identify prisoners under examination." Fielding had only been a few months on the bench before he drafted a Bill which he submitted to Lord Hardwicke, who was then Lord Chancellor, "for the better preventing of street robberies." Nothing seems to have come of this for the moment, but in 1751 he published a book dedicated to Lord Hardwicke : *An inquiry into the causes of the late increase of robbers, etc., with some proposals for remedying the growing evil, in which the present Reigning Vices are impartially exposed, and the Laws that relate to the provision for the poor and to the punishment of felons are largely and freely examined.* He attributes the increase of crime : (i) To the unnecessary and increasing number of places of public amusement, which induce the working classes to

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squander their money and time ; (2) " A new kind of drunkenness unknown to our ancestors," which turns out to be " gin-drinking " ; (3) Gambling—" a school in which most highwaymen of great eminence have been bred" (which reads like a quotation from *Jonathan Wild*) ; (4) The condition of the poor and the demoralising condition of contemporary prison life.

Among other practical suggestions, he makes one the prohibition of advertisements offering rewards for stolen property, " with no questions asked " ; also legislation for regulating the conditions under which pawnbrokers carried on their business; and the allowance of expenses and compensation to prosecutors in order to encourage the undertaking of proceedings by those who have been robbed. Most of these suggestions have long been adopted, but were first put in practical form by Henry Fielding. Another scandal, in considering which he was far in advance of his age, was the frequency of public executions.

There was no false sentiment about Fielding as a reformer. No one had less sympathy with a rogue, but his view was the sound one, that if the legislature would take proper care to raise the condition of the poor, the root of the evil would be attacked, " nor," he declares, " in plain truth will the utmost severity to the offenders be justifiable, unless we take every possible method of preventing the offence—the subject as well as the child should be left without excuse before he is punished." And he refers with horror to the " many cartloads of our fellow-creatures once in six weeks carried to slaughter," of whom much the greater part might " with proper care and regulations "

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have been " not only happy in themselves, but very useful members of the society which they now so greatly dishonour in the sight of all Christendom."

The pamphlet made a considerable stir. It was shortly followed by the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee to " revise and consider the Laws in being which relate to felonies and other offences against the peace." A Bill was subsequently brought in, embodying the resolutions of the Committee, and a further Act was passed, called the " Tippling Act," restricting the sale of spirits, both of which measures must have been largely influenced by the suggestions of the Bow Street reformer, and the latter measure was successful if " Mrs. Staff," the constable's wife in *The Coffee House Politicians*, is to be believed. " Thank your honour ! Your honour will not be offended, I hope—we stand at a great rent : and truly, since this gin Act all trade has been so dull that I have often wished my husband would live by the Highway himself instead of taking Highwaymen."

One of the greatest dangers to the public consisted in the existence of organised gangs of criminals who existed for the purpose of public plunder. Fielding tells us of one which numbered nearly a hundred members, and formed a regularly organised body, with officers and accounts caretully kept. He attacked the evil with such weapons as he had to hand. His method was to pay an informer to betray the criminals " into the hands of a set of thief-takers whom I had enlisted into the service ; all men of known and approved fidelity and intrepidity," a method which must have appealed to the author of *Jonathan Wild*. It was not a time for being over-nict. Risks had to be

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taken to deal with so flagrant a danger, and the result justified Fielding. He claims with legitimate pride that during the last months of 1753 there was not a single murder or robbery in the streets of London—a remarkable result of the energy and intelligence of one man.

The five years he spent as a magistrate were certainly not idle ones. He found time to write another paper—a proposal for making an effectual provision for the poor, and an explanation of the case of Elizabeth Canning. Here his good nature, especially where a woman was concerned, and perhaps a novelist's leaning for a good story, led him wrong. Elizabeth was a very ordinary kind of impostor. She went to dine with an uncle and disappeared for four weeks. She returned, as is usual in such cases, with an absurd, if circumstantial, story of being kidnapped and ill-treated. As a result of her virginal vagaries, a venerable, but ill-favoured, gipsy woman was sentenced to death. Fielding held a preliminary inquiry in the case. He was deceived by the evidence of a witness called, oddly enough, "Virtue" Hall. Subsequent investigation proved that the gipsy had a complete *alibi* and her pardon was followed by the conviction of Miss Canning for perjury. Such are the crude facts. The pamphlet was written after the trial of the gipsy at the Old Bailey—in support of the verdict, and apparently in answer to attacks that had been made upon his connection with the case. The actual part Fielding took is rather confusing. The gipsy and another woman had already been committed for trial. Upon the application of a solicitor named Salt, Fielding took the evidence of Virtue Hall, who had not

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given evidence before. At first she could tell no coherent story, and it was not until Fielding threatened to commit her for trial as accessory that he elicits the evidence which impressed him so much. This should have put him on his guard. No statement made under such circumstances could be worth very much, but the mistake, which at the most was an error of judgment, was not made in his capacity as a magistrate. He was bound to take her evidence. His mistake was believing Virtue Hall. When the full investigation followed after the Old Bailey trial, it threw a curious light on the manners of the day to read : " Upon my return to Town my clerk informed me that several noble Lords had sent to my house in my absence desiring to be present at the examination of the gipsy woman. On this I informed Mr. Salt and desired him to bring Elizabeth Canning and Virtue Hall in order to swear their several informations again in the presence of the gipsy woman and Wells, and appointed him a day for doing so, of which I sent an advice to the noble Lords "; so let us hope their patrician curiosity was satisfied.

There was also time for literary work of probably a more congenial kind. He contributes to the *Covent Garden Journal*, finishes *Tom Jones*, and writes *Amelia*. *Amelia* was the only novel written entirely during his Bow Street period. He depicts with terrible directness the state of the jails of that day. Prisons he had already described as " schools of vice, seminaries of idleness, and common sewers of nastiness and disease." Considering the conditions under which it was composed, the legal part of *Amelia* is rather slurred. It is impossible not to wonder what is the

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precise offence for which Captain Booth finds himself in prison. The evidence before Justice Thrasher would appear to sustain a charge of assault on the police. We are told generally "the delinquents were then all dispatched to prison," where Booth, had he not been rescued by Miss Matthews, would apparently have remained indefinitely. He is released on certain moneys being found, from which he would seem to have been committed in default of finding sureties. This seems the only explanation ; yet if this were so, it is curious that Booth made no attempt to find sureties himself, which should have been a matter of little or no difficulty. Then again, the seductive Miss Matthews. The charge against her was attempted murder. This not being a summary offence she must have been committed for trial to the Old Bailey. Yet, when the injured man recovers, she is released without more to do (it is true, after some discreet payments), and the proceedings apparently lapse. It is all very odd. Perhaps the author intended this to be an example to illustrate the point that prosecutors should receive further inducement to take action.

Poor Fielding was never a favourite of fortune. His last blow was perhaps the hardest. The admirable work he had done in stamping out crime in the Metropolis was recognised by those in authority, but his reward was his own death-warrant. For some time he had been in ailing health. Like many people of imagination, he had a touching faith in quack medicine. In August, 1753, he had been taking the Duke of Portland medicine for gout for nearly a year, but in spite of this ducal drench his doctors ordered

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him " to go immediately to Bath." While he was getting ready for his visit, " almost," as he tells us, " fatigued to death with several long examinations relating to different murders, all committed within the space of a week, by different gangs of street robbers," he received a message from the Duke of Newcastle, requesting his attendance at Newcastle House. Fielding was so ill and overworked that, in spite of his sense of public duty, he could not attend. A second summons he felt unable to neglect, and he attended at the cost of " a severe cold." He is consulted as to some plan for ending the murders and robberies that had again become too common. Fielding is ready with a plan, which is adopted, upon the lines he had already found successful—an informer suitably financed. But by this time the gout has " turned to a deep jaundice." Bath might yet have saved him. But in his eagerness to break up " this gang of villains and cut-throats," he remains in London, to the destruction of the gang, but also such health as remained to him. " Mine," he says pathetically, " was no longer a Bath case." The poor magistrate was " in a very weak and deplorable condition," suffering as he was from jaundice, dropsy, and asthma. A severe and prolonged winter does not improve matters. Dr. Joshua Ward's Drops are mere drops in the ocean of his maladies. Even Bishop Berkeley's Tar Water fails him, and, in desperation, he sets off on that journey to Lisbon, from which he was never to return. His cheerful courage, as shown in the famous *Journal*, is amazing. It may well have been sustained by the consciousness of a hard task well done. On the credit side of the

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account the admirable discharge of new and difficult duties; while on the debit he may have felt somewhat in the vein of his great admirer—that the strenuous magistrate at Bow Street had not been altogether useless to the historian of *Tom Jones* and *Amelia*, whose exquisite pictures of humour and manners have already outlived, if not the palace of the Escorial, at any rate the Imperial Eagles of Austria.

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" IF I had no duties and no reference to futurity, I would spend my time in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman."

No one could have said that unless he were a feminist, by which I understand, rightly or wrongly, a man who is really fond of women, and, like all men who are fond of women, Johnson was content with them as they are. He was no idealist of the sex, and would have subscribed cheerfully to the appeal of the distinguished novelist who made her heroine exclaim : " Love me for my faults and I shall never disappoint you."

The monstrous legend of ethereal beings who flit elusively superior through our sordid lives, clamantly superman and essentially supernatural, a sort of compound of an early Victorian angel and one of Sir J. Barrie's fairies, would have had no place in his philosophy.

This grotesque fantasy was, it is almost unnecessary to say, invented by man. It would never have occurred to a woman to be ashamed of her sex ; and not only invented by men, but by men who disliked women. As Voltaire said of Providence, if He had not existed it would have been necessary to invent Him, so these poor creatures to whom the real woman means nothing, met a similar necessity by inventing something to take her place and evolved this highbrow hybrid.

The learned Doctor, as learned in human nature as

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in books, had no such illusions. He knew their failings ; their perpetual envy of our vices, their lack of integrity in matters of business ; that they did not do things well, but, like the dancing dogs, the thing was that they did them at all, and all the rest of it. No man ever understood women better, and therefore no man was ever more popular with women. From Kitty Clive to the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, all liked him, with the possible exception of Mrs. Boswell, and what woman ever really cares for her husband's best friend, even if he happens to be a man ?

Women as a sex are material and unromantic, and naturally hate being idealised. Nothing is more tedious than to be put upon an unsuitable pedestal. A halo that does not fit is an uneasy crown. The female mind likes men who like women, and with its native shrewdness it sees that the real though unconscious motive of the idealist is hatred of his fellow-creatures, and just as unconscious bad manners are the worst manners of all, so the unconscious malignant is of all the most dangerous.

It is in pursuit of ideals that wars ravage the world, and every idealist has a portable rack and thumb-screw in his dressing-bag. As Anatole France says : " Robespierre was an optimist who believed in virtue. If you want to make men perfect, you end, like Robespierre, by desiring to guillotine them. Marat believed in justice and demanded 200,000 heads."

Idealists have always been the enemy, social and national, from Robespierre to the German Emperor.

That most great men have remarkable mothers is a popular theory, and Boswell tells us Johnson's mother was a woman of distinguished understanding. An

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understanding manifest more in character than culture, it would seem.

For Johnson says of her : " My father and mother had not much happiness from each other. The^ seldom conversed, for my father could not bear to talk of his affairs, and my mother, being unacquainted with books, cared not to talk of anything else. Had my mother been more literate, they had been better companions. She might sometimes have introduced her unwelcome topic with more success if she could have diversified her conversation. Of business she had no distinct conception, and therefore her discourse was composed only of complaint, fear, and suspicion." At any rate, she had enough learning to teach him to spell.

He complains : " She was ever importunate with regard to her fears of spending more than she could afford, though she never arrived at knowing how much that was "—a fault common, as the Doctor points out, to most women who pride themselves on their economy. She was certainly of a careful habit, for when, as a child, Dr. Johnson ate so much of a boiled leg of mutton at his Aunt Ford's that " she used to talk of it," his mother was of opinion that " it would hardly ever be forgotten."

Dr. Johnson thought her mind was afterwards enlarged. To this end, as a child, he did his best, for, coming across a passage in one of *Msofis Fables* where it is said of some man that " when he hated another he made him rich," " This," he says, " I repeated *emphatically* in my mother's hearing, who could never conceive that riches could bring any evil." He adds : " She remarked it as I expected," whether

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with effect or not we can only surmise, but we know this: his father discouraged his wife from keeping company with their neighbours on the ground that tea was very expensive, and that Mrs. Johnson lived to say that if her time were to pass again she would not comply with "such unsocial injunctions." At any rate, she was a devoted mother. She used to visit the child every day when out at nurse, going different ways in order that her assiduity might not expose her to the ridicule which maternal care in those days would appear in general to have excited ; and we know she gave her son coffee which she could not afford because he happened to like it. In spite of her financial austerity, she must have been a popular woman, if it is true, as Mrs. Piozzi relates, that when an oppressive neighbour once endeavoured to take away from her a little field she possessed, he could persuade no attorney to undertake the case against a woman so beloved in her circle.

On the whole his father and mother seem to have hit it off fairly well; if their home life was not as ideal as the Burneys', of whom he wrote with classical dignity : "Of this consanguineous unanimity I have had never much experience, but it appears to me one of the great lenitives of life."

There is a mysterious phase of infantile development known as "taking notice," and almost Dr. Johnson's first recollection was of a woman and a very great lady, when he was taken, at the age of two, to be touched by Queen Anne for the king's evil, whom he was able to recall in a confused but somehow a solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds and a long black hood.

But it was while Johnson was at Stourbridge School, where he went at the age of fifteen, that he had his

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first romance. The details are obscure. The young lady, from internal evidence, would appear to have had the agreeable name of Belinda, and her birthday inspired the following lines :

" This tributary verse receive, my fair,
Warm with an ardent lover's fondest prayer—
May this returning day for ever find
Thy form more lovely, more adorned thy mind.
All pains, all cares, may favouring heaven remove,
All but the sweet solicitude of love."

It is often forgotten that Dr. Johnson in his youth was a welcome visitor to many of the leading families of Lichfield, and it was in the agreeable society of that cathedral city that his affections became maturely engaged. A great Lichfield friend was Gilbert Warmesley, who, though a Whig " with all the virulence and malevolence of his party," had a most agreeable sister-in-law, Molly Aston.

The Doctor undoubtedly had a very tender feeling for Molly Aston, and with good cause : " Molly was a beauty and a scholar and a wit," although she shared the deplorable politics of her brother-in-law, and talked " all in praise of liberty," which provoked the Latin epigram which Mrs. Thrale translated—and translated very well:

" Persuasions to freedom fall oddly from you,
If freedom we seek, fair Maria, adieu."

" She was the loveliest creature I ever saw," he declared, and years afterwards confessed that the happiest period of his past life was the year in which he spent a whole evening with Molly Aston.

I have always suspected that the Stella of his *Odes on the Seasons* was Molly Aston. The poem is charac-

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teristic. We find his common sense proof even against the tender passion. Contrary to poetical precedent, there is no love-making in an English spring. No dalliance for reasonable people in an east wind. On the contrary, as an unhappy victim "whom to beds of pain arthritic tyranny consigns," he implores Wisdom in the abstract:

" His swelling passions to compose
And quell the rebels of the heart."

Let us do the lover justice ; no one can help uric acid, but he is only waiting for the warm weather.

In midsummer a far different note is struck :

" Come, Stella, queen of all my heart,
Come, born to fill its fast desires. . . .

" Let me when nature calls to rest
And blushing skies the morn foretell,
Sink on the down of Stella's breast,
And bid the waking world farewell."

Autumn does not cool his ardour, but like a prudent tactician he brings up his reserves :

" The grape remains,
My Stella with new charms shall glow
And every bliss in wine shall meet."

So in winter :

" Let love his wonted wiles employ
And o'er the season wine prevail."

And above all we are implored to remember:

" That Time life's dreary winter brings "—

and the moral not forgotten :

" Catch, then, oh, catch the transient hour,
Improve each moment as it flies,
Life a short summer, man a flower—
He dies, alas ! how soon he dies."

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Nothing will persuade me that these are not the seasons of that famous year—" the happiest period of his life"—when he spent a whole evening with Molly Aston.

Mrs. Thrale, with the courage of her sex, asked what Mrs. Johnson thought of Molly Aston. " She was jealous, to be sure," said he, " and teased me sometimes when I would let her, and one day, as a fortune-telling gypsy passed us . . . she made the wench look at my hand, but soon repented her curiosity—for so said the indiscreet sybil—' Your heart is divided between a Betty and a Molly. Betty loves you best, but you take most delight in Molly's company. When I turned about to laugh I saw my wife was crying—pretty charmer, she had no reason."

And at any rate Molly married a naval officer, but I fancy Mrs. Johnson must have been more nervous of Molly than Mrs. Fitzherbert, to whom Johnson turned for consolation, although Miss Aston's successor had " the best understanding " the Doctor had ever met with " in any human being."

What knowledge of the sex Johnson shows in his epitaph upon her ! How well one knows the type !

She died, and her husband felt at once *afflicted* and *released*. One hardly needs to be told : " Her beauty had more in it of majesty than attraction, more of the dignity of virtue than the vivacity of wit." Not that Johnson liked foolish women : " Some cunning men choose fools for their wives thinking to manage them, but they always fail. . . . Depend upon it, no woman is the worse for sense and knowledge." Even his posting companion " should be one who could understand me and could add something to the conversa-

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tion " ; but there are limits. " Supposing a wife to be of a studious or argumentative turn, it would be very troublesome. For instance, if a woman should continually dwell upon the Arian heresy," and perhaps Mr. Fitzherbert was one of those men " who in general is better pleased when he has a good dinner on his table than when his wife talks Greek " !

Next there came in virginal succession Miss Hill Bootby, who looked after the children at Mrs. Fitzherbert's death. Johnson says she somewhat disqualified herself for the duties of this life by her perpetual aspirations after the next. But, none the less, he contended with Lord Lyttleton for her favour. The peer gained the temporal advantage, but Johnson criticised his poetry, so it may be said to have been a drawn battle, and we hear that at her death he was distracted with grief, and his friends about him had much ado to calm the violence of his emotion.

Johnson himself told Boswell that his first love was a Mrs. Careless, a clergyman's widow. It dropped out of his mind imperceptibly, " but she and I shall always have a kindness for each other."

Of her he says again : " If I had married her it might have been as happy for her."

Like the man who disbelieved in ghosts because he had seen so many, his affections had been too often engaged for him to accept the theory of affinities in love. " One, and one only," was no part of his lover's creed. And it was with reference to Mrs. Careless that he answered Boswell's " Pray, Sir, do you not suppose that there are fifty women in the world with any one of whom a man may be as happy as with any

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one woman in particular ? Aye, Sir, fifty thousand ! " and adds a belief that marriage would in general be as happy as if they were all made by the Lord Chancellor upon considered judgment, without consulting the parties concerned.

In spite of this admirable theory, " his own was a love match on both sides," but though Johnson lost his heart he kept his head. It appears " Mrs. Porter was a romantic woman and had got into her head that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog." So when they rode from the church, " at first she told me I rode too fast and she could not keep up with me, and when I rode a little slower she passed me and complained I lagged behind."

This was the critical moment in Johnson's married life. How admirably it is met! " If it is commonly a weak man who marries for love," he was not one of them. " I was not to be made the slave of caprice, and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly till I was fairly out of her sight . . . and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did I observed her to be in tears." The victory was won and his married happiness placed on a firm basis. He was cruel only to be kind ; he remembered in his moment of trial that women " give great offence by a contemptuous spirit of non-compliance on petty occasions. The man calls his wife to walk with him in the shade; she feels a strange desire at that moment to sit in the sun. He offers to read her a play or sing her a song, and she calls the children to disturb them or addresses him to seize that opportunity of settling the family account. Twenty such tricks will the faithfullest wife in the world not refuse to

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play, and then looks astonished when the fellow fetches in a mistress."

As far as one can ascertain they were very happy together. She would sweep his house, which annoyed him, and he did not always like her dinners ; still, there were the makings of a successful husband in one who said : " No money is better spent than what is paid out for domestic satisfaction—a man is pleased his wife is drest as well as other people and a wife is pleased she is drest " ; but, as he points out with admirable sense : " Love and marriage are different states. Those who are to suffer the evils together and to suffer often for the sake of one another, soon lose that tenderness of look and that benevolence of mind which arose from the participation of unmingled pleasure and excessive amusement." That they disputed perpetually, as he told Miss Thrale, I think is merely the literary emphasis—one of those phrases which so often misled the faithful about literary households.

He always impresses on those contemplating matrimony : " Now you are going to marry do not expect more from life than life will afford. You may often find yourself out of humour and you may often think your wife not studious enough to please you, and yet you may have reason enough to consider yourself as upon the whole very happily married."

Practical always, as he liked women for what they are, so he tolerated marriage because he entered into it with his eyes open. He had no illusions. " It is so far from being natural for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage, that we find all the motives which they have for remaining in that connection and

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the restraints which civilised society imposes to prevent separation, are hardly sufficient to keep them together."

Still, his view is : " Even ill-assorted marriages were preferable to cheerless celibacy," for, as he points out elsewhere : " Marriage has many pains, but celibacy no pleasures." And as, touching men: " Marriage is the best state for man in general, and every man is a worse man in proportion as he is unfit for the married state." On the duties of married life he is commendably sound. Excuses for infidelity are " miserable stuff " ; the erring wife is what she is, and there is an end of it. " To the contract of marriage, besides the man and the wife, there is a third party, society, and, if it be considered as a vow, God, and therefore it cannot be dissolved by their consent alone. Laws are not made for particular cases, but for men in general."

Apart from the religious aspect, a woman who breaks her marriage vows is much more criminal than a man who does.

His admirable common sense points out: " Confusion of progeny is the essence of the offence. A man, to be sure, is criminal in the sight of God, but he does not do his wife a material injury if he does not insult her. If, for instance, from mere wantonness of appetite he steals privately to her chamber-maid, Sir, a wife ought not greatly to resent this. I would not receive home a daughter who had run away from her husband on that account."

On the question of beauty he is conclusive : " Sir, it is a very foolish resolution to resolve not to marry a pretty woman. Beauty is of itself very estimable.

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No, Sir, I would prefer a pretty woman unless there are objections to her. A pretty woman may be foolish, a pretty woman may be wicked, a pretty woman may not like me. But there is no such danger in managing a pretty woman as is apprehended. She will not be persecuted if she does not invite persecution. A pretty woman, if she has a mind to be wicked, can find a readier way than another, and that is all."

About Mrs. Johnson there is a great conflict of evidence ; Macaulay describes her as "a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colours, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces."

Yet Mrs. Thrale—and one may surely trust a woman to be impartial in her criticism of a friend's wife—says a picture she saw of her at Lichfield was very pretty, and that her daughter pronounced it very like. A contemporary describes her as still handsome at the time of her second marriage, a lady of great sensibility and worth, and so handsome that his associates in letters and wit (with doubtful tact one would have thought) were often very pleasant with him on the strange disparity which in this respect subsisted between husband and wife.

There is a coloured print dated 1768 in a collection of the correspondence of Samuel Richardson, edited by Anne Letitia Barbould, of the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells, in which Dr. Johnson and his wife appear. The lady certainly makes a handsome figure.

Her detractors assert that this is another Mrs. Johnson, the wife of a local doctor of the period, but I believe the balance of testimony is against them.

She must have been what is known as a good sort,

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because the £800 she brought Johnson as a fortune he lost in the school. They were reduced to the greatest penury, and she never seems to have reproached him with the fact, and the best tribute to her memory is his grief at her loss. We all remember how he could only work after her death in one room in the house, because it was the only one she had never used. Those who laugh at the idea of a love match should remember of his four qualifications for a wife, the first, *virtue*, was hers undoubtedly. *Money* she had, the last. There is evidence of her *wit*, and, if the above extracts are correct, she had some claims to the third—*beauty*.

On her tombstone his epitaph includes " *formosa*," and although we know " in lapidary inscriptions a man is not on his oath," I think the balance of evidence is on the decorative side,

Her view of Johnson was that he was the most sensible man she ever met. Johnson's treatment of her was kindness itself, so kind that Hawkins could only explain it by the theory that, if " not dissembled, it was a lesson he learnt by rote, and that when he practised it he knew not where to stop till he became ridiculous." But then we know what Hawkins was. In a controversy with an old friend he made devastating use of the accident that his opponent had a red-haired parlour-maid, and it is an admitted fact that he never saw Mrs. Johnson. Hawkins even insinuates that there was a separation between them at the time of Johnson's association with Savage, an idea which probably arose from the fact that owing to poverty Johnson was unable temporarily to keep house, and Mrs. Johnson was harboured by a friend in lodgings near the Tower.

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Boswell, it is true, suggests that Johnson's conduct, after he came to London and met Savage, was not as celibate as it had been and subsequently was. Boswell, however, seems to have attached undue importance to Johnson's expressions of remorse and apprehension on the approach of death.

Johnson had a meticulous conscience always, and, unduly severe on himself, was in his moods of melancholy inclined to be morbid in his retrospection.

His wide tolerance and human sympathy inclined him to company of all sorts. His friendship with Bet Flint, "generally slut and drunkard, occasionally whore and thief," could easily be misunderstood.

Johnson's attitude towards women of the town was one of the most interesting phases of his attitude towards the sex. They interested him ; he would take them to taverns and hear their stories, and, one may be sure, helped them when he could on their way, and tried to make the crooked way straighter. What a splendid instance of his fearless generosity is the story of his picking up the half-naked and apparently dying woman in Fleet Street and carrying her home ! When excellent reasons were given him for turning her out, how fine his answer : " That may be as much her misfortune as her fault ; I am determined to give her the chance of a reformation." As Goldsmith said : " The fact of being miserable was enough to ensure the protection of Dr. Johnson."

How he kept his word and with what success is known to all students of his life.

The appeal of these women was feminine and not professional. To this indefatigable student of his fellow-creatures none were alien. A rake only in the

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sense of a sifter of human waste. We know what he said himself, and he was no hypocrite:

" No, Sir, we never proceeded to the *magnum opus*. On the contrary, I have been rather disconcerted and shocked by the replies of these giddy wenches than flattered or diverted by their tricks."

Johnson was human ; we know the silk stockings and white bosoms of the actresses in Garrick's green-room " excited his amorous propensities," but one thinks not in that way. Have we not on record his famous manifesto of the affections : " Sir, if I had an *amour* it should be with a countess. It would fire the imagination " ?

Popular as Johnson was, and attractive as his personality appears in its various settings, nowhere does he appear to such advantage as in the pages of Fanny Burney and Mrs. Thrale. The contest was over, the battle won. His character not merely survived the severest of all tests, success, but emerged mellowed by its autumn sun. In the daughter of his old friend, Dr. Burney, he surprised to his delight an intellectual equal, and in the sunny humour of Mrs. Thrale he found an ever-sympathetic companion. Like all men who like women, their company brought out the best that was in him. The rivalry of sex was absent; he could afford to be merciful. The struggle for victory was no longer essential.

I am not sure that we do not get the real man better in Fanny Burney's *Memoirs* even than in Boswell. The picture is certainly more agreeable. His good humour and gaiety light up her pages.

" Now for this morning's breakfast!

" Dr. Johnson, as usual, came last into the library

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(what a pleasant touch) : he was in high spirits and full of mirth and sport."

She emphasises his "love of social converse that nobody, without living under the same roof with him, would suspect."

Again : "Dr. Johnson came home to dinner. In the evening he was as lively and full of wit and sport as I have ever seen him" ; so full of sport that we know on one occasion he was "so facetious that he challenged Mr. Thrale to get drunk." When Miss Burney reproached him with not speaking to her, his retort was eminently practical: "'My dear,' he said, taking both my hands, 'I was not sure of you. I am so near-sighted and I apprehended making some mistake.' Then drawing me unexpectedly towards him he actually kissed me.

"Mrs. Thrale laughed and said she would go for a walk if she did not fear for Miss Burney's reputation if left alone with the Doctor.

"When some one mentioned Mrs. Montagu, Dr. Johnson began to see-saw with a countenance strongly expressive of inward fun, and after enjoying it some time in silence, he suddenly and with great animation turned to me and cried :

"Down with her, Burney! Down with her! Spare her not! Attack her, fight her, and down with her at once! You are a rising wit and she at the top, and when I was beginning the world and was nothing and nobody, the joy of my life was to gibe at all the established wits, and then every one loved to Hallo me on; but there is no game now, everybody would be glad to see me conquered ; but then, when I was new, to vanquish the great ones was all the delight of my poor

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little soul; go at her, Burney, at her, and down with her!"

We hear how interested he is in women's dress, and how severe on poor Miss Browne's taste. All trivial enough, but what an agreeable picture these trifles make of the greatest pleasure life affords, congenial intimacy! We are inclined to agree with Mr. Musgrave, "an Irish gentleman of fortune and member of the Irish Parliament," also the author of a play which opened with the discovery of a Bishop in a house of ill-fame by his domestic chaplain, but who owes his immortality to Miss Burney's friendship rather than those distinctions—that no one but a fool or a rogue had any need to be afraid of Dr. Johnson.

At any rate, at the Thrales house at Streatham the hostess, in Miss Burney's words, was all good humour, spirits, sense and agreeability. We are told her anecdotes are untrustworthy, but what excellent reading they are and how frankly written! It is true she complains of his becoming tiresome after Mr. Thrale's death, but this was written when she had married Piozzi, and the subsequent quarrel was not of her making.

The marriage annoyed Johnson, and annoyed him beyond reason and without reason. Nothing can justify the letter he wrote to her on hearing the fatal news.

Mrs. Thrale had a perfect right to marry whom she willed. Ill-natured people said Johnson wanted to marry her himself. I do not believe it; there is strong evidence to the contrary, but he had a sincere regard and admiration for Thrale and resented the fiddler, and was sufficiently human to feel the annoy-

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ance common to all men who see a woman they like marry some one else, even if they have no desire to do so themselves. As he says somewhere :—

" I do not see. Sir, that it is reasonable for a man to be angry at another whom a woman has preferred to him—but angry he is, and he is loth to be angry at himself." I could wish he had confined his anger to Piozzi. For once Dr. Johnson was ungenerous in his treatment of a woman, and a woman to whom his debt was great.

Fanny Burney reminds us how catholic his taste was; but for her we might not have heard of a lady called Laurinda, who wrote verses and stole furniture, but " was a lady who had high notions of honour," and Hortensia, who walked up and down the Park repeating Virgil.

Mrs. Williams, who kept house for him, has been somewhat harshly treated by Boswell, who was, I suspect, jealous of her. Dr. Percy says, so far from being a constant source of disquiet and vexation to him, although she was totally blind for the last thirty years of her life, her mind was so cultivated and her conversation so agreeable that she much enlivened and diverted his solitary hours.

Her claim upon him was her infirmity and the friendship of his wife. She seems to have kept his house well, and one cannot blame her for disliking Bet Flint, especially when she brought a lady friend to call.

I fancy Mrs. Demoulins was rather trying ; she had the chief management of the kitchen and quarrelled with Mrs. Williams. " They quarrelled incessantly, but as they were both of occasional service to each other and had no other place to go to, their animosity

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was not centrifugal." How admirably humorous is the use of centrifugal. There is no better instance of one of Johnson's best weapons, a sense of comicality in words—not even the woman who was "fundamentally sensible." Her father had been one of Johnson's earliest friends at Lichfield, and having lost his money, the daughter naturally drifted to Gough Square. Perhaps cooking joints with string upset her temper. We know Dr. Johnson had some thought of buying a jack, "because a jack is some credit to a house," but it never came to anything.

There was a mysterious lady called Poll, whom Dr. Johnson liked very well at first, but who would not do on a nearer examination. Neither Johnson nor Mrs. Williams could remember how she came to join them, and arrived at the conclusion they could spare her very well.

It appears "Poll was a stupid slut. I had some hopes of her at first, but when I talked to her tightly and closely, I could make nothing of her. She was wiggle-waggle, and I could never persuade her to be categorical." One cannot help wondering with Mrs. Thrale how all these vagabonds managed to get at Dr. Johnson. His explanation was: "Oh, the dear creatures, I cannot but be glad to see them." There was nothing smug about him. Their vagabondage was their charm. But Mrs. Williams was always on a different plane.

To Miss Reynolds Johnson writes upon Mrs. Williams's death: "To my other afflictions is added solitude. Mrs. Williams, a companion of thirty years, is gone."

He speaks of her as a very great woman, and much

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lamented her loss. It came when he could ill spare her, just before the end.

It was surely fitting that the last conscious act of a life which had meant so much to so many women should have been an act of kindness to another. We read : " On Monday, the 13th of December, the day on which he died, a Miss Morris, daughter to a particular friend of his, called and said to Francis that she begged to be permitted to see the Doctor, that she might earnestly request him to give her his blessing." Francis went into his room, followed by the young lady, and delivered the message. The Doctor turned in bed and said : " God bless you, my dear." These were the last words he spoke, as kindly as the life they closed.

NOTE.—An unsolved problem is the identity of Jenny.

" Easter Eve.

" I rose and breakfasted; eat little, gave orders that Mr. Stainesby the clergyman who is to give dying Jenny the sacrament shall have 5s. and 3d. He came to Jenny very carefully."

Extract from Dr. Johnson's " Prayers and Meditations " MS. in Pembroke College, Oxford. The passage in the original MS. has been scored out.

POPE IN WORSTED STOCKINGS

IT would be unreasonable to blame an epigram for terminological inexactitude, and the well-known description of Crabbe by the authors of *Rejected Addresses* has all the happy inaccuracy of its literary form.

Apart from the use of the rhyming couplet, which Crabbe seldom abandons, and one or two didactic pieces, such as "The Library" and "The Newspaper," Pope and Crabbe were in opposite camps. Pope, artificial, an optimist and a wit; a townsman with all the patronising outlook of a man of fashion upon a country to which he never got much nearer than Twickenham. Crabbe, a countryman, of the people real, and a humorist. He knew the poor and wrote of them as he knew them—as they were. His work was not merely an answer to Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, it was a protest against a literary tradition. Ever since the days of Virgil's "o Fortunatos Nimum" the pastoral poets, who invariably lived in towns, had vied with one another in singing the charms of country life. Under their sentimental treatment peasants became eclogue shepherds, living in a golden age. As Thomson describes it:

" From dale to dale,
Waking the breeze, resounds the blended voice
Of happy labour, love and social glee."

Gray in his *Elegy* pictures :

" The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,"

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and the return of the labourer to the blazing hearth,
where :

" The busy housewife plies her evening care,"

The children

" Climb his knees the envied kiss to share,"

which is all very pretty, but only meant the poets were a little tired of the London streets. To the urban mind the country is never more than a pleasant place to spend a week-end. Crabbe had never seen anything like it in Suffolk; Aldeburgh had little in common with sweet Auburn. In Byron's words :

" Nature's sternest painter, yet the best."

He paints the real pictures of the poor, and refuses :

" Real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride—"

This has always stood in the way of Crabbe's popularity. The English public like to face the unpleasant with coloured glasses. They would always prefer Sir Walter Besant to George Gissing, and *The Lilac Sunbonnet* to *The House with the Green Shutters*. As the *Quarterly Review* said in noticing the " Boro," " we turn to poetry, not that we may see and feel what we see and feel in our daily experience, but that we may be refreshed by other emotions and fairer prospects, that we may take shelter from the realities of life in the Paradise of Fancy." As long as your fancy invents an imaginary poor, delightful with all the qualities inconsistent with their position, especially if you can artfully insinuate that they have really far less to put up with than the oppressed rich, success is certain. This was not Crabbe's way. In "The

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Village," the first piece in which Crabbe found himself, he opens with the famous protest:

" In Caesar's bounteous reign
If Tityrus found the golden age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song ?
From Truth and nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where fancy, leads the way."

Lines which were revised by no less a person than Dr. Johnson—one hardly needs to be told—the " mechanic echoes" have the true Johnsonian ring. But the Doctor spoilt the last one, which originally read :

" Where fancy leads or Virgil led the way."

Crabbe had an admirable contempt for the complacency of the rich :

" Say ye opprest by some fantastic woes,
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose . . .
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure
Which real pain and that alone can cure *I*
How would ye bear in real pain to lie,
Despised, neglected, left alone to die ?
How would ye bear to draw your latest breath
When all that's wretched paves the way to death ? "

But Crabbe appeals not merely as a realist, but as an artist. His methods are not photographic, but realisation through the medium of his work of his own personality. His characterisation, his exquisite felicity of phrase, and his all-embracing humour place him secure among the immortals. Oddly enough, he has always been treated as a serious author with ridiculous moments who is rather to be laughed at than with. The critic's attitude has been rather that of a dull man who does not see a joke and then repeats it as something absurd. A sense of humour is a mental affliction of a very subtle kind, and with real

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humour its expression often takes a subconscious form which is apt to escape recognition. No lines of Crabbe's have been more criticised than these :

" Something had happened wrong about a bill
Which wasn't drawn with true mercantile skill,
So to amend it I was told to go
And seek the firm of Clutterbuck and Co."

They are always described as shocking bad poetry; indeed, the authors of *Rejected Addresses* excuse their parody by quoting them. Let us see how they occur. In the " Tales of the Hall " the elder brother is relating the romance which affected his life, all conscious of its absurdity, as well as its tragedy. We are told of the young man dreaming in June of his " fancy's gracious queen," when suddenly " one matchless face I saw." Then a cry of alarm is heard. It appears there are cows in the field. The " shrieking charmer " escapes to a stile with her maid :

" Where safe at distance and from terrors free
They turn to view my beastly foes and me."

Inspired by beauty the hero resolved :

" To save the maiden and to show the man."

He faces the cows. All women will sympathise with him when he confesses :

" I now had time my business to behold,
And did not like it, let the truth be told.
The cows, though cowards, yet in numbers strong."

However, in spite of their numbers the cows are defeated, and :

" My sovereign beauty with amazement saw,
So she declared, the horrid things in awe.
Well pleased she ^witnessed what respect was paid
By such brute natures—every cow afraid."

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The hero is suitably rewarded. She :

" Receives her champion with a gracious smile ";

and the lady knows how to smile :

" It spoke as plainly as a smile can speak,
Seek whom you love, love freely whom you seek."

However, true love being always impracticable, he makes the mistake which many a man has made under the stress of similar circumstances, and omits to secure the lady's name and address. Afterwards he seeks her near, afar, at home, abroad, with ill success. The only thing he discovers is that she has the odd name of Rosabella. At last, to distract himself, he goes into his uncle's business. Then occur the much-criticised lines, and you will see how exactly they are what is wanted to get Crabbe's effect; their deliberate commonplace emphasises the irony of the situation. George goes to look for Clutterbuck, who, as sometimes happens in these cases, was not at his business premises, but:

" There was a youth who [indiscreetly, as it turns out] named a second place."

So off he goes, expecting to see :

" The private seat
Of soothing quiet, Wisdom's still retreat,"

but finds, I regret to say, something far different. It appears the eminent Clutterbuck was leading a double life, with the sympathetic assistance of Rosabella. While he was billing in the City, he was cooing in the suburbs. Now we see the genius of Crabbe. The note is at once changed, and the interview is one of the best things Crabbe ever did, unconventional and displaying an insight into human nature worthy of

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Guy de Maupassant. Rosabella's half-hearted point is:

" 'Tis gain to get whatever life affords."

She defends herself with more passion than conviction, until, moved by her story, he suggests :

" Be mine the hand and heart

If with your world you will consent to part."

But it is impossible :

" She proved

Slave to the vices that she never loved,

And while she thus her better thoughts opposed,

And wooed the world, the world's deception closed."

The hero goes back to the City, where :

" Patient and dull I grew,

A love of money, other love at rest,

Came creeping on, and settled in my breast."

Then tired of money-making and fearful of impending avarice:

" His passions wearied and disposed to rest,"

he returns to the country, and looking back on life with the reflection :

" Yet much is lost, and not much yet is found "

still with:

" A mind 'prepared and, steady "

sees

" Through the receding clouds the rising good."

This is, I think, as good an instance as can be found of Crabbe's literary method. His ironical outlook, his appreciation of how narrow is the thin line between comedy and tragedy. No one ever translated character into letters better than Crabbe. " Blithe Donald," the gardener, whom we behold "*aspiringly content*." What an admirable description of the Scotch attitude towards life :

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" Patient and mild, he sought the dame to please,
Who rules the kitchen and who bore the keys."

Fair Lucy from the laundry, mild Susan from the dairy, even Catherine from the still room, woo him in vain, but none of them " from his cool phlegm could Donald's spirit raise.¹⁵ " Heedless of beauty " :

" A butler now, he thanks his powerful bride,
And like her keys keeps constant by her side."

The Irishman is just as apt:

" To do the Captain justice she might share
What of her jointure his affairs could spare.
Irish he was in his profusion true,
But he was Irish in affection, too;
And though he spent her wealth and made her grieve,
He always said ' my dear ' and ' with your leave.' "

Then the old bachelor who never marries, though frequently in love :

" I know not why, but when the day was named
My ardent wishes felt a little tamed."

His last affair:

" I now was sixty, but could walk and eat,
My food was pleasant and my slumbers sweet,
But what could urge me at a day so late
To think of women ?—my unlucky fate.
It wasn't sudden ; I had no alarms,
But was attacked when resting on my arms."

It was the Vicar's daughter. He becomes engaged again. Then there is the usual formula, young Henry Gale comes on the scene, and she hopes :

" Her father's friend would be her lover's too."

And then his subsequent resignation :

" When in my arms their boy and girl I take,
I feel a fondness for the mother's sake ;
But though the dears some softening thoughts excite,
I have no wishes for the father's light."

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Not less admirable is Arabella's answer to a mischief-making old maid. Arabella, it should be mentioned, had lost her first lover by being over-nice and has no intention of repeating the mistake :

" If false the charge, I then shall show regard
For a good man and his the just reward;
And what for virtue can I better do
Than to reclaim him if the charge be true ? "

Then his description of a card party :

" Sir, I protest, were Job himself to play
He would rave to see you throw your cards away.
Not that I care a button, not a pin,
For what I lose, but we had cards to win.
A saint in Heaven would grieve to see such hand
Cut up by one who will not understand.
Complain of me, and so you might indeed
If I had ventured on that foolish lead,
That fatal heart, but I forgot your play—
Some folks have ever thrown their hearts away."

And again :

" Sir, when next you play
Reflect whose money it is you throw away.
No one on earth can less such things regard
But when one's partner doesn't know a card.
I scorn suspicion, man, but while you stand
Behind that lady, pray keep down your hand.
Good Heaven revoke, remember if the set
Be lost in honour you should pay the debt.
There, there is your money, but while I have life
I never more sit down with man and wife.
They snap and snarl, indeed, but in the heat
Of all their spleen their understandings meet.
May it be told, do you divide the amount
Or goes it all to family account ? "

What an admirable description of any friendly bridge-party of to-day!

It is always an interesting speculation how far people are influenced by their environment. I am inclined to think there is something in it. No one

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would expect flippancy from the Editor of the *Spectator* or pedantic accuracy from a Welshman. However this may be, Crabbe had the misfortune to be born on the East Coast of England, and this must always be recollected in considering his point of view. You cannot expect idylls in an east wind. This gruesome shore is now of interest principally as showing the resource of English doctors in attacking the ravages health makes in Harley Street. Owing to the advance of medical science and healthier methods of life, that thoroughfare was in despair until it discovered the East Coast as a health resort. Then all the diseases ending in "itis" came to town, and the brass plates were saved. Crabbe had no illusions about the East Coast or its inhabitants :

" A dismal shore
Where he had never seen
The earth productive or the sky serene."

" A frowning coast
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast."
" Where joyless roam a wild amphibious race
With sullen woe displayed in every face."
" I sought the simple life that nature yields.
Rapine and wrong and fear usurped her face."

And he explains like the swallows :

" While still for flight the ready wing is spread,
So waited I the favouring hour and fled."

He was born in Aldeburgh, in Suffolk, in 1754. His father was a sour, disappointed man, untempered even by intemperance. It may be given to some to be intellectually beyond their opportunity and to be happy. It was not to Crabbe's father. He gave little to his son beyond a fair education, and the one

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inestimable gift for literary genius, an unhappy childhood.

At first Crabbe tried the medical profession. While studying at Woodbridge he met his future wife, Sarah Elmy, and became engaged at eighteen. As a doctor Crabbe had little success. Love turned his thought to poetry, and Crabbe determined to seek his fortunes in London, and he started thither with £5 borrowed, some manuscripts, and a case of surgical instruments. The £5 did not last long, the booksellers refused his manuscripts, the pawnbroker got the instruments. It was an age when literature did not disdain to knock at the doors of the great, and Crabbe frankly sought a patron.

He tried the Government in Lord North. He obtained an audience, was received with attention and told to call again. But he found Downing Street as inaccessible as if he had been a Suffragette. At last, sacrificing almost his last half-crown to the footman, he obtained an audience, only to be dismissed instantly and "with some severity."

Crabbe then turned to the Opposition and sought Lord Shelburne. In vain he composed a poem in which the noble Lord was described, with some poetic licence as:

"Blest with all that's good or great
To adorn a rich or save a sinking state."

The conflicting parties on this point were in coalition. An application to Lord Thurlow was met by a polite regret that his avocation did not leave him leisure to read verses.

After a time his affayrs became desperate. Threatened with imprisonment for debt, poor Crabbe was at

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his wits' end. In a happy moment for both of them, he turned to the humane and generous Burke. In March, 1771, he wrote to him for assistance a touching letter:

" I am sensible [he writes] that I need even your talents to apologise for the freedom I now take, but I have a plea which, however simply urged will, Sir, with a mind like yours procure me pardon. I am one of those outcasts on the world who are without a friend, without employment, without bread."

It was a remarkable letter, and was written to a remarkable man. Crabbe had tried two remarkable men, but they were both English. Burke had the intuition given to Irishmen and women. He understood. From that moment the Poet's troubles were at an end. He " is saved from sinking." The waters receded and he was left upon a kindly shore. As a rule people help the needy either with money or advice, generally the latter. Burke did both, and did more, he induced Dodsley to publish " The Library." It was well received and brought reputation, if not money, to the author.

This was well enough, but literature is a bad crutch, and Burke, with the practical wisdom of an Irishman in the affairs of another, suggested the Church. It appealed to Crabbe.

Burke introduced him to Fox and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and recommended him to Lord Thurlow, who this time asked him to breakfast, assured him of his interest and favour, and gave him on leaving a banknote for £100 in a sealed envelope.

The next step was ordination, and he returned to Aldeburgh as curate. In any sense but the geographical, it was a return of triumph. Crabbe had conquered

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London, but found Aldeburgh adamant. The " surly savage race " resented his success, and when Burke obtained him the position of domestic chaplain to the Duke of Rutland, he left without regret for Belvoir.

Fortune was smiling. Lord Thurlow was as good as his word, and saying Crabbe was as like Parson Adams as twelve to the dozen, gave him two small livings in Dorset, which brought in some £200 a year.

In the distinguished calm of Belvoir, he produced the work which won him fame.

" The Village " was revised by Fox and Burke. The poem is a description of Aldeburgh, and is the strongest thing he ever wrote. It illustrates the living misery of the poor he knew.

" The gentle souls who dream of rural ease,
Where the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please "

he bids go and inspect the village, and study:

" The simple annals of the village poor,
Their temper, manners, morals, customs, art."

He deals with the virtues and vices of the poor, and above all their old age, when in the workhouse :

" By disease oppressed
They taste a final woe and there they rest.
There in yon house that holds the parish poor—
There children dwell who know no parent's care,
Parents who know no children's love dwell there.
The lame, the blind and, far the happiest they,
The moping idiot and the madman gay."

In his fashionable surroundings, Crabbe always kept his independence of thought. In the society of that day they thought and spoke of the poor very much as they now do of Cabinet Ministers.

The Duchess of Buckingham writes to the Countess of Huntingdon :

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" I thank your Ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers ; their doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding."

But Crabbe was not on the side of " the Bantocks."
In "The Village" he writes :

" Yet why, you ask, these humble crimes relate ?
Why make the poor as guilty as the great ?
To show the great, those mightier sons of Pride,
How near in vice the lowest are allied,
And each in all the kindred vices trace
Of a poor blind, bewildered, erring race,
Who, a short time in varied fortune past,
Die and are equal in the dust at last."

When the Duke of Rutland was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Crabbe did not accompany him. In his prosperity he had not forgotten Sarah Elmy, and after an engagement of ten years married—to live in uninterrupted happiness for thirty more.

" There was such goodness, such pure nature seen,
In Lucy's looks, a manner so serene,
Such harmony in motion, speech and air
That without fairness she was more than fair,
How more than beauty in each speaking grace
That lent their countless glory to the face."

After his marriage, Crabbe accepted a living at Strathern, near Belvoir, and tried to change his livings in Dorsetshire for one not so far away. Lord Thurlow (like Solomon Pell's Chancellor) said " he'd be damned if he'd do it for any man in England "—but could not refuse it to a duchess and so beautiful a duchess as the Duchess of Rutland, and the livings of Muston and

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Allington were given in friendly alteration. Six years later John Tovel died. John Tovel was a substantial yeoman with some £800 a year, and the uncle of Sarah Elmy. At Parham he kept open house—rather in the style of Old Wardle, the one visiting list upon which we should all have wished to be. Tovel's particular friends are described by Crabbe. One, "a jolly old farmer with much of the person and humour of Falstaff and a face as rosy as brandy could make it" ; the other a relation, a wealthy yeoman, famed for "his indiscriminate attachment to all who bore the name of woman, young or aged, clean or dirty, lady or gipsy—all were equally admired. Although he seldom went to bed sober, he retained a clear eye and stentorian voice till eighty and coursed at ninety." When he came to reside at Parham, Crabbe found this a little difficult to live up to. Crabbe was no ascetic. The poet Campbell says of him, "He took his wine cheerfully, far from excess ; but his heart seemed really to expand, and he was full of anecdote and social feeling."

Like the elder brother in "Tales of the Hall" :

"He ate and drank as much as men who think
Of life's best pleasures ought to eat and drink.
Men purely temperate might have taken less,
But still he loved indulgence, not excess."

Then again, there was a sister of Mr. Tovel. Miss Elizabeth Tovel was rather a trial, she was a managing old lady, and difficult to live with, as only a well-meaning woman can contrive to be.

After twelve years at Parham, his bishop asked Crabbe why he did not live in his parish. Our agreeable pluralist, somewhat surprised, said the only reason was his personal convenience, and the bishop

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proving unreasonable, Crabbe departed for Muston, where the " Parish Register " was written, largely at the suggestion of Charles James Fox. In it he takes us into the vestry of a village church and explores with sympathetic eye the simple annals of the parish poor. Describing the smiling cottage, the frowning slum, the absentee landlady who pays her tenants no attention, the resident squire who pays them, or their wives and daughters, too much. Then the farmers and their wives, the labourer and the inn :

" The sailor returning from the sea,
The village beauty and her tragedy."

All touched in with the precision of a Dutch painting.

It was the story of Phoebe Dawson that distracted the last moments of Fox.

The " Register " was followed by the " Boro," which extended a similar treatment to the town, and gave more room for his satirical vein. Here again we see the worsted stocking more than Pope. Pope's satires are personal. In the " Dunciad " he is avenging individual or literary grudges. They are meant to hurt.

Crabbe's intellect and outlook were ironical; while he had not a very exalted opinion of mankind he liked the individual. His satire is due to his insight into human nature and his profound sense of human frailty. It is social and not personal. Reform and not revenge its motive :

" I love not the Satiric muse
No man on earth would I abuse."

He hated the sin and not the sinner :

Man's vice and crime I combat as I can,
But to his God and conscience leave the man."

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We read of the squire, whose pose is mock humility,
never more annoyed than when it is taken seriously.

The gentle vicar :

" His Master's servant, but not one
To lead an army of His Martyrs on."

his conservatism :

" All things new
He deemed superfluous, useless or untrue."

explained :

" No one so old has left this world of sin
More like the being that he entered in."

The attorneys :

" Those sons of strife, those terrors of the town,"

and best of all the election ; how many candidates for
Parliament have realised :

" Election friends are worse than any foes.
The party curse is with the canvass past,
But—party friendship for your grief will last."

In 1812 he received the compliment of parody. His
liking for quaint antithesis and his odd jingles and
word-play lent themselves to the parodist.

Such lines as :

" Old Jacob married thrice
He dealt in coals and avarice was his vice."

" He'd means of dress and drest beyond his means."

" Swallow, a poor attorney, brought his boy
Up at his desk, and gave him his employ."

are hardly distinguishable from the lines in " Rejected
Addresses " :

" Emmanuel Jennihg brought his youngest boy
Up as corncutter, a safe employ."

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" 'Tis sweet to view from half past five to six
Our long wax candles with short cotton wicks
Touched by the lamplighter's Promethean art
Start into light and make the lighter start."

" Hark ! the cheque taker moody silence breaks,
And bawling pit full' gives the check he takes."

But Crabbe could afford to be laughed at.

Murray offered £3,000 for the "Tales of the Hall," and the copyright of his existing works.

In 1813 Mrs. Crabbe, who had been ailing for some time, died. The blow fell heavily upon Crabbe. Fortunately, about this time the Duke of Rutland, the son of his kindly patron, wanted the living of Muston, and gave Crabbe Troubridge instead. The change helped to rouse Crabbe from an apathy which threatened to become chronic.

Like most men who have been happily married, he found life difficult without the companionship of women. His son writes of him some time after, "He was peculiarly fond of the society and correspondence of females." Like all feminists :

"He loved the very failings of the female mind."

Again :

"I am persuaded that few men have even in early life tasted either the happiness or the pain which attends the most exquisite of passions in such extremes as my father experienced at this period of his life."

His admirers noticed "an increased warmth in the love scenes of his poetry." Once he was actually engaged to be married. In a diary we read : "September 22nd, Sidmouth. Miss Ridout declaration. Acceptance." Then a cloud. "October 5th, Mr. Ridout." Then disaster. "December 12th, Charlotte's picture returned."

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But I fancy, like Mr. Pickwick's attitude towards the fair sex so beautifully described by his Junior Counsel, Mr. Phunky, " His behaviour where temales have been in the case was that of a man who having attained a pretty advanced period of life, content with his own occupations and amusements, treats them only as a father may his daughters." Although an old squire did complain : " Damme, sir, the first time Crabbe dined in my house he made love to my sister." And a maiden lady is said to have declared that on one occasion he exhibited " such a warmth of manner she was quite frightened."

At Troubridge Crabbe lived surrounded by his grandchildren till the end. The living brought him in £800 a year, most of which he gave away. His old age was perhaps the happiest period of his life. He was appreciated by his parishioners and welcomed by the county. With occasional visits to London time was agreeably occupied. Campbell, John Murray his publisher, Miss Hannah Moore, and Rogers were among his friends. He becomes a member of the Literary Society, and is a guest at the Academy dinner. He even dines at Holland House, of which he writes : " Dined three times before Lady Holland was weary of me, and even at the last was treated with marvellous kindness."

Nor was his success merely social. He was appreciated by his fellow-workers. That Campbell, Sir Walter Scott, Rogers and Wordsworth—who said of his poems, " they would last as long as anything in verse"—should answer to his call is perhaps not wonderful, but that he should equally appeal to the great Romantic is more remarkable.

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In 1817 Lord Byron writes to Murray : " If I had to begin again I would mould myself accordingly—Crabbe's the man." Nor was this appreciation merely contemporary ; Tennyson, Swinburne, Fitzgerald, all came under the influence of his charm, and Thomas Hardy says : " My earliest influence in the direction of realism was obtained from Crabbe's works."

But of all tributes, he would perhaps have liked most that of shrewd Jane Austen, who said: " If she could have been brought to think of marrying, she would rather like to have been Mrs. Crabbe." And when the end came, he died full of years and honour, regretted, as only artists are regretted, by more than knew him. He left a priceless legacy to literature, the only duty on which even the richest may cheerfully pay, an appreciative study of his work.

PSALMANAZAR

PSALMANAZAR as a man is a fascinating study, but his appeal is only to the student of human nature. His books are dead and never had more than a synthetic vitality. His famous account of Formosa is so dull that it ought to be more convincing, and is aptly described by the author, so often inept, as "a long-winded and multifarious dissimulation." Yet we find a man whom off-hand, one would call an impudent and dishonest impostor not merely respected by all who knew him, but regarded with something very like affection by that downright moralist Samuel Johnson. The Doctor certainly had no sympathy with the modern theory of compensating virtues. The lady with a temperament was what she was, and there was an end of it; Rousseau was a rascal in spite of his philosophy, or perhaps because of it. Virtue and vice must not be confounded. Yet Dr. Johnson tells Mrs. Thrale that Psalmanazar was the best man he ever knew : also "his piety, penitence and virtue exceeded almost what we read as wonderful in the lives of the saints." He ends a "uniform life" by an exemplary death. His patient endurance of his last illness compelled admiration and suggested the well-known remark—"It is so very difficult for a sick man not to be a scoundrel." Dr. Johnson even goes so far as to assert, "He would as soon have thought of contradicting a bishop", as Psalmanazar—a somewhat ambiguous statement. Personally I doubt if he would

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have shrunk from the task, and even seem to recall instances of episcopal correction.

Such was Psalmanazar to a very shrewd judge of men. It is true he repented, and repented with sincerity, and the generous Johnson had rather a foible for penitents, and in particular religious penitents, but there must have been something more than penitence, something appealing in the man himself. In many ways he was remarkable, in one unique. He is the only man as far as I know, except the Man in the Iron Mask, whose real name has hitherto been unknown. I say hitherto, because I have a theory I will deal with later. His working name was a corruption of Shalmaneser, the celebrated King of Assyria, and was also the name of the great prophet, the Prince of Peace, of the Formosan Revelation. His birthplace was near Avignon, so he says. This has been disputed, merely upon that ground, but I think I have discovered the exact spot. His mother was a pious, good woman, though of narrow circumstances. His father, of ancient but decayed family, and there was something in the decay which precluded his living nearer to his wife than five hundred miles, or contributing anything to her support.

The credit of his education must be shared between the Jesuits, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, and among them he learned Latin thoroughly, which was of the greatest advantage to him later on. The Jesuits at that time were the missionaries of the East, and their tales of heroism and adventure in China and Japan undoubtedly fired his youthful imagination.

His education completed at sixteen, he turned his attention to tuition, but appears to have spent more

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time in philandering with the mothers than teaching the sons. Then he finds his real vocation and becomes a wandering adventurer, and he early mastered the fact that for such a career a little dogmatic religion is an invaluable asset. His first pose was that of a young student in theology of Irish extraction, who left his country for the sake of religion. This, however, fell rather flat, for he discovered, in his own words, "that while passing for an Irishman did not expose him to the danger of being discovered, it came short of the merit and admiration I had expected from it." So he used his recollection of the Jesuits' talk of the East, and became a native of Japan recently converted. A short sojourn in Protestant countries showed him the better way, and though still a Japanese, he adhered to his native faith, which he justified by reason. So he wanders through Europe; even visits his father, whom he finds upright and religious, but still decaying, except intellectually, for the parent advises his son to waste no time with him, but to travel as soon as needs be through the Low Countries, where it appears there is much generosity shown to men of parts and genius. So Psalmanazar travels on, suitably dressed as a pilgrim in a robe he had stolen from a village church.

At Liege he falls in with a crimp for the Dutch army who turns out to be the proprietor of a cafe in Aix-les-Bains; with him he serves as a waiter, his pose relied on as an attraction for the visitors. Next he enlists with the Elector of Cologne, and, dismissed for inefficiency, re-enlists with the Duke of Mecklenburg's forces. All this time he never abandons his position as the unconverted heathen. He maintained the position by

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being moral (which piqued the orthodox), not drinking, which he did not care about, and abstaining from bad language, which he found difficult, but merely a matter of practice. Then he further persisted in praying night and morning to the sun in an unknown tongue, and living on raw meat and roots. Thus he relieved the tedium of his military duties, until the regiment moved to Sluys. Now came his great chance.

Major George Lauder was Governor of Sluys : being a Scotchman, he had a natural taste for theological controversy. There was a Scotch regiment in the pay of the Duke of Mecklenburg, to which one William Innes was chaplain. A discussion was arranged by the Governor, in which William Innes and another, Amalfi, the Minister of the Walloon Church, were to examine into Psalmanazar's pretensions and act as theological assessors. Amalfi seems to have been an easy victim. At any rate, Psalmanazar claims a victory at all points. William Innes, however, with the shrewdness of a Scotchman, detected his man at once, but was far too canny to expose him : with the business instinct of his race he saw there was money in it, and from that moment, Psalmanazar was a made man. Failure was hardly possible—the combination ideal. To the imagination of the Gascon was added the shrewdness of the Scot. The only question was how to do it. The place was obvious. England has always been, and will always be, the happy hunting-ground of the religious impostor. It is unthinkable that a time will ever come upon this shore when the Jesuits cease recanting and the nuns escape no more. To a lad of Psalmanazar's temperament the

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temptation was irresistible. He was getting very tired of a military life, although he congratulates himself on having successfully avoided any fighting. Since his schooldays he had found serious work tedious, and Innes offered him the excitement and publicity he loved, and to one little more than a boy, in fact nineteen, the actual fun of it must have had a certain appeal. I do not believe he was ever a fraudulent impostor in the dishonest sense. It was a partnership, in which Psalmanazar found the imposture and William Innes the fraud. One detail had to be changed. Innes thought Japan a little dangerous. Missionaries and other pushing people had been there, and Formosa seemed a safer domicile, so a Formosan the accommodating convert became. Innes began by publicly baptising him, rather in a hurry lest some rival should anticipate. George Lauder he was christened, after His Excellency the Governor. Then Innes wrote a full account of the remarkable conversion to Compton, the Bishop of London, who with the simple faith of his office accepted the story without question. The convert's discharge from his regiment is arranged, and the confederacy start for town. In spite of a violent storm, during which the excellent Innes took the first seat in the only boat, and refused to move, they arrive safe and theologically sound, for during the voyage Psalmanazar had translated the Catechism into the language of Formosa, and presented on arrival a copy to the Bishop. Success was almost immediate.

It appeared the convert had been abducted from Formosa by the treachery of the Jesuits and carried to Avignon. Refusing to become a Roman Catholic he

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was naturally threatened with the tortures of the Inquisition. After an escape almost providential, but assisted by five francs, he was fortunate enough to meet the convincing Innes, and sought under his guidance the protection of Protestant England. It was clear to all right-thinking people something must be done. Such a man could not be allowed to starve for conscience' sake in a Christian country. There was only one thing to be done—the one thing that always is done in these cases. A subscription must be opened for his maintenance, and the money came in well. For this *role* Psalmanazar had many qualifications. A thorough mastery of Latin, which he wrote and spoke fluently, a smattering of five other languages to say nothing of Formosan, and above all, an admirable platform manner.

Father Fontenay, a Jesuit missionary, who had been to Japan and Formosa, challenged him to a public discussion at the Royal Institution, but the address of Psalmanazar kept him the ear of the audience, and he met the sceptical Father fearlessly at dinner on two occasions later with Sir Hans Sloane, and afterwards with Lord Pembroke—who to the end remained his friend—and further confuted the Jesuit by eating his food raw. His success was not merely social. Scholars declared his Formosan language to be real, because " it was so different from all they knew, both in respect to words and idioms." In this they were not absolutely correct, for the fifteenth letter of the alphabet of twenty words was our old friend Dam ! Nor was his readiness confined, as often happens, to the platform. When asked by Bishop Burnett, " How can you prove you came from Formosa ? " the answer was, " Well, if

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your Lordship (who had, it seems, what Disraeli called a Batavian grace) came to Formosa you would be in a very difficult position. You look as like a Dutchman as any that ever traded to Formosa."

Enough money was collected to send Psalmanazar to Oxford. The idea was that he should teach the Formosan language to a set of gentlemen, who should subsequently convert the natives of that island to the tenets of the Church of England. At Oxford his success continued. No tea party was complete without him. Christ Church shuddered at his stories of human sacrifice. He had even eaten human flesh and still professed inability to see anything wrong in the diet, while admitting in every sense the error of taste. He pretended to work all night by burning candles till morning and not sleeping in his bed, and although he did not drink, affected to have the gout, as it gave him an added dignity with the Dons. William Innes all the time was in the offing, and between them the next coup was engineered. Psalmanazar published a full account of his early life and experiences in Latin, Englished by a Mr. Oswald, and giving a full historical and geographical account of Formosa, an island subject to the Emperor of Japan, which it was not, with splendid pictures and an introduction describing his conversion. Most of it was pure invention, and it always shows more invention than imagination, but Innes coached him up with Candidius—a Dutch minister who really had been there—and Varennius' account of Japan.

Here is shown the genius of the impostor. A duller man would have; copied Candidius without acknowledgment; Psalmanazar refers to him only

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to correct and contradict, and gives chapter and verse for his statements. The book dealt exhaustively with the language, dress, religion and politics of the island. Nor was abuse of the Jesuits wanting. There was a certain method in this, because the Jesuits were the only people who could expose him. Father Fontenay was his enemy. In the face of the book his attacks were merely an attempt to discredit a man whose revelations he feared. Abuse of the Jesuits also appealed to Innes as a Scotsman in two ways. First they made the book sell, and secondly I am persuaded they soothed his Caledonian conscience as discrediting a faith he hated. The book was dedicated to the Bishop of London. The preface pointed out its objects were to prevent the Bishop being deceived, and the interests of Truth generally.

The real story of his life, it appears, was this. One Father de Bode, pretending to be a Japanese, but really a Jesuit in disguise, persuaded Psalmanazar to rob his father, and take ship with him to the West. Then follows an amplified version of the story set upon the town by Innes, and a slightly glorified version of his actual adventures. Next comes a long account of his conversion to Chistianity and then we get to business.

Formosa was an independent isle until a Chinese potentate Moryandanoo, having "ravished Japan by villainy, conquered Formosa by fraud." Affecting ill health he took to his bed, and sent over to the Formosan deities offerings which were to interest them on his behalf ; but they were not really offerings, but soldiers concealed in litters after the precedent of the Trojan horse. Forty soldiers were placed in each

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litter drawn by elephants. At the windows, the heads of oxen and rams disarmed the suspicions of the confiding Formosan, who, in the absence of any kind of national service, fell an easy victim to the unscrupulous invader. Thus was the dynasty established. The religion was a revealed religion. Originally the heresy of sun and moon worship obtained. Then two philosophers arrived who implored the inhabitants of Formosa to abjure this heresy. The true faith was very simple. They had only to build a temple with an altar. On the altar the hearts of 20,000 male children under nine were to be burnt, and the real god would appear. However the Formosans rejected the philosophers and were duly chastened by a parody of the plagues of Egypt.

Then Psalmanazar, the Prince of Peace, appeared, and all was well. The temple was built, equipped with a quick combustion furnace and a special grill. The children were burnt, and to every one's gratification the god appeared in the form of an ox. The sun and moon became merely governors to rule the world, and were worshipped only on common days and without human sacrifice. All depended on the form in which their god appeared. A lion or a bear was bad ; an ox, calf, or lamb, good ; a camel held out hopes, but the best of all was an elephant, which portended great prosperity. Polygamy was allowed, or the number of children would have fallen short, even though the first-born were exempt from sacrifice. If virtuous, after death you became a star, if not, you wandered eternally in the air. The laws were severe, and the poor well looked after, in both of which matters Candidius was put right. The Viceroy lived in a palace

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three miles round, and the houses were covered with gold. Also Greek was taught at the Formosan University. Although the masses were dark, people of quality were very fair, as they lived underground in the hot weather, and washed with distilled water. This was artfully inserted, as the author himself had a sanguine complexion. Medicine was simple. You drank a hot potion, ran two miles and went to bed and woke up well. The language was explained by translating the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Being an island, shipping was not neglected, but took the form of floating villages, which were an extension of the Noah's Ark type. The book ends, as it began, with an attack on the Jesuits.

After the habit of their Society, they engineered a sort of Formosan St. Bartholomew, but were hoist with their own petard, and massacred in advance, and since that time no Christian has been allowed to enter their country by the Formosans, otherwise in religious matters tolerant to a fault. It is amazing to think that such stuff could have been seriously received. Still we have welcomed De Rougemont and believed in Dr. Cook, and in those days Formosa was a long way off and had not a tea shop in Piccadilly. However, received it was and with acclamation. The first edition was speedily exhausted. Translations into French and German followed. If notoriety were the author's aim, he certainly succeeded. In his own words : " The common cry and the public papers (even then identical) did it beyond my expectation. I was cried up as a prodigy, not only by the domestic but even by the foreign papers."

Psalmanazar attributed his success largely to the

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continuous attitude of the Pious Pagan. "Who could imagine," he says, "that a youth of so much sense and learning, so seemingly free from ambition and other vices, could be abandoned enough to be guilty of such an abominable imposition and fraud, for the sake of a little plain food and raiment, beyond which he neither makes the least effort or seems to have the least wish ? " Then he was an admirable controversialist. He invented the theory so dear to politicians of "What I have said, I have said." With him it was a fixed principle.

"There was one maxim I could never be prevailed upon to depart from, that whatever I had once affirmed in conversation to ever so few people and that ever so improbable or even absurd should never be amended or contradicted in the narrative." He had mastered the great truth that the only way to deal with a correction is to repeat the error with emphasis, and this he did not fail to do in the second edition eagerly sought for. But now a great misfortune overtook him.

It was generally felt that something must be done for William Innes. But for him Psalmanazar might still be living in anthropophagus error at Formosa, or a victim of the deplorable Roman superstition. Such zeal should not go unrewarded and it did not. Innes was appointed Chaplain-General to the British forces at Portugal. It was an ill day for his ally. Psalmanazar was like Napoleon after quarrelling with Talleyrand. Nothing would go right. While Innes, to complete the parallel, always fell on his feet. Afterwards a preacher at St. Margaret's, Westminster, he survived a scandal about the offertory, and then stole and published as his own a book written by a fellow-countryman entitled

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A modest enquiry into the origin of Moral Virtue—dedicated it to the Lord Chancellor, who was so impressed by its merits that he gave him a valuable living in Essex, where Innes died universally respected. There can be no doubt Innes was Psalmanazar's evil genius, nor, apart from dishonesty, a very edifying companion. Psalmanazar says : " He had an almost insurmountable propensity to wine and women, and when fraught with the former, fell immoderately foul of the latter, whether maid or married, not scrupling even to use violence." From which he draws the not uncharitable inference that Innes had no real regard to religion " either natural or revealed." Not that Psalmanazar was a prude during the half-score or dozen years admittedly spent in the most shameful idleness, vanity and extravagance ; he confesses to some sort of gallantry with the fair sex, and hinting that hardly any man might have enjoyed a greater variety of romance, expresses almost an astonishment at his own moderation.

With the departure of Innes Psalmanazar was more vulnerable. The translation into French of his book brought into the field his old antagonist Amalfi. Critics became more critical, and even his admirers began to wonder if the story was not too good to be altogether true. He became suspect, the patrons fell away. Even the papers made fun of him. The *Spectator* in 1711 announced a performance of "The Cruelty of Atreus," in which Mr. Psalmanazar, fresh from Formosa, would perform the leading part, " eating his children to the stimulating music of cymbals."

With the true instinct of the born impostor Psalmanazar felt the time had come for a disappearance.

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He retired from public view. Then a gentleman named Pattender invented a white paint. It was an excellent paint, and Psalmanazar was persuaded to father it as a Formosan discovery. Yet, notwithstanding its virtues and, in his own words, "their care and artifice to conceal its real faults (for some it had)" the thing did not go. Here the want of Innes was felt. With his business instincts there would, one feels, have been a fortune in the venture, and we might have been decorating our houses with it to this day.

He afterwards emerges as clerk to a Dragoon regiment, where he posed as Sir George, having been knighted by Queen Anne. After two years he again found himself at a loose end, and like the ruined heroine of the old-fashioned novel, took to fan painting. So late as 1716, a clergyman was still found to believe in his Jesuit revelations, and subscriptions brought him in some £30 for a few years.

Then came the last and not least extraordinary phase. He came across a theological work called *Reformed Devotions*, which impressed him. Nelson's *Method of Devotion* brought him further light. Then a borrowed copy of Law's *Serious Call*, which he omitted to return, completed his reformation. The skin of imposture was shed, and for nearly fifty years he led a life of hard work and exemplary conduct. A casual acquaintance with a printer led to his translating books for the press, and so he gets "a comfortable Living." Now he shuns notoriety as a penance for his misdeeds and publishes everything anonymously. His capacity for work is astounding; a general history of printing is his, to *The Universal history* he is a considerable contributor, and an essay on miracles

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excites attention. Next to "the blessing of God" he attributes his health and capacity for unceasing work till eighty-four to taking twelve drops of Sydenham's tincture of opium in a pint of small punch every night before going to bed.

Such is his life in Ironmonger Row—pious industry supported by punch and relieved by the society of the Club which met in an Old Street public-house, where he talked with the metaphysical tailor and was not contradicted by Doctor Johnson. Even the unclubable Hawkins says of Psalmanazar as an old man: "Scarcely any person, even children, passed him without showing him the usual signs of respect." Smollett in *Humphry Clinker* describes him as "having drudged half a century in the literary mill in all the simplicity and abstinence of an Asiatic: he subsisted on the charity of a few booksellers, just sufficient to keep him from the Parish."

Many years before his death, he commenced his *Memoirs*. According to his instructions they were not published till after his death. There he tells his story and makes its apology, but not the best or the real one—of that in the nature of things he would be unconscious. The real justification was geographical—his birthplace and its early associations. He was born near Avignon and a true son of the South. Can there be any doubt that Tarascon was the spot? As Alphonse Daudet says: "There are no Baron Munchausens in the South of France. The Southerner does not deceive but is self-deceived. He does not always tell the bare truth but he believes he does. His falsehood is not false, it is a kind of mental mirage. The only exaggerator in the South is the sun that

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glorifies everything it touches " ; and can we have any doubt that Psalmanazar himself was a direct ancestor of the immortal Tartarin ? The evidence is conclusive. Do not we remember how Tartarin, having been offered the management of a business at Shanghai, and refusing with the prudence which tempered his adventurous personality, was so interested in the affair that at last he firmly believed he had been there, and was always accepted in the Club as an authority on the life and adventures of the glorious East ? So strong is the influence of heredity !

Such, at any rate, is my excuse for Psalmanazar, and it is borne out by the fact that his conscience was only awakened after twenty years under the grey skies of England, and I believe owed more to its climate even than to Mr. Law's *Serious Call*.

SMELFUNGUS

FASHION is never more capricious than when it turns its attention to literature—authors come and go in favour. There seems to be only one fixed rule—the real thing always survives. An eclipse may be ; but even a complete eclipse does not last long. Time is the only infallible critic. For some years Smollett has been in the shade; why it is a little difficult to understand ; certainly he is an easy target for the fastidious critic. The faults are all on the surface. His heroes rely on faith rather than works for their acceptance. Whether Peregrine Pickle or Roderick Random be the greater rascal would be a near-run thing. Upon the physical charms of his heroines he dwells with an almost embarrassing particularity, and, indeed, with regard to both maintains the intimate domesticity of Mrs. Aphra Behn. His coarseness is certainly repellent, but at a time when all the early Georgian geniuses insist on this note at some point of their masterpieces it ought not to be an insuperable bar. One reads a gentle, almost ladylike, analysis of life for two or three hundred blameless pages, to be brought up suddenly by a gross incident or phrase, introduced with something of the aggressive air with which a curate smokes a pipe.

There is nothing of this about Smollett. His grossness, generally more indecent than immoral, is a sort of careless habit of expression rather like the profanity of bargees, to which the author probably attached very little importance one way or the other.

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It is a question of manners more than morals—of treatment rather than subject—even if it be admitted that the manners are not particularly refined and the treatment rather heavy in hand.

Fielding is very fond of the incident of a grotesque fight. His books are full of them. Molly Segrim's battle in the churchyard is classic, but Fielding always treats the affair in an ironic spirit which relieves the brutality, and when Mrs. Partridge attacks her husband, poor Partridge acts only on the defensive, but when Count Fathom has a difference of opinion with his wife—whom incidentally he has treated disgracefully—"she lent him a box on the ear with such energy as made his eyes water, and he for his honour of manhood and sovereignty, having washed her face with a cup of tea, withdrew to a coffee-house in the neighbourhood," is Smollett's treatment of the incident, in the crude brutality of which one seems to detect a certain atmosphere of sympathy with Fathom.

It was a rude age : Smollett was no pale student—a choleric, combative Scotchman who had had to fight a hard battle in a very rough school. His early experiences as a ship's doctor in the Navy no doubt proved an admirable training in many ways, especially for a novelist of character, but whatever ingenuous arts it taught, the sea of those days hardly tended to soften the manners. Essentially a fighter, his theory of life was the eternal tradition of the Navy ; whatever the force of the enemy, always attack; and in the joy of combat Smollett was not always very scrupulous in his methods. As Thackeray says of him: "He fought endless literary battles and braved and wielded for years the cudgels of controversy. It was a hard

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and savage fight in those days and a niggard pay. He was oppressed by illness, age, narrow fortune; but his spirit was still resolute and his courage sturdy. The battle over, he could do justice to the enemy with whom he had been so fiercely engaged and give a not unfriendly grasp to the hand that had mauled him." The grandson of a Scotch judge, Smollett inherited little but an irritable disposition from both parents, and a sense of humour from his mother. In 1739, like so many of his countrymen, he availed himself of the fairest prospect Scotland affords her sons, and started on the high road to England, true to type, with the tragedy of *The Regicide*, and very little else, in his pocket. Of his early circumstances and the journey to London the curious may read with considerable entertainment in the opening chapters of *Roderick Random*. As showing the changed condition of life, it is not without interest to find two pages of that work devoted to denouncing the extortion of a landlord and the bill set out in full, in final evidence of the "Knavery of the World":

	s.	d.
" To bread and beer . . .	0	6
To a fowl and sausage . . .	2	6
To four bottles quadrim . . .	2	0
To pie and tobacco		7
To lodging	2	0
To breakfast	1	0
	8	7 "

Which does not strike one nowadays as so very excessive, especially when we read that quadrim is an excellent ale of the landlord's own brewing—a landlord

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who quotes Horace and affects a soul above pence, to add to his villainy—and Smollett, with all his faults, was no niggard.

In those days an author sought the help and favour of a patron, according to Dr. Johnson's famous definition, one after Smollett's own heart: "A wretch who supports with insolence and is paid with flattery." The first Lord Littleton, a peer of literary tastes, is approached, but proves dilatory and unsympathetic. The famous Garrick refused the tragedy, apparently with ample justification. Smollett, though defeated, bides his time, and in *Roderick Random*, nine years afterwards, tells us all about it. Fortunately Smollett was never reduced to the straits of the gifted Mr. Melopoyne, who, when he meets Roderick Random in the Marchalsea, is reduced for clothing to a dirty rug tied about him with two pieces of list. Such is the reward for having written a tragedy which Roderick reads "with vast pleasure, not a little amazed at the conduct of the managers who had rejected it." So admirable a work was it, "judged by the laws of Aristotle and Horace," that its rejection was due, according to its unfortunate author, entirely to the perfidious conduct of Garrick thinly disguised as Marmozet, of whom he declares, "Nothing could equal his hypocrisy but his avarice, which conquered the faculties of his soul so much that he scrupled not to be guilty of the meanest practice to gratify that sordid appetite." In vain does Roderick Random affect to defend him on the ground that his social reputation is inconsistent with such conduct. The pretence is not very convincing and is only too obviously a device to give the outraged poet another chance, of which he

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avails himself fully. " It is not for the qualities of his heart that this little parasite is invited to the tables of dukes and lords who hire extraordinary cooks for his entertainment—his avarice they see not, his ingratitude they feel not, his hypocrisy accommodates itself to their humours and is of consequence pleasing, but he is chiefly courted for his buffoonery and will be admitted into the choicest parties of quality for his talent of mimicking Punch and his wife Joan, when a poet of the most exquisite genius [*i.e.* the author of *The Regicide*'] is not able to attract the least regard."

In comparison with this Lord Littleton, if not " paid with flattery," is let off lightly as Lord Rattle and Sir Gosling Scrag, even if his ode to the memory of his wife is ridiculed by a burlesque ode on the love of a grandmother, a performance of which in later years its author was probably not very proud. Yet in his *History of England* Smollett writes of Garrick : " The exhibitions of the stage were improved to the most exquisite entertainment by the talent and management of Garrick, who greatly surpassed all his predecessors of this and perhaps every other nation in his genius for acting. In the sweetness and variety of his tones, the irresistible magic of his eye, the fire and vivacity of his actions, the elegance of attitude, and the whole pathos of expression " ; but then in the interval that distinguished actor had produced, and paid for well, Smollett's farce, *The Reprisals, or The Tars of Old England*. The hand is extended also to the peer of whom we read in the same work : " Candidates for literary fame appeared even in the higher sphere of life " as exemplified by " the delicate taste, the polished muse, and the tender feelings of a Littleton." The

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battle is over and the not unfriendly hand held out.

So with his struggles as a doctor. He tries to establish a practice in Downing Street and then in Mayfair, and fails. One cannot picture Smollett as a fashionable physician. Among his many gifts a bedside manner was hardly included. In consequence in his books he pokes the most merciless fun at the medical profession. Another attempt is made at Bath with a like result, and he writes a pamphlet to prove that its famous waters are entirely useless for all medical purposes—internal or external. Smollett was a practical man. Religion's appeal to him was slight. Catholicism, he says somewhere, was to him ridiculous, a comedy; Calvinism a tragedy and detestable. His Christianity would always have found it difficult to love an enemy unless indeed he had drubbed him soundly first. Although he never made a success as a doctor, in some ways he was far ahead of his time. He had an enormous belief in cold water and fresh air, and may claim to have discovered sea-bathing as a medical treatment.

But with Smollett, as with so many of his peculiar temperament, his bark was much worse than his bite. At heart a generous, kindly man, who found it as hard to do an unkind thing as to say a civil one. In the midst of his strenuous work he was a devoted husband and best of fathers. What a charming picture one of his letters gives : " Many a time do I stop my task and betake me to a game of romps with Betty while my wife looks on smiling and longing in her heart to join in the sport." Poor Betty, whose early death he never ceased to mourn. Like "most Scotchmen, he was a staunch

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friend, especially to those in need, but perhaps the best testimonial to the real character of the man is the fact that when, broken in health and fortune, he went on his travels to the South of France, his servant, after twelve years' service, refused to leave him. There must be something inherently attractive in a man whose dependants love him. The real test is not whether a man is hero to his valet, but how long he has managed to keep him. Among his multifarious labours Smollett ran a kind of literary factory, where he turned out every kind of production, from a *Universal History* to a translation of Voltaire. To get through the work he kept an army of hack writers in constant work. There was nothing unusual in this, it was the age of Grubb Street; but Smollett provided the agreeable novelty of entertaining them every Sunday to dinner at his house in Chelsea. A most entertaining account of the *menage* will be found in *Humphry Clinker* : " Every Sunday his house is open to all unfortunate brothers of the quill, whom he treats with beef, pudding and potatoes, port, punch, and Calvert's Entire butt beer. He has fixed upon the first day of the week for the exercise of his hospitality because some of liis guests could not enjoy it upon any other for reasons I need not explain. I was civilly received in a plain yet decent habitation which opened backwards into a very pleasant garden kept in excellent order, and indeed I saw none of the outward signs of authorship either in the house or the landlord, who is one of those few writers of the age that stand upon their own foundation, without patronage and above dependence." The account of the company which follows is one of the best examples of Smollett's fun, and

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with the famous party, after the manner of the antients in *Peregrine Pickle* remains as entertaining as anything in English literature. But even better than Smollett's conscious picture of himself is the unconscious.

Francis Barber, Dr. Johnson's black servant, had the misfortune to be pressed on board the *Stag* frigate (Captain Angel). Smollett writes to Wilkes on his behalf : " I am again your petitioner in behalf of that great cham of literature, Samuel Johnson. . . . Our lexicographer is in great distress; he says the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat which renders him very unfit for His Majesty's Service. You know what matter of animosity the said Johnson has against you, and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it than of laying him under an obligation." There spoke the real man, and through Wilkes's influence Barber was restored to a service for which he was better adapted than His Majesty's. An odd, agreeable incident, which shows at one in kindness of heart three very different men.

After the failure of the tragedy for a time Smollett abandoned literature, and taking a position of surgeon in the Navy sailed in the squadron under Sir Chaloner Ogle. He was present during the whole of the operations against Carthagera in 1741, and remained in the Navy until 1744. They were four momentous years. It was then that Smollett gained that intimate knowledge of the English sailor to which we owe Morgan and Bowling, Hatchway and Trunnion, and it was on his way home that he met at Jamaica the beautiful Miss Lascelles, to whom he was so happily married. Nancy Lascelles, as the daughter of a

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planter, should have been an heiress, but something went wrong with her fortune. This was of little account to a man of Smollett's spirit. Upon his return, for some time he hesitated between medicine and literature, and it was not until 1748 that he published *Roderick Random*, and his genius found its real expression. The book had an immediate success. The knowledge of life, sense of character, and consistent succession of humorous scenes and incidents, appealed directly to the public, in spite of its underlying bitterness of tone. It is the work of a proud, sensitive man smarting under a sense of failure, and even worse—the successes of many he felt with justice his inferiors.

Peregrine Pickle followed in 1751, and at once there is apparent a more genial atmosphere. If *Peregrine*—"the savage and forecious Pickle," as Scott calls him—is no great advance as a hero upon *Roderick*, the society at the garrison strikes a much more human note. It's true the practical joke is still the basis of a good deal of the humour. It is a little startling to find a plot to marry the unfortunate Commodore to the repulsive Miss Grizzle treated as excellent fun, especially when engineered and carried to a successful end by the two people who profess the greatest affection for their victim. But there is real pathos in the scene of Trunnion's death, and what sailor could wish a finer epitaph than Hatchway's on his old friend: * Well fare thy soul, old Hawser Trunnion; man and boy I have known thee these five-and-thirty years, and sure a truer heart never broke biscuit. Many a hard gale hast thou weathered, but now thy spells are all over and thy hull fairly laid up. A better commander I'd never desire to serve, and who knows but

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I may help to set up thy standing rigging in another world " ? After *Peregrine Pickle* Smollett established himself at his house in Chelsea, which was his home for twenty years.

Except to a criminologist, *Ferdinand Count Fathom* is a dull book. Smollett falls into the vulgar error that crime is amusing. The truth is, as a rule, a villain is a dull dog. The idea that criminals are a dashing, fascinating crew is the poorest cant of the penny dreadful. Only stupid people commit crimes ; no one turns to the road if he has contrivance enough to make an honest living. There is no duller reading than the *Newgate Calendar*. Cassanova himself after a volume or two becomes a bore. If one took the lives of twelve saints I venture to think they would provide much more entertainment than the same number of sinners, however desperate. Even Fielding made a tedious affair of *Jonathan Wild*, despite its irony.

At Chelsea all the time a vast output went on. Histories, voyages, compendiums of information, were poured upon the town. Smollett, among other ventures, translated *Don Quixote*, and the task no doubt suggested Sir Launcelot Greaves, a knight-errant in an English setting. In addition to his other labours he became editor of the *Critical Review*, and here his combativeness got him into serious trouble. It appears that Admiral Knowles's conduct on the occasion of the Rochfort Expedition was the subject of comment, which in the *Critical Review* took this form : " He is," said Smollett, " an admiral without conduct, an engineer without knowledge, an officer without resolution, and a nan without veracity"—a vigorous

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piece of writing which, cost its author three months' imprisonment and a fine of £100. He next started *The Briton Magazine*, a hopeless attempt to make Lord Bute popular. Its only practical result was to involve Smollett in a quarrel with Wilkes, whose retaliatory *North Briton* carried heavier metal. A series of misfortunes followed. Lord Bute threw him over, poor Betty died, his finances became affected, and in 1763 he shut up his Chelsea establishment, and "traded by malice, persecuted by faction, abandoned by false patrons, and overwhelmed with a sense of a domestic calamity," he sought mental and physical relief in foreign travel.

During the two years' absence he wrote letters to his various friends, which form his *Travels through France and Italy*, one of the few looks of travel that have proved of permanent interest. A pioneer can always get an audience ; it takes a writer to keep it. Smollett was both, for the author of *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* may fairly claim to have discovered the Riviera. In another classic of travel Sterne describes our author : " The learned Smelfungus travelled from Boulogne to Paris, from Paris to Rome, and so on, but he set out with the spleen and the jaundice. He wrote an account of them, but it was nothing but the account of his miserable feelings." And again :

" I popped upon Smelfungus again at Turin in his return home, and sad tale of sorrowful adventures he had to tell, wherein he had been flayed alive and beheaded and used worse than St. Bartholomew at every stage he had come at.— I'll tell it,' cried Smelfungus, ' to the world.'—' You had better tell it,' said

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I, to your physician.' " There was a tragic truth in this; more perhaps than Sterne guessed. The poor traveller, although he refused to admit it, had already developed the seeds of consumption which eventually killed him. Arriving at Boulogne in August with a bad cold, to the amazement of the natives he went in for a course of sea-bathing. " By this desperate remedy got a fresh cold in my head, but my stitches and fever vanished the very first day, and by a daily repetition of the bath I have diminished my cough, strengthened my body, and recovered my spirits."

Smollett was not an easy traveller ; he had one great disqualification common to generous natures—a hatred of being swindled—and found the bills even worse than Roderick Random's. The customs officials who held up his library of books were " vermin," a classification which alone should endear him to travellers everywhere and always. His ultimate destination was Nice, but he travelled by Montpellier, at that time the most famous health resort in Europe, in order to see the antiquities around Nimes and Anjou, and to try how far the climate suited his ailment. On the way he engages Joseph, his coachman, who turns out to have been a member of a gang of brigands headed by one Maudrin—the Dick Turpin of eighteenth-century France. Joseph, in fact, had only been pardoned in consideration of his performing upon Maudrin the office of executioner. However, Joseph proved " very obliging and submissive," and at once became, like all Smollett's dependants, devoted to his master, so much so, that on Smollett's return eighteen months later, the amiable brigand, on seeing him

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again, " shed tears of joy." At Montpellier practised the great lung specialist of the day, Dr. Fyves. Smollett, ever suspicious of the faculty, submits a statement of his case in Latin, and the doctor declares that he has tubercles in the lungs. It was only too true, but Smollett will not admit the truth, ridicules the poor professor, and pushes on for Nice.

If he had no other title to fame, Smollett discovered the Riviera. " Winter in all his rigour reigning on one- side of the house and summer in all her glory on the other" still describes its climate. He stays the night at Cannes, " a little fishing town, agreeably situated on the beach of the sea " ; and so to Nice. The poor invalid is enraptured with the beauty of the scene. " When I stand upon the rampart and look round me, I can scarce help thinking myself enchanted." Those who sneer at Smollett as a Goth, insensible to beauty of all kinds, should read his appreciation and admirable description of the beauties, architectural and natural, of Southern France. Even in the eighteenth century the trade in flowers was in full vogue. " Presents of carnations are sent from hence in the winter to Turin and Paris, nay, sometimes as far as London by the post. They are [and still are] packed up in a wooden box without any sort of preparation, one pressed upon another ; the person who receives them cuts off a little bit of the stalk, and steeps them for two hours in vinegar and water, when they recover their full bloom and beauty." Those who grumble at the cost of a railway ticket to the South must remember that in September, 1764, " the journey from Calais to Nice of four persons in a coach, or two post-chaises, with a servant on horse-back

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travelling post, may be performed with care for about £120, including every expense."

At Nice he continued the sea-bathing. "The people here were very surprised when I began to bathe in the middle of May ; they thought it very strange that a man seemingly consumptive should plunge into the sea, especially when the weather was so cold, and some of the doctors prognosticated immediate death ; but when it was perceived that I grew better in consequence of the bath, some of the Swiss officers tried the same experiment, and in a few days our example was followed by several inhabitants of Nice." The climate delights him, but it is gratifying to learn that even in the eighteenth century "the seasons seem more irregular than formerly." The Gothic view of Smollett is largely due to Sterne, who accuses him of speaking disrespectfully of the Pantheon. "'Tis nothing but a huge cockpit,' said he.—'I wish you had said nothing worse of the Venus of Medici/' replied I." It is a most unfair attack. "I had a most eager curiosity to see the antiquities of Florence and Rome. I longed impatiently to view those wonderful edifices, statues, and pictures which I had so often admired in prints and descriptions. I felt an enthusiastic ardour to tread that very classical ground, which had been the scene of so many great achievements," is hardly the language of a Philistine. It is true he was not merely a critic, but an independent critic. He did not like Michael Angelo's *Last Judgment*, and said so, in which he joined hands with a later novelist, Wilkie Collins. But in saying of Raphael's art, "He has the serenity of Virgil, but wants the fire of Homer," he adds to the felicity of phrase a nice

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perception of artistic values. If he did not like the Pantheon he did full justice to the Castle of St. Angelo, St. Peter's, the Coliseum, and the baths of Caracalla. And after all, complain as Sterne did of his usage of the Venus, poor Smollett is most apologetic to the lady:

I believe I ought to be entirely silent, or at least conceal my real sentiments, which will otherwise appear equally absurd and presumptuous. It must be want of taste that prevents my feeling that enthusiastic admiration with which others are inspired." All he did say was, " I cannot help thinking that there is no beauty in the features of the Venus, and that the attitude is awkward and out of character." In June, 1765, the traveller returned to his native land, writing : " I love it still more tenderly as the scene of all my interesting connexions, as the habitation of my friends, for whose conversation, correspondence, and esteem I wish alone to live." His health was undoubtedly improved. To show, as it were, that there was still life in the old dog, he writes *The Adventures of an Atom*, in which, refreshed by travel, he runs genially amok among patrons, politicians, and the public life of the day. The strain of work began again to try his constitution, but not before he had completed, while the southern sun still lingered in his bones, his greatest book, *The Adventures of Humphry Clinker*, which Thackeray described as " the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel-writing began." It was probably his letters from the South that suggested the epistolary form in which it is written. Tedious as that method is for the exposition of a story, Smollen saw what an admirable opportunity it gave the humorist. The different

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points of view with which the same incidents are seen and recorded by the varying characters make an ever-changing feast of fun. In *Humphry Clinker*, Smollett found himself at last, and quite unconsciously the splenetic fighter merges into the genial humorist, Matthew Bramble. But the end was near. Poor Smollett never lived to enjoy the success of *Humphry Clinker*. In 1770 he was driven again abroad by his health, and this time started upon a journey longer than he had anticipated.

To any one fond of reading a bad memory is a great asset. It is about the equivalent of a moderately stocked library. One turns back to the old books with an ever-fresh enjoyment. Sometimes, it is true, to be disappointed. The masterpieces of our boyhood are not always quite as good as we thought, but others turn out surprisingly better. Smollett certainly does not disappoint. His style, if not in the least literary, is certainly literature, direct, pointed, and economic. His words tell and are generally the right ones. In times of peace and prosperity, the reflective and philosophical appeals. Gentle problems for arm-chair solution wile away the pleasant Sunday afternoons of the well-to-do. In times of stress and struggle we turn to the simpler stories of life and character. When Carlyle wanted to forget the destruction of the French Revolution he read the admirable works of Captain Marryat. So Smollett's turn may come. As long as humour and characterisation attract, *Humphry Clinker* will be sure of an audience, and Tabitha Bramble, Winifred Jenkins, and Lismahago continue to delight us. One thing is undoubtedly true of Smollett. No one who ever wrote has had so great

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and abiding an influence on future novelists. Dickens's debt to him was immense. Actual incidents he reproduces. Sam Weller's joining Mr. Pickwick in the Fleet is merely Peregrine Pickle and Hatchway and Pipes over again, and among "the glorious host" that came out of the "blessed little room" upstairs to console David Copperfield's childhood by their grateful company, Dickens does not forget to include Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, and Humphry Clinker. To the suggestive genius of Tobias Smollett, Fanny Burney, Walter Scott, Marryat, and Charles Lever all owe, not in the sense of plagiarism but of inspiration, a debt they would never have repudiated.

CAPTAIN MARRYAT

IT is not given to many mortals to succeed in one capacity—very few in two. Captain Marryat is in a happy dilemma. Was he greater as a sailor or writer ? Weighed in impartial scales the result might hang indeterminate, but impartiality is precluded by the delight he has given as an author to countless generations of readers, and the bias is inevitable on the side of literature. Probably the question never occurred to the gallant author, who threw off his books with such easy facility, and I dare say was, in his heart of hearts, a little puzzled why such simple tales of the sea should achieve such prodigious success. Perhaps his reputation as a sailor helped, but the success was immediate and lasting. For his first published novel, *Frank Mildmay*, he received £400 from his publisher, Mr. Colburn, and as much as £1,200 for *Midshipman Easy*, and made what in those days was a comfortable fortune between the years 1829 and 1848.

If his success as a sailor launched him as an author, his success as an author rather swamped his renown as a sailor, and few of the present generation who enjoy his books realise that he was one of the most distinguished naval officers of his time ; and it was a time of heroes. Lord Nelson had only been dead a year when Marryat joined the Navy to serve under such distinguished admirals as Lord Cochrane (afterwards Earl of Dundonald), Lord Napier, and Sir Samuel Hood. Like many great men, he owed a great deal to

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his mother, who was a Bostonian and a noted beauty, and there is an agreeable story to the effect that she opened a ball, given in celebration of American Independence, with George Washington himself. His father, a Huguenot by descent, combined politics and poetry, and in spite of that incongruous union got as far along the tortuous path as to refuse a baronetcy from Spencer Percival; but there can be little doubt it was to his American strain that Captain Marryat owed that vivacity of intellect and character which stood him in such good stead in his varied life.

Educated at private schools, we hear " his boisterous temperament brought him into repeated collision with the imperfect discipline." Indeed, he seems to have spent most of his time at school in running away from it, and, like so many boys before and after, always to the sea.

In 1806, a year after the Battle of Trafalgar, an admirable account of which occurs in *The King's Own*, he started on his first voyage on board H.M.S. *Imperieuse*, with no less a captain than the redoubtable Cochrane. When we realise that Lord Cochrane was the original of Captain Savage in *Peter Simple*, suspicion should be silenced for ever as to his share in the De Berenger conspiracy. Who can imagine that most chivalrous of gentlemen being concerned in a fraud, however picturesque ?

In the strenuous days of war one wondered what had happened to Lord Dundonald's famous secret war plan which " would destroy any fleet or fortress," for such was its claim, and in 1811 a committee of five presided over by the Duke of York reported this no idle boast. It was " infallible and irresistible, but too inhuman in

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its results " to be employed. The secret remained in the possession of the War Office, and was seriously considered at so recent an occasion as the Crimean War, with the same result and disqualification ; but Cochrane's obvious methods of warfare were nearly as deadly as his secret, and during the three years Marryat served under him he took part in no less than fifty engagements of varying but invariable success. On one of these expeditions the incident took place afterwards narrated in *Frank Mildmay*. The lieutenant in command was shot; Marryat, who was just behind him, was knocked down by his falling corpse and trampled over by the entire boarding-party. In the end he was put among the dead, and only recovered his senses just in time to prevent his being thrown overboard. " For a wonder this chap has cheated the gallows " was nearly his requiem, but " You are a liar " came in the very nick of time, and the situation and author were saved.

His character as an officer was summed up somewhat quaintly by Cochrane in a letter: " He was brave, zealous, intelligent and even thoughtful, yet active in the performance of his duties."

In *Frank Mildmay* there is much that is autobiographical. The incident of the hero jumping overboard to save his enemy and persecutor Murphy actually happened on the *Imperieuse*, and he writes to his mother after he had saved a midshipman who used to bully him, oddly enough a son of the famous Radical writer, William Cobbett, " From that moment I have loved the fellow as I never loved friend before; all my hate is forgotten. I have saved his life."

The most dramatic incident in the novel actually

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took place on board the *Molus*, on which he served under Lord James Townshend. In a gale that vessel was thrown on her beam ends, her top masts and mizzen torn away. The only chance of saving the ship was to cut away the hamper, but so dangerous was the operation that no one could be induced to attempt it until, in his own words, "I made signs to the captain I would attempt to cut away the wreck, follow me who dared. I mounted the weather rigging; five or six hardy seamen followed me," and, at the imminent risk of his life, the ship was saved. It may well have been, as Frank Mildmay says, "The proudest moment of my life." For his heroism on this occasion Marryat was awarded a certificate which, in the words of his captain, declared, "He conducted himself with such bravery, intrepidity, and firmness as merited my warmest approbation."

However, the book is only incidentally autobiographical, and he found it necessary to assure the public that, had he run the career of vice of the hero of *The Naval Officer*, at all events he would have had sufficient sense of shame not to have avowed it. One cannot help agreeing with this view, for Frank Mildmay was, even apart from his morals, the least attractive of his heroes.

Marryat's courage was equal to every test. On at least twelve occasions he risked his life by jumping overboard to save others—on one occasion in a sea full of sharks—and was presented with the Gold Medal of the Royal Humane Society in 1818. But, after all, courage is hardly a distinction in the English Navy, and Marryat's reputation rested on other, and perhaps surer, foundations. He was as capable as he was brave.

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In 1812 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, after his varied service against the French. He served with distinction in the American War, and found himself at the peace of 1815 on shore with the rank of commander. In the leisure which this afforded him, to say nothing of designing a life-boat, he invented and brought to perfection his famous code of signals. At once adopted by the Merchant Service and the British and French Navies, to this day it has never been superseded ; a remarkable performance, which was recognised by his election in 1819 to a fellowship of the Royal Society, and in 1833 he received the Cross of the Legion of Honour from Louis Philippe.

In 1820 Captain Marryat obtained his first command in the *Beaver* sloop and was stationed at St. Helena, where it was his mission to guard Napoleon, against whose navy he had done such excellent work. Marryat remained at St. Helena till the end, and brought home the official news of the Emperor's death, also a sketch of the dead Emperor made shortly after death, one of the few actual, as apart from ceremonial, portraits, for, among his other gifts, the captain was an excellent draughtsman and caricaturist.

His next command was H.M.S. *Lame*, on board which he took part in the first Burmese War. Here fortune for once favoured him. Owing to the illness of his superior officer he found himself in command of the naval force. A very interesting account of the expedition will be found in " *Olla Podrida*," a collection of fugitive pieces published in the *Metropolitan Magazine*. After two years of amphibious warfare, Marryat emerged with the rank of post-captain and a C.B.—a somewhat Modest reward of services uniformly

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successful, for which he received the thanks of the general in command in public orders, and twice those of the Governor and Council in Calcutta.

In 1828 he was appointed to the *Ariadne*, a command he resigned upon being selected as equerry to the Duke of Sussex, and his naval career ended.

As a naval officer he can hardly be better described than in his own words about Lord Napier. "In the midst of tyranny he set the example of mercy. In the midst of ignorance he was learned and scientific. In the midst of idleness he was studious himself and ready to instruct others . . . one of the best seamen and best officers in His Majesty's service." It would seem at first astonishing that so distinguished a career should have received so little official recognition ; but the reason is simple. Captain Marryat was not merely a man of original ideas, but tried to put them in force. In *Newton Foster* he had written strongly against the system of impressment; still worse, in 1822 he published a pamphlet entitled *Suggestions for the Abolition of the Present System of Impressment in the Naval Service*. This, in 1822, was rank blasphemy. William IV. had read and been delighted with *Peter Simple*, and was well disposed towards its author, but the pamphlet rankled.

When the distinction was conferred upon Marryat by the French King, it was necessary to obtain William IV.'s consent for it to be worn, and in certain quarters it was suggested that this was the occasion for some higher distinction for one who had served his country so long and well. William IV. granted the one as a matter of course, and was favourably inclined to the other suggestion, when, in an unlucky moment,

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he remembered the pamphlet, and said, " Marryat! Marryat! Is that not the man who wrote a book against the impressment of seamen ? Then he shan't wear the Order, and he shall have nothing," and there is little doubt that he was regarded with suspicion in official circles as a dangerous innovator, nor did the fact that he stood as a Reformer for the Tower Hamlets in 1832 do anything to remove this distrust.

In 1829 he began his new career with *Frank Mildmay*, and, after the interruption of a cruise in the *Ariadne* frigate, settled down steadily to write in 1830. To Marryat as an author the public has been rather ungrateful. There is a foolish idea abroad that he is a mere writer for boys, and that some apology is almost seemly for any mature appreciation of his works. Nothing could be more unfair—although he did write two of the best children's books in English, *Masterman Ready* and *The Children of the New Forest*.

An ill-natured criticism by Edgar A. Poe—often quoted against him—is responsible for a good deal of this feeling. " His books are essentially mediocre—his ideas are the common property of the mob and have been their common property time out of mind—one looks through his writings in vain for the slightest indication of originality, for the faintest incentive to thought." So we are told. It is true Poe was criticising probably his worst novel, *The Poacher*, and in considering the qualities that entitle a novelist to consideration Poe omits two of the greatest, characterisation and humour, in both of which Marryat was pre-eminent, and in both of which, it may be said, Poe himself was conspicuously lacking.

Still, the criticism is inherently absurd. Who wants

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subtle philosophy in a novel of action ? And imagine *Midshipman Easy* written in terms of Mr. Henry James ! Nor is the charge of want of originality well founded. Both in subjects and treatment Marryat was a pioneer—as another distinguished American of letters, Washington Irving, wrote to and of him : " I think the chivalry of the ocean quite a new region of fiction and romance, and to my taste one of the most captivating that could be explored " ; and by his treatment he put on record for all time the finest thing this country has, the spirit of the British Navy.

There are some assertions best met by a flat refusal to consideration. If the novels had been such poor stuff, would they have been appreciated by the masters of literature ? To no one he appealed more than to Dickens. Macaulay and Sydney Smith were his devoted admirers. Thackeray consoled himself when ill on the Mississippi with his " dearly beloved *Jacob Faithful*" and I am sure that kindly humorist felt the less lonely for the companionship. Christopher North was one of the fathifful; and Lockhart declared: " His quiet effectiveness of circumstantial narrative " reminded him of Defoe.

Henry Kingsley writes in *Ravenshoe* : "A flood of historical recollections comes over Charles, and he recognises the place as one long known and very dear to him. On these very stairs Mr. Midshipman Easy stood and resolved he would take a boat and sail to Gazo . . . other events have taken place at Malta . . . but Charles did not think of them, not even of St. Paul and the viper ... he thought of Midshipman Easy and felt as if he had seen the place before."

It is just that that makes the difference between the

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artist and the craftsman. Poe blames Marryat for relying on mere multiplication of incident; but Marryat always makes us feel "as if we had seen the place before." It is the difference between *Pickwick Abroad* (which dismal rubbish Poe apparently takes seriously) and the real thing.

With all his virtues the author of *The French Revolution* did not suffer folly easily. Yet after that grim tragedy when John Stuart Mill's housemaid burnt the immortal work, stout-hearted Thomas Carlyle (never finer than at that crisis) turned to Marryat for consolation, and spent a week at the seaside reading his novels.

At a time when our nation seems never free from care it could not do better than follow the sage's example. England will find there the courage of combat and the spirit of victory. What strikes one most is the sublime confidence of victory. No one was ever less of a braggart than Marryat, or a more generous antagonist. His admiration for the fighting qualities of the French is unbounded; but that they could possibly defeat Englishmen on the sea is inconceivable. It is against the order of nature. His was no two keels to one standard; on the contrary, one to three was his admirable formula.

As an author Marryat has suffered from his very virtues.

He is such excellent reading that the prigs suspect him, and is never unintelligible, so the critics despise him. His works survive the greatest test of the novelist genius. Can you remember his characters? What a gallant company they form! Peter Simple himself, the dashing O'Brien, although one wishes he had not been so hard on the midshipman of the *Snapper*

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—yet who is perfect ? How dignified his gallery of captains ! Captain Savage, Captain Wilson, and the anonymous Captain M. of *The King's Own*^ tempered by that genial *raconteur* Captain Kearney. What a fine story that of the ship with the cargo of rose-water ! How masterly his treatment of the old aunt and the will ! How efficient his first lieutenants ! What a generous figure Midshipman Easy (his midshipmen are always perfect) and his warm-hearted, if visionary, father !

Perhaps old Easy's scheme of phrenological reform may not have been scientifically sound, but it was a bold conception, not more absurd than Christian Science, and much less dangerous. One always feels he lived before his time. Nowadays he might have made his mark as a social reformer, and perhaps been the idol of an East End constituency as a Labour M.P.

Who can ever forget Mr. Hawkins, the chaplain, who in time of stress is always reverting to the quarter-deck officer, in eloquence and action ? What a deserved impression he made on his prisoner, the Russian captain, when he learns by whom he has been captured.

" The padre—*par exemple*—well, I always had a great respect for the Church. Pray, sir said he, turning to Easy, ' do your padres always head your boarders ? '

" ' Always, sir,' replied Jack. ' It's a rule of the service—and the duty of a padre to show the men the way to heaven. It's our ninety-ninth Article of War.'

" You are a fighting nation,' " replied the Russian, with some reason in the face of this Church militant.

The nurse in the same work will always be remembered for the classic excuse for the inopportune baby.

Then his warrant-officers, Mr. Muddle, the car-

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penter, with his fascinating theory of recurrent existence ; Swinburne, the quarter-master, who explains our hereditary alliance with the Portuguese on the ground that " we can get no port wine anywhere else, and they can't get any one else to buy it." Even Mr. Biggs, hostile though his presentment, appeals to our affection. His " duty before decency " challenges comparison with Nelson's immortal sign ; and what a gentleman he was in spite of certain defects of manner and temperament! In the triangular duel, what short work he makes of the purser's pettifogging point, that because they had no quarrel Mr. Biggs should not shoot at him ! How fine his answer : " Shot for shot and hit the luckiest" !

From his best shore book, *Jacob Faithful*, how pleasantly come back to us Mr. Turnbull and his climbing wife—old Tom and his son—the dominie, a gentleman and a scholar if ever there was one—and Jacob himself; for Marryat manages the difficult task, in an age of conventional heroes, of making his human and possible. But pre-eminent above all stands out the immortal Chucks ; a figure worthy to rank with the great Mell himself, with whom he had much in common, and I am sure the author of *Evan Harrington* would be the last to resent the comparison ; and can there be the slightest doubt that when he dined " at the same table with Lord Privilege," he had taken the precaution to buy his clothes from " Meredith's the Tailor," just as O'Brien and Peter Simple hastened to do when they got back to Portsmouth after their famous escape from the French prison.

How mellow Mr. Chucks's vocabulary ! In the whole
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range of fiction is there a more gratifying incident than Chucks's glorious *renaissance* as the Swedish Count Shucksen ? If there is, I do not know it; and among his characters let us not forget Snarley-Yow—the most remarkable dog in fiction. Nor do I think that it is mere partiality which makes one regard Agnes Easy, *nte* Rebiera, as a delightful young lady; and Peter Simple very lucky with Celeste.

But the real answer to those who dismiss Marryat as a mere compiler of professional anecdotes is his remarkable advance in the literary art. Any one who has really lived can write a tolerable first book about it; it is the second and the after-efforts that tell. *Frank Mildmay* is full of go, but crude and ill put together, no doubt interrupted and hampered by Marryat's appointment to the *Ariadne*. In his own words : " I cared much about the ship, and little about the book." In this and *Newton Foster* the influence of Smollett is apparent, and the Smollett of *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*, rather than of *Humphry Clinker* ; a certain brutality of treatment and undue reliance on the practical joke as a basis of humour. *The King's Own* is full of good things ; nothing could be better than the account of the mutiny at the Nore and the Battle of Trafalgar. The storm at the end is taken from an historical episode, when Lord Exmouth on the *Indefatigable* fought the French frigate *Droit de PHonneur* on to a lee shore and beat off himself to the open sea ; but as a story it is disconnected and the end melodramatic with a tragedy quite out of the original picture.

It is with *Peter Simple*, the best of all his books, that Marryat finds his literary legs, and, for the first time,

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expresses his own individuality, free from the influence of others. The difference is marked. One has only to compare the complete picture, Captain Kearney, with the rough sketch of Captain G. in *Frank Mildmay* to note the immense advance. *Peter Simple* is one of those attractive novels that start well. What an excellent touch is the influence of the markets on Mr. Handycock's manners ! The journey down to Portsmouth in the week with Captain Savage and the drunken sailor, the incidents of the midshipman and poor Peter's misadventures, especially his ill-timed pride in his female acquaintance—what good fun it all is ! As a picture of life on board ship, the book has a mellowness and finality which, except perhaps in *Midshipman Easy*, is never reached again. Every one must have been struck by the vividness of the escape from Givet. That it should ring so true is not surprising, as a great deal of it was based on fact; and Marryat even took the name O'Brien and gives it to the hero of these particular incidents.

The real story will be found in a book called *My Adventures During the Late War : a Narrative of Shipwreck, Captivity, Escapes from French Prisons, and Sea Service in 1804-14*, by Donald Henchy O'Brien, Capt., R.N., a new edition of which was published in 1902 and admirably edited by Mr. Charles Oman, the indefatigable student of that period. It tells an amazing story. Truth once more is much stranger than fiction. The O'Brien of romance only escaped once, but Donald Henchy breaks prison three times, only to succeed at the last venture. Captured in 1804 he was a prisoner at Gitet from March till October, then, transferred to Verdun, he escaped in 1807 with

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three other naval officers. After making their way as far as Etaples, they were caught by *douaniers* when actually in sight of the sea, less fortunate than the Captain's namesake and Peter Simple. After recapture, O'Brien and his companions were sent to the mountain fort of Bitche in the Vosges, reserved for refractory prisoners of war. On the way the intrepid band made a dash for liberty, and O'Brien got away and made for Austria, then the nearest neutral frontier. After crossing the Rhine, and working through the Black Forest, he was arrested on suspicion at Lindau on Lake Constance. The Bavarian Government sent him back to France, and in November, 1807, poor O'Brien found himself again at Bitche.

It is not surprising to learn that this time he was rigorously imprisoned in a subterranean dungeon, reported proof against any attempt of escape. Nevertheless, after a year he escapes again, surmounts the three walls of the prison, and this time gets through to Trieste, and finds his intrepid way to H.M.S. *Amphion* one of his old ships, on November 7th, 1808. It is a most amazing story of audacity and grit. His first escape from Verdun Marryat follows fairly closely. The device of pretending to be conscripts on the way to the camp at Boulogne and the life in woods follow the original; also the arrival at the coast and attempts to get a boat. Marryat makes his characters escape from Givet, where the real O'Brien had been imprisoned on the way to Verdun ; and in the details of the escape from the fortress itself uses many of the incidents of the real O'Brien's last and successful escape from the fortress of Bitche. It is from this escape he takes the incident of the cnase, when Peter

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and O'Brien are nearly detected by the sportsmen hunting the wolf, when they are hiding in the wood. The discovery of the dead rope-dancer and the subsequent disguise is, however, pure Marryat.

The real O'Brien's adventures are extremely good reading, and they show on every page how true Marryat's presentation of the naval officer of the period was. The use he makes of the book is quite legitimate. It is no slavish copy. Different incidents he uses taken from each escape, but weaves them into an original story of his own, and the gain from the book is principally the atmosphere and sense of reality which pervades the Odyssey of his characters from Givet until they climb on board the *Snapper* cutter in the English Channel.

Between *Peter Simple* in 1834 and *The Phantom Ship* in 1837 appear *Jacob Faithful*, *Midshipman Easy*, *Japhet in Search of a Father*, and *Snarley-Tow*. It is an output of which any author might be proud. There is a school which declares *Snarley-Tow* his best book. It is certainly very well constructed, but it lacks the spaciousness and dignity of *Peter Simple* and the genial humour of *Midshipman Easy*. It contains one odd anachronism, for Lieutenant van Slyperken puts an umbrella under his arm to visit the widow Vandersloosh nearly a century before it was invented by the ingenious Mr. Joseph Hanway. Corporal van Spitter and the widow are quite in his best vein, and the rascally lieutenant is a wonderful figure; but the book has not that curious charm that is the peculiar property of Marryat at his best. It is odd how some books, like some people and many houses, have this intangible quality. I wonder how

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many, if they honestly confessed what book had given the greatest pleasure in their reading life, would not say *Midshipman Easy* ? To that masterpiece of humour and adventure one never turns in vain, and the atmosphere of the Mediterranean is suggested with the sureness of real literature.

About *Peter Simple*, *Jacob Faithful*, *Midshipman Easy*, and *Snarley-Tow* there can be no doubt; with them the high-water mark is reached. To enjoy *Japhet* thoroughly you must be one of the faithful. The gipsy part is excellent, but in fashionable life ashore Marryat is hardly at his best; for instance, the device adopted by Major Carbonnell to win at whist strikes one as rather ingenuous. Still, the book had an immense vogue, and there is the well-known story of the American vessel signalling to the English boat as they passed in the Atlantic to ask whether "Japhet had succeeded in finding his father."

In his social point of view there was always something of a sailor's simplicity in Marryat's outlook, especially his extraordinary awe of rank. His view of the position and dignity of a Peer of the Realm is prodigious—one is quite glad for his own sake that he did not live to-day. The accounts of Lord Privilege are almost reverential, and even baronets are treated in a manner to satisfy Sir Vavasour Firebrace himself.

After *Snarley-Tow* the ebb becomes perceptible ; only those with the true Marryat spirit should be allowed to read *The Pirate* and *Three Cutters*, *The Poacher* and *Percival Keene*, which last, at any rate, produced one of the first parodies in English, Bret Harte's *Mr. Midshipman Jtreezy*. *The Pasha of Many Tales* contains some excellent ones, *Poor Jack*

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has good moments, and *The Phantom Ship*, after its third or fourth perusal, so moved Robert Louis Stevenson " with a spirit of emulation that he began *The Master of Ballantrae*" but it is on the earlier works that Marryat's reputation as an author must rest.

The Army has produced many novelists but no novel. In his books Marryat has given us not merely novels but a record of the Navy. Distinguished as his naval career was in so many directions, it is doubtful whether he did not do more for the service to which he was so devoted by his books. How many have had their love for the sea first awakened by their study, and in his pages first realised that immortal spirit which, in the fine words of Mr. Blatchford, has made an island a piece of land surrounded by the British Fleet ?

A VICTORIAN PROPHET

NOWADAYS part of every Noodle's oration is a sneer at the Victorian age, so it is perhaps not surprising that one of its most remarkable figures should be almost forgotten. Sydney Smith to the ordinary man survives only as a sayer of good things which, if they had not been so good and said so often, might have had a bishop for their father. When his name is mentioned one thinks of St. Paul's and remembers the dome and the tortoise rather than the Dean.

In England joking is a dangerous craft, especially if the jokes are good. A certain toleration is afforded to that kind of jocularity which relies on memory rather than on imagination ; but the real thing is apt to be resented in public men. The wit of Disraeli did Lord Beaconsfield no good, and if it had not been so subtle as to escape general recognition would have done him more harm. " Let us be serious, here is a fool coming," was not the least wise remark of Dr. Johnson.

There is a small brochure extant called *The Wit and Wisdom of Sydney Smith* ; the wit has lived after him, but we fear the wisdom has been interred with his bones in Kensal Green. It is unfortunate, for the foundation of all his philosophy was that great Victorian quality, so repugnant to all true Georgians, common sense. In an age of headlines and perorations there is no writer whose works could be studied with more advantage than the three comfortable volumes

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of Sydney Smith. Although some of his best work appeared over a hundred years ago, it is remarkable how well it wears.

He lived and wrote during the Napoleonic wars. The troubled period after the downfall of the French monarchy, the Revolution, the Irish Rebellion, the defeat of Napoleon, and the long period of reaction under Lord Liverpool were contemporary events. He had seen war and hated it, but he was no pacifist. He realised to the full that even peace can be bought too dearly. "It is not that human beings can live without occasional wars, but that they may live with fewer wars and take more just views of the evils which war inflicts upon mankind." But he resents its strange popularity. "There is more misery inflicted upon mankind by one year of war than by all the civil peculations and oppressions of a century—yet it is a state into which the mass of mankind rush with the greatest avidity." Writing in 1827, he shows that England had been at war thirty-five minutes out of every hour since the Peace of Utrecht. This is a typical instance of his vivid method of making a point.

There was no "cathedral pomp of sentences" about his style. With him illuminating his subject was no figure of speech. Not merely was the nail lit on the head, but the sparks flew every time. Perhaps his rather material genius gave him a fondness for numerical analysis. He was always a great authority on the subject of meats and medicines, and used to beguile the leisure of his clerical duties by dosing his parishioners. His living at Foston, in spite of being "twelve miles from a Jernon," was a cure of bodies as well as souls.,

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At one period he made this depressing calculation : " Having ascertained the weight of what I could live upon so as to preserve health and strength and what I did live upon, I found that between ten and seventy years of age I had eaten and drunk forty-four horse-wagon loads of meat and drink more than would have preserved one in health. The value of this mass of nourishment I consider to be worth £7,000 sterling. It occurred to me that I must by my voracity have starved to death fully a hundred persons."

Elsewhere he points out how life is passed : " If you live to seventy-two, which I hope you may, your life is spent in the following manner : An hour a day is three years. This makes twenty-seven years sleeping, nine years dressing, nine years at table, six years playing with children, nine years walking, drawing, and visiting, six years shopping, and three years quarrelling." A doctor friend who dies and leaves £100,000 is declared to explain his fortune as : From aurum catharticum, £20,000; aurum dureticum, £20,000 ; aurum podegrorum, £30,000 ; aurum apoplecticum, £20,000; aurum senile et nervorum, £10,000.

In the great struggle with Napoleon he was on the side of the patriots, but even Waterloo did not blind him to its price. " The atrocities and horrors and disgusts of war have never been half enough insisted on by the teachers of the people, but the worst of evils and the greatest of follies have been varnished over with specious names, and the gigantic robbers and murderers of the world have been holden up for imitation in the weak eyes of youth." It is true he had no great liking for intervention in the affairs of

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Europe. He asks : " Why are the English to be the sole vindicators of the human race ? " and it may be that the following plea might find some sympathisers to-day: " For God's sake, do not drag me into another war. I am worn down and worn out with crusading and defending Europe and protecting mankind. I *must* think a little of myself. I am sorry for the Spaniards, I deplore the fate of the Jews : the people of the Sandwich Islands are groaning under the most detestable tyranny: Bagdad is oppressed. I do not like the present state of the Delta. Thibet is not comfortable. Am I to fight for all these people ? The world is bursting with sin and sorrow—am I to be the champion of the Decalogue, and to be eternally raising fleets and armies to make all men good and happy ? We have just done saving Europe"—with the sequel already realised in a considerable portion of that area after a similar salvation—" I fear the consequences will be we shall cut each other's throats."

In his time regarded rather as a firebrand, Sydney Smith would be considered a very moderate Liberal nowadays—a type in danger, like the Whigs of 1813, of becoming merely " an animal described in books of natural history." His mission was to redress grievances and not to invent them. Parliamentary reforms he accepted with resignation rather as a necessary concession to stave off more unfortunate demands. He was a hesitating, though ultimately a convinced, Free-trader.

He was violently opposed to the principle of the ballot, and wrote a paper to say so. In the same article he gives his views on universal suffrage. " There is no act of folly or madness which it may not in the

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beginning produce," and adds with great shrewdness : " The people are the best judges of their immediate gratifications, and the worst judges of what would best conduce to their interests for a series of years." " If I am to be a slave," he said, " I would rather be the slave of a king than of a rabble "—a sentiment he shares with Lord Rosebery. He preferred the middle path of security. To him " Democracy and Despotism were the two tubes of a double-barrelled pistol "—both a danger to the State. " The Democrats are as much to be kept at bay with the left hand as the Tories are with the right."

He grew up when the French Revolution and its horrors were fresh in his mind. At the most impressionable age he had seen its workings face to face. His daughter Saba (Lady Holland) tells us that soon after leaving Winchester his father sent him to Mont Villiers, in Normandy, where he stayed six months to improve his French. The Revolution was at its height, and as a precaution it was thought necessary that he should enrol himself in one of the Jacobin clubs of the time as " Le Citoyen Smit, membre affilié au club du Jacobins du Mont Villiers."

After Waterloo the condition of Europe in a lesser degree presented many of the problems of to-day—unrest at home, revolution abroad ; but the proletariat had not learned combination, and the revolutionaries have had a hundred years to strengthen their Press. The heavy hand of Lord Liverpool crushed unrest at home, and Metternich gave autocracy a new lease of life abroad.

The Jacobins of yesterday have become the Bolsheviks of to-day, and the League of Nations isjnerely

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a Holy Alliance adapted to those of democratic views. The wildest opinions of the French Revolution appealed to the youth of Sydney Smith's era. "Gratitude was said to be a vice, marriage an improper restraint, law an imposition, and the lawyers aiders of fraud," is a description, not of the progressive theorist of to-day, but of his fellow of the early nineteenth century. No writings have suffered less by keeping than Sydney Smith's. Their sanity has kept them fresh. Noodle's oration would still make a success of many a political meeting. "I have a very bad opinion of public affairs. I never thought so ill of the world. Arbitrary Governments are giving way everywhere and will doom us to half a century of revolution and expensive wars" might be a quotation from Dean Inge.

There was no sentimentalism about Sydney Smith. One of the strongest supporters of the great Reform Bill (his famous speech in which Mrs. Partington and her mop figured has become a classic), he writes about the Bristol riots : "It is absolutely necessary to give the multitudes a severe blow, for their conduct at Bristol has been most atrocious, and you will save lives by it in the end."

One cannot imagine him promising to create a new heaven and earth upon the ruins of a great war. He realised too fully what it meant. A nation after war, even a successful war, is like a man who has repulsed a highwayman. The only things left him are to thank Heaven for his escape and to hasten to repair his physical and material damage.

We have, so far, refused to face the bill. This is the price of victory "Taxes upon every article which enters into the mouth, or covers the back, or

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is placed under the foot; taxes upon everything which it is pleasant to see, hear, feel, smell, or taste ; taxes on warmth, light, and locomotion"—and in those happy days the workers had not entered into a Triple Alliance. " Taxes on everything on earth and the waters under the earth, on everything that came from abroad and is grown at home, taxes on the raw material, taxes on every fresh value that is added to it by the industry of man. Taxes on the sauce that pampers the man's appetite and the drugs that restore him to health, on the ermine that decorates the judge and the rope that hangs the criminal, on the poor man's salt and the rich man's spice, on the brass nails of a coffin and the ribands of the bride." There is no escape. " At bed or board, *couchant* or *levant*, we must pay." Failing the retrenchment which no one preaches, we may yet see at no distant future : " The schoolboy whips his taxed top ; the beardless youth manages his taxed horse with a taxed bridle on a taxed road ; and the dying Englishman, pouring his medicine which has paid 7 per cent, into a spoon that has paid 18 per cent., flings himself back upon his chintz bed that has paid 22 per cent, and expires in the arms of an apothecary who has paid a licence of a hundred pounds for the privilege of putting him to death." And in those days the lucky heirs found their inheritance only " taxed from 2 to 10 per cent., but large fees are demanded for burying him in the chancel, and his virtues are handed down to posterity on taxed marble ; and he is then gathered to his fathers, to be taxed no more."

The *Peter Plymley Letters* are Sydney Smith's most important political writings, and if the modern reader

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were to substitute " Home Rule" for " Catholic Emancipation/' he could hardly find a better statement of the Irish side of that contentious question, whether he agrees with it or not; they are an admirable lesson in the art of controversy. The first letter appeared in 1807. The Union had commenced with the century, but had not been auspicious. All the bribing of Pitt and the coercion of Castlereagh would have failed if the Catholics had not been persuaded to support the measure by a promise of Emancipation. How that promise was broken is a matter of ancient and discreditable history, but that a concession of such obvious justice could have been delayed till 1829 is amazing when we read the famous letters.

The author's method rather recalls that of Charles James Fox in debate, who was said to put the adverse case with more force than his opponents and then successfully to demolish it. Literature can hardly provide a finer blend of logic and irony. The letters are addressed to the Rev. Abraham Plymley by his brother, Peter Plymley, to meet the objections to the measure of the ordinary man, typified by the Rev. Abraham. The obvious and usual defects of the imaginary discussion are avoided with the greatest skill. Abraham is no dummy whose arguments are merely put forward to be brushed on one side. We are made to realise his point of view, which is put with considerable force.

The late Mr. George Russell, whose delightful book on Sydney Smith no one should miss, is a little hard on Peter for his alleged coarseness, but the precise location of the Rev. 'Abraham's wounds and the future of Mrs. ,Plymley led captive by ar force.

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Gaul are so ludicrous that the unregenerate refuse to be shocked. Peter makes great use of the danger to the State of the existing condition of Ireland. If he may seem occasionally to exaggerate the menace, it must be remembered that the population of Ireland at that time was about 5,000,000, of whom 4,000,000 were Catholics, while the population of England and Scotland was hardly more than half the present number. After dealing with the theological objections he writes : " But I want soldiers and sailors for the State. I want to make a greater use than I can now do of a poor country full of men. I want to render the military service popular among the Irish. To check the power of France, to make every possible exertion for the safety of Europe, which in twenty years' time will be nothing but a mass of French slaves, and then you, and ten other such boobies as you, call out: ' For God's sake, do not think of raising cavalry and infantry in Ireland . . . they interpret the Epistle to Timothy in a different manner from what we do.'"

If Lord Kitchener had studied the *Plymcy Letters* in 1914, the recruiting campaign in Ireland might have told a very different tale.

In the eighth letter Peter gives the real answer to the inevitable and eternal Orange objection, while admitting that for the moment the Government might lose to some extent the affections of the Orangemen by emancipating the Catholics. " If you who count ten so often can count five, you must perceive that it is better to have five friends and one enemy than five enemies and one friend, and the more violent the hatred of the Orangemen, the more certain the

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reconciliation of the Catholics. The disaffection of the Orangemen will be the Irish rainbow ; when I see it, I shall be sure the storm is over." It is astonishing what a familiar ring all the hostile arguments have. One feels inclined to rub one's eyes at reading that it would be much better if Ireland were sunk under the sea ; that they had so many concessions already they are unreasonable to demand any more ; that the period of war is inconvenient for change ; that the Irish, owing to the violence of their methods, are their own worst enemies ; and that, in any event, nothing should be granted to fear—and to wonder whether one is not reading by mistake a leader in the *Morning Post*. To all this Peter Plymley's answer was : " The physical strength of the Catholics will not be greater because you give them a share of political power ; you may by this means turn rebels into friends, but I do not see how you make rebels more formidable." That the best way to treat an enemy is to turn him into a friend was the great secret.

He writes to Lord Grey in 1819 : " What I want to see the State do is to listen in these sad times to some of its numerous enemies . . . anything which would show the Government to the people in some other attitude than that of taxing, punishing, or restraining." This salutary change was to be effected by removing all disabilities and subsidising the Catholic bishops and clergy in Ireland and paying for the maintenance of their schools and churches. This, Peter Plymley declares, would not cost more than £250,000 a year. Who knows ? Perhaps if this policy had been adopted in 1807, the Union might have been accepted by the Irish people ; without it,

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the Union was foredoomed to failure. One can only hope that the objections which seemed so unanswerable then may not be quite as conclusive as many think when refurbished and applied to another and even more momentous question.

If Sydney Smith was wrong about the ballot, on most of the questions of the moment he was a sound prophet. We are no longer locked into railway carriages ; our chimneys are swept by brooms instead of small boys ; prisoners are allowed counsel, and are better treated pending trial ; the Game Laws are mitigated ; prisons are reformed, and landlords no longer set spring-guns and man-traps ; women are better educated, and if they have not more intelligence, at any rate have less excuse.

All schoolboys should love him as advocating learning the classics with cribs. There was hardly a reform he advocated which has not been adopted, and in those days it required some courage to be a Liberal. " A long and hopeless career in your profession, the chuckling grin of noodles, the sarcastic leer of the genuine political rogue," were the rewards of a reformer.

But in politics and religion his good sense gave him a healthy horror of the extremist. His humour saved him. Ridicule was to him the right weapon for confounding the foolish, and he used it unsparingly. The revolutionary in politics, the fanatic in religion, were alike repugnant to his good sense. " A thousand years have scarce sufficed to make our blessed England what it is ; an hour may lay it in the dust," is hardly the language of a revolutionary.

The Methodists of his day appeared to him vulgar

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and absurd creatures, and they got no mercy at his hands. The chances afforded by the *Evangelical and Methodistical Magazine* of 1807 must have been difficult for a humorist to resist. The young man, stung by a bee, who forgot himself so far as "to utter the most dreadful oaths and imprecations," is again stung on the tip of his "unruly member," and the moral is drawn: "Thus can the Lord engage one of the meanest of His creatures in reproving the bold transgressor who dares to take His name in vain." In these odd pages clergymen just about to deal at whist are struck dead as a punishment. Innkeepers are destroyed for offering cockfights as a rival attraction to a Methodist sermon. A sailing packet for Margate is advertised on board which no profane conversation is to be allowed. And this passage occurs, which Sydney Smith rather maliciously calls "Brother Carey's Piety at Sea": "Brother Carey, while very seasick and leaning over the ship to relieve his stomach from that very oppressive complaint, said that his mind was even then filled with consolation in contemplating the wonderful goodness of God." The fun that Sydney Smith makes of all this is merciless.

Unfortunately for the Methodists, the Rev. John Styles rashly entered the lists against the Edinburgh Reviewer. Their champion, referred to as "the sacred and silly gentleman before us," is informed: "In routing out a nest of consecrated cobblers and in bringing to light such a perilous heap of trash as we were obliged to look through in our article upon the Methodists and missionaries, we are generally conceived to have rendered a useful service to the cause of rational reh'gion." This is the opening sentence,

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but the controversialist warms to his work* It appears that poor Mr. Styles mildly protested against the fun so unsparingly made of his friends ; but he does not get much sympathy. He is reminded : " It is not the practice with destroyers of vermin to allow the little victims a hold upon the weapons used against them," and told : " It is scarcely possible to reduce the drunken declamations of Methodism to a point to grasp the wriggling lubricity of these cunning animals and to fix them in one position."

A good deal of this is merely the exuberance of a controversialist in triumph. To take it too seriously would be absurd. He makes equal fun of himself when he wrote of Mrs. Fry : " She is very unpopular with the clergy. Examples of living acting virtue disturb our repose and give birth to distressing comparisons ; we long to burn her alive." But it is strong language from a champion of toleration, too strong even for his editor, Jeffrey, who mildly protests ; but no one can deny that it makes most excellent reading.

As a politician, two remarkable prophecies may be placed to his credit. When he visited Paris in 1826 he predicted the downfall of Charles X. " The French Government are behaving very foolishly, flinging themselves into the arms of the Jesuits . . . disgusting the people, and laying the foundation of another revolution which seems to me, if the man lives, to be inevitable." In an article on America, written in 1824, he writes : " The great disgrace and danger of America, the existence of slavery . . . will one day entail (and ought to entail) a bloody civil war upon the Americans "—almost as startling in its foresight as Madame de Stael's curious observation, made at a

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dinner at Bowood in 1813, that " the danger for the future would be a universal empire founded by the Germans."

The Whigs did not treat Sydney Smith too well. To look after their friends unduly has never been their failing. Lord Stowel was quite right when he told him : " You would have been in a different situation and a far richer man if you could have belonged to us." Still, if he suffered Foston from his friends, Lord Lyndhurst gave him his first real step in the Church by making him Prebendary of Bristol and allowing him to change the bleak Foston for delightful Combe Florey. Foston must have been rather trying, especially when Mr. Percival's Residence Bill in 1808 made residence " twelve miles from a lemon " essential in spite of the absence of a vicarage. Poor Mr. Percival was not a very inspiring figure. He seems to have a peculiarly irritating effect on Sydney Smith ; at any rate, he had his revenge, for, owing to this Act, the unfortunate incumbent found himself not merely obliged to live at Foston, but to build a house at his own expense, which he could very ill afford. Lord Byron writes of him in *Don Juan* as " Peter Pith " not too kindly :—

" The loudest wit I e'er was deafened with ;
I knew him in his livelier London days ;
A brilliant diner out, though but a curate.

His jokes were sermons and his sermons jokes,
But both were thrown away amongst the fens ;
For wit had no great friend in aguish folks ;
No longer ready ears and shorthand pens
Imbided the gay *bon mot* or happy hoax.
The poor priest was reduced to common sense,
Or to coarse efforts, very loud and long,
To hammer a hoarse laugh from the thick throng."

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But the English bard was probably not forgetful of the Scotch reviewer.

At Foston, however, he stayed for twenty years. Very poor, but very happy in spite of his isolation, he writes to Lady Holland : " I hear you laugh at me for being in the country. In the first place, whether one lives or dies, I hold, and have always held, to be of infinitely less moment than is generally supposed ; but if life is to be, then it is common sense to amuse yourself with the best you can find where you happen to be placed." Although he declared he had a melancholy tendency, his principal characteristics seem to have been an ever-bubbling gaiety, which he owed, no doubt, to his French mother.

After Bristol, his financial difficulties were at an end. By the death of his brother he became almost rich, and as Canon of St. Paul's he was established in a position in which he was probably happier and certainly more independent than if he had been a bishop. He had no illusions about money. That for every extra guinea he was substantially happier he is not ashamed to admit. When he inherits his fortune he writes : " After buying into the Consols I read Seneca on the contempt of wealth. What intolerable nonsense ! "

To be a bishop was his legitimate ambition, but he was not a man who took disappointment hardly. Towards the end of his life he writes with obvious sincerity to Lord Holland : " If proper vacancies had occurred in the beginning of Lord Grey's administration, I believe this could have been done. Other politicians have succeeded who entertain no such motive, but there is a still greater obstacle to my pro-

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motion, and that is I have entirely lost all wish to be a bishop. The thought is erased from my mind, and in the very improbable event of a bishopric being offered me, I would steadily refuse it."

Of one thing one may be perfectly sure, if he had been promoted to a bench, the fine quality of his humour would have prevented his making any mistake—of manner. There would have been no buffoonery on his bench. The dignity of the office would have been safe in his hands, and his wisdom would have had a wider field for its benefice. On the other hand, he would have had no leisure for writing letters, and the world would have been the poorer by their loss. Surely there never was a greater master of that intimate and delightful art, greatest of social gifts, than Sydney Smith.

What charming fun he makes of Luttrell, his picture of Mrs. Smith's alarm about her side dishes the first time the fashionable wit pays them a visit—Luttrell, whom, he alleged, thought muffins grew, who is detected as coming "not from good pastures; at least he had not his usual soup and patties look. There was a forced smile upon his countenance which seemed to indicate plain roast and boiled, and a sort of apple-pudding depression, as if he had been staying with a clergyman." On another occasion "he was very agreeable, but spoke too lightly, I thought, of veal soup."

Sydney Smith was a man to whom his friends meant much. He loved their society and their talk; "of all the saints I hate La Trappe the most." That he saw more of them was the reason he preferred town to country. "Life is to be fortified by many friend-

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ships. To love and to be beloved is the greatest happiness of existence. ... I could and would not live if I were alone upon the earth and cut off from the remembrance of my fellow-creatures." And generously was the debt paid. Sympathy, advice, entertainment, all agreeably blended in his correspondence. Although he sought little for himself, he is constantly trying to advance his friends' interests: Jeffrey is to made a judge, Malthus advanced in the Church, a major he liked made a colonel, and so forth. Perhaps the peculiar charm of the letters is their intimacy.

Every host will sympathise with this complaint: " We are expecting some company, but the idea of filling a country house with pleasant people is a dream ; it all ends in excuses and disappointments, and nobody comes but the parson of the parish." How painfully true is his remark to Lady Grey on moving into a more accessible house : " A few yards in London dissolve or cement friendship."

He never tires of poking fun at himself. " You have met, I hear, with an agreeable clergyman: the existence of such a being has been hitherto denied by the naturalists ; measure him, and put down on paper what he eats," is one of his postscripts. His own characteristics are not spared. " Please remember me to Mrs. Fox, and if she has forgotten me, help her to some primary token. Grace and slenderness, gravity and taciturnity."

A gift of fruit was fully repaid by bringing so amusing an acknowledgment. " What is piety ? What is true attachment to the Church ? How are these fine feelings best evinced ? The answer is plain :

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by sending strawberries to a clergyman." Which must have been very bad for his gout.

If he really resented not being made a bishop, it does not obscure his fun when he complains : " The upper parsons live vindictively and evince their aversion to a Whig Ministry by an improved health. The Bishop of——has the rancour to recover after three paralytic strokes, the Dean of——to be vigorous at eighty-two. Yet these are men who are called Christians! "

Even Malthus is made entertaining: " I got an agreeable party for him of married people. There was only one lady who had had a child, but he is a good-natured man, and if there are no appearances of approaching fertility, is civil to every lady."

What can be better than his account of dining with Lord Holland in Paris and meeting Barras, " in whose countenance I immediately discovered all the signs of blood and cruelty which distinguished his conduct. I found out, however, at the end of dinner that it was not Barras, but M. de Barante, an historian and man of letters, who, I believe, has never killed anything greater than a flea ! "

In his old age the letters have a pathetic note, but never lose their fun. He reminds his friends that they are in the firing line and must close up their ranks. To one of his oldest he writes : " Promise me in the midst of these affecting deaths that you will remain alive, and if Death does tap at the door say, ' I can't come ; I have promised a parson to see him out.' "

Great fun is made of his maladies—hay fever torments him. " The epidermis is so irritable that an absurd remark, the sight of a Dissenter—anything

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sets me sneezing, and if I begin sneezing at twelve I don't leave off till two o'clock. I am distinctly heard in Taunton when the wind sets that way."

When we read "quite well I find at sixty-seven" means "about twelve or fourteen distinct ailments," and later: "Mrs. Sydney has eight distinct illnesses and I have nine; we take something every hour and pass the mixture from one to the other," we cannot help feeling that old age was a more painful affair in those days. If we do not live longer, we seem to suffer less in the process. Perhaps it was the superfluous waggon-loads. "He is never guilty of excess, but there is a certain respectable and dangerous plentitude," is a significant phrase in reference to an illness of Lord Holland's. But whatever old age brought Sydney Smith faced with a stout heart. He describes himself: "Bulging out like old houses but with no immediate intention of falling over."

Not long before the end he writes to Lady Holland: "It is a bore, I admit, to be past seventy, for you are left for execution and are daily expecting the death-warrant . . . but we shall all meet again in another planet cured of all our defects.——will be less irritable; ——more silent; ——will assent; Jeffrey will speak slower; Bobus will be just as he is; I shall be more respectful to the upper clergy."

We would like to have the blanks filled up; it would make a pretty puzzle for literary people, but, whoever they are, one feels sure of this: they would combine with the others in welcoming Sydney Smith to the Elysian fields, and that even Eternity would not stale the charm of his company.

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THE centenary of Mr. Thackeray has come and gone, and time is ripe for a declaration of faith. Not that there has been any substantial heresy, but of late the curious may have noticed a persistent campaign of depreciation among the minor critics. All Grub Street would seem to have formed a bearing trust. No one would wish to be hard on them. After all, critics have to live. To live they must write, and if, as we are told, people do not read Mr. Thackeray's works, they have always been ready to read about them. One generation had exhausted the language of appreciation. The next, ready with sharpened quills, waited only for inspiration. Unfortunately, it requires some literary craft to make an old story readable and inspiration halted. Then some glow-worm of Grub Street discovered Mr. Thackeray was a sentimentalist and ink ran almost in a spate.

We all know the unpardonable sin in literature is sentiment. You may be obscene, dull, even historical, and be respected and possibly read, but venture sentiment and you are damned, unless indeed, you happen to be a Scotchman—and so Mr. Thackeray's fame is cast to the jackals. It is a little hard for an author to be resented in one age as a cynic, only to be rejected in the next as a sentimentalist.

We all remember how Harriet Martineau professed to be unable to read *Vanity Fair* "from the disgust it occasions." Even Anthony Trollope, a sincere

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admirer, was of opinion " he was too thoroughly saturated with the aspect of the evil side of things." In those Victorian days even the elect confused subject and treatment. But has not the modern attack on sentiment been a trifle overdone ? Your novel should deal with life and everything which makes life tolerable is based on sentiment. True sentiment is the equity of thought and sentiment need not necessarily be false.

Now Mr. Thackeray's sentiment was never false. Of all those kindly touches giving that intimate charm to the green volumes, there is not one that after all the years does not ring true. But he wrote decently and like a gentleman, and what is more unpardonable, with a sense of his responsibility as a power for good or evil. The odd thing is that when authors were a race apart and mostly of a Bohemian habit, the tone and principles of their output would have been acceptable to Miss Pinkerton's Academy. Now Bohemia has disappeared. The modern *Pall Mall Gazette* is not edited from Holloway nor do distinguished authors drink brandy and water in cider cellars. So the writer has to seek relief from his blameless suburb in a riot of print recalling the " daring essay in defence of suicide " by Pendennis's contemporary at Oxbridge.

One has less sympathy with those who ought to know better. Not so long ago, Mr. Bernard Shaw said, in his courteous way, Thackeray was a fool. Mr. Shaw's position is, of course, a difficult one ; he is a genius and a genius in an age of stress and hustle. It would be unreasonable to expect him to rely for recognition on some entertaining, if rather inhuman, plays. Insistent genius demands more immediate

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attention, and to insult one of the greatest figures in English literature certainly achieves it. Mr. Bernard Shaw, however, would have been wiser if he had not given his reasons. There were two—one, that Mr. Thackeray would not have liked Mr. Bernard Shaw (which seems hardly conclusive); the other, that Mr. Thackeray sympathised with his weak characters, whereas Dickens did not. One does not quite follow why sympathy is not for the weak, but to cite Dickens in such case is merely to talk nonsense. When one thinks of Tom Pinch, Little Nell and her grandfather, poor Smike and the meekness of Oliver, the falseness of the point is apparent. Then Mr. George Moore does not like Thackeray ; he says the public were bullied into admiration by the *Book of Snobs*. When we remember Thackeray's famous definition of the type, why the *Book of Snobs* does not appeal to the author of *My Dead Life* is intelligible. Then he complains about Becky Sharp—"Fancy writing the history of Becky Sharp and not discussing whether she had a temperament or not"—whereas the key to Becky's character is that she is a cold-blooded, good-natured woman, swayed by no feeling except self-interest.

One regrets to find Mr. Whibley among the detractors. His recent "Opusculé" (as "Thunder and small beer" has it) on Mr. Thackeray contains, as one would expect, some admirable criticism, but is tainted with the sentimental heresy. *Vanity Fair*, we are told, is spoilt because it has a moral. "If he had suppressed the sentiment which ever rose up in his heart, *Vanity Fair* might have been as amoral as *The Way of the World*, and what a masterpiece it would have been," and almost as arid, one may answer.

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Then he objects to the author playing the part of chorus and especially to his moralising—he is accused of "forgetting the impartiality of the artist and taking sides against his own characters." But why must an artist be impartial? It is a pure assumption. The partiality of Thackeray is a concession to the actuality of his people. To reader and author alike they are so alive it is impossible to be indifferent to their actions—and therefore, in logical sequence, to withhold praise or blame.

The best criticism I have heard of Mr. Thackeray's works was, oddly enough, my introduction to them. Years ago, in a certain house library at Eton, some boys were discussing, and I need hardly say, adversely, the books in it, and one of them, pointing to the green volumes of Mr. Thackeray said, "Fancy anybody buying stuff like that," to which another said, indignantly, "They are very good books." "What are they about," he was asked. "About people," he said. Like Mr. Pickwick's famous remark on the management of crowds, "volumes could not say more." They are about people—live people—uncannily alive—it is almost impossible to believe they haven't actual existence. I declare, when I saw *Vanity Fair* on the stage, I was almost frightened when our old friends came on. Yes, you may dislike the books, you may criticise their philosophy and methods, but never were books written whose characters were so full of red blood.

This explains the lack of form which we find in Mr. Thackeray's books—it is the difference between talent and genius. Talent may produce good work out of materials of knowledge and intellect, master of its

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medium it keeps itself well in hand ; genius knows no calculation, surrendering itself entirely to the influence of unknown powers, has as little control over its works as a prophet over his inspiration. This is why all the greatest geniuses are formless—Dickens, Balzac and Thackeray and the Russians. This is why the moderns, academically correct, leave us so cold. Over-attention to form is always a sign of the second-rate in literature and art.

What does Mr. Thackeray himself say about it: he says somewhere: " I have no idea where it all comes from. I have never seen the people I describe or heard the conversation I put down ; I am often astonished myself to read it when I have got it on paper. It seems as if an occult power were moving the pen." When asked once by a young lady to allow Ethel to marry Clive Newcome, he said: " Characters once created lead me and I follow where they direct ; I cannot tell the events which await on Ethel and Clive." He is such a creator, he gives independent life.

There is one thing one must not lose sight of in considering Mr. Thackeray's works—that he never wrote a novel until he was thirty-seven. It explains their melancholy. Few keep many illusions after thirty-five, and his thirty-five years had not been without their tragedy. It was a shock to all of us when we read a few years ago that Mrs. Thackeray was dead, but to those to whom she was so much she had been lost for over fifty years. Yet he writes years after, " Though my marriage was a wreck, I would do it over again, for behold, love is the crown and completion of all earthly good." Until he wrote *Vanity Fair*, outside

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the actual world of letters he was almost unknown. It is astonishing that a man who had then done such admirable work should obtain so little recognition. When we think that at that time he had written the *Yellow Plush Papers*, had given to the world the satire of the *Book of Snobs*, the tenderness of the Hoggarty Diamond, the grim Catherine and the magnificent irony of Barry Lyndon, to say nothing of delightful gems of humour in *Fraser* and *Colburrfs Magazine*, one can almost understand his diffidence when he was engaged upon the strongest novel in English literature.

Talking at Brighton to Miss Smith, the daughter of *Rejected Addresses*, he said, referring to *Vanity Fair*, which had not then a name: " / wonder if this will take, the 'publishers accent it and the world read it'" A name was at last found—so good a name that as he told Miss Perry when it came to him in the night, he got up and ran three times round his bedroom. It must have been a very stupid public. *Vanity Fair* was refused by *Colburrfs Magazine*, and was eventually published by Bradbury and Evans in the Yellow numbers. It was rather a rickety infant. It very nearly died from lack of sustenance. There is the story told by Lady Ritchie, how, when walking from the bow-windowed house in Young Street with one of the early numbers, across Kensington Gardens to a family friend, she was stopped by her father and told that perhaps after all it was no good taking it. However, it had its appreciators. Mrs. Carlyle writes on a visit that she brought away the last four numbers and read them over in bed and found them " very good indeed." And Charlotte Bronte, from that grim Yorkshire vicarage, detected " an intellect profounder and more unique than his con-

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temporaries had yet recognised" It was an article by Abraham Hayward in the *Edinboro Review*—and it is said, the lighter humour of Mrs. Perkins' ball (and indeed "The Mulligan" might have saved a worse book)—that first put *Vanity Fair* on its feet.

Mr. Carlyle defined genius as an infinite capacity for taking pains. This was, of course, only his fun, but the worst of a Scotchman's fun is that no one suspects it, and we have been dominated by dullards ever since who realised that the world is at the mercy of any one who will get up at five o'clock in the morning. The exact reverse, of course, is true. Genius is intuitive, and a wonderful instance is seen of this in Mr. Thackeray's description of Brussels at the time of Waterloo. If we turn to the entertaining *Memoirs* of Mr. Creevy, it reads like a page out of *Vanity Fair*. We find it told how the English army is in retreat. On the 18th, his stepdaughter runs into his room and tells him the French are in the town; he goes out and meets an English M.P. who says: "Everything looks as bad as possible, I shall keep the horses at the door," more lucky than Lady Bareacres in their possession, and finds a soldier friend bringing in a wounded General, who says that the battle is lost and that he had better lose no time in getting away, until one can almost sympathise with Jos Sedley when he cuts off his moustaches. However, stout Creevy, like Becky Sharp, and unlike the recreant Jos, remains behind, and is rewarded by his famous interview with the Duke of Wellington.

To mention Waterloo is to recall that immortal passage—after the kindly humour akin to tears of Mrs. O'Dowd polishing the Major's accoutrements—

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George kissing Amelia—Becky counting up Rawdon's assets, not forgetting the pistols in a rosewood case "same which I shot Captain Markham," and calculating how she can do with the pension of an officer's widow—"No more firing was heard at Brussels—the pursuit rolled miles away—Darkness came down on field and city: and Amelia was praying for George who was lying on his face dead, with a bullet through his heart." There is no better example of Mr. Thackeray's exquisite style. Its dignity—its reticence—in a few words the tragedy and circumstance of war—after all these years about people who never lived difficult to read unmoved.

Objection is often taken, generally by women, to the character of Amelia. I hold that Amelia is a true representation of the real English woman. She would undoubtedly have made a good wife. It may be said the sort of good wife that makes a bad husband. She might bore him, it is true, but after all, the only difference between marrying a stupid woman and a clever one is this: if you marry a stupid woman she bores you, and if you marry a clever woman, you bore her, and I have never had any doubt that Amelia made Dobbin extremely happy. Of late the modern woman has made desperate efforts to get away from Amelia—they try to be wicked and only become vulgar, they try to be intellectual and write books which make a publisher's reader blush, they even try to be politicians, but if you scratch the most modern of women, you come eventually to the Amelia type. If you don't like it, your only resource is to turn to the Latin or the Celt, and probably Dobbin took the safer course.

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Another test of genius is its antiseptic quality. The great book is as fresh to-day as when it was written. Becky's rise and fall in Mayfair might have happened, and perhaps did happen, yesterday. A remarkable instance of this is found in the *Book of Snobs*, one of the few books which have affected the character of a nation. Nothing will ever prevent the English being a snobbish people, but since that work we have had at any rate the grace to be ashamed of it. There is nothing old fashioned about the club politician. "What," says Jawkins in the No Surrender Club, "did I tell Peel last year? If you touch the corn laws you touch the sugar question—if you touch the sugar you touch the tea. I am no monopolist, I am a Liberal man, but I cannot forget that I stand on the brink of a precipice and if we are to have Free Trade give me reciprocity."

Then Captain Spitfire, R.N., who "does not care so much for home politics but is great on foreign affairs. I think this sort of man is scarcely found anywhere but in clubs. It is for him the papers provide their foreign articles at the expense of some £10,000 a year each. ... It is he who says that Lord Aberdeen ought to be impeached and Lord Palmerston hanged or *vice versa*. . . . Lord Palmerston being sold to Russia, the exact number of roubles paid by what house in the city, is a favourite theme with this kind of snob."

In how many drawing-rooms have not we heard this sort of thing in the last few years?

"Why was not the Princess Scragamoffsky at Lady Palmerston's party, Minns? Because she can't show—and why can't she show? Shall I tell you, Minns,

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why she can't show ? The Princess Scragamoffsky's back is flayed alive, Minns. I tell you it is raw, sir! On Tuesday last at 12 o'clock, three drummers of the Preobajinski regiment arrived at Ashburnham House, and at half-past twelve, in the yellow drawing-room at the Russian Embassy, before the Ambassadors and four ladies' maids, the Greek papa, and the Secretary of Embassy, Madame de Scragamoffsky received thirteen dozen. She was knouted, sir ! Knouted in the midst of England—in Berkeley Square, for having said that the Grand Duchess Olga's hair was red ; and now sir, will you tell me Lord Palmerston ought to continue Minister ? "

The mystery of Miss Shum's husband has been repeated in more than one police court, and one need not look beyond the Law Courts to be reminded of the luck of Barry Lyndon. From that astounding book, even Mr. Whibley cannot withhold a grudging praise, but in order to labour his sentimental point, he misses for once his mark. When Barry drops a tear of sympathy over the misery of his mother, we are told "such a son as he showed himself would be indifferent whether his mother starved or not." The truth is your scoundrel is as often as not sentimental. His feelings are admirable, but unfortunately he does not translate them into action—that is where morally he fails—his virtues are purely abstract.

As Thackeray points out himself in explaining the character of Lord Castlewood in *The Virginians*, "there is no greater error than to suppose that weak and bad men are strangers to good feeling or deficient of sensibility. Only the good feeling does not last; nay, the tears are a kind of debauch of sentiment as old

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libertines are said to find that the tears and grief of their victims add a zest to their pleasure."

Nor is he more happy in comparing Barry Lyndon adversely with *Jonathan Wild*, a dull mechanical work, the whole plan of which is a blunder. Fielding makes the essential mistake of not letting Wild tell his own story, and so never convinces the reader. It is inconceivable that any one except himself should be found a serious appraiser of such a villain, but that Barry should sincerely admire his own misdeeds is exactly what one would expect and gives the plausibility upon which all successful irony depends.

Pendennis, Lady Ritchie somewhere says, is the happiest of her father's books. You must go to Ottery St. Mary and Exeter to understand how the author has caught the gentle charm of Devonshire, and of all his characters none ring truer than the immortal figure of Major Pendennis ; as the man of fashion, the philosopher of Pall Mall, the defeater of the rascally Morgan, he is alike admirable. The literary episodes are largely drawn from the author's own experiences, in fact, *Pendennis* may almost be said to be his *David Copperfield*. Its green numbers were coming out in friendly rivalry. He is writing to Mr. Brookfield—"Get *David Copperfield*, by Jingo, it's beautiful, it beats the Yellow Chap of this month hollow."

Then were there ever pleasanter characters than Chevalier Strong and delightful Harry Foker ? Captain Costigan, like all Thackeray's Irishmen, is a perpetual joy, and Altamount is such a cheery ruffian that one is quite glad the drain-pipe didn't break. The modern carpers can never forgive Pendennis for his

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behaviour to Fanny Bolton. They are like the lady in the play who could not forgive her husband for deceiving her before marriage by saying he had never loved another woman and afterwards finding out it was true.

Of course, it is a dreadful shock to find a hero who is virtuous and Mr. Whibley is so properly annoyed that he falls into the very error he alleges against "the English humorists" of judging one generation by the standard of the next. The Victorian public was a very curious one. The novel was rather regarded as a form of fairy tale for those of riper years. I believe in order to understand the point of view, one should study with care that remarkable book by Mr. Gosse, *Father and Son*. It was expected of a novelist to improve. Anthony Trollope says it is the business of a novelist to instruct in morals and amuse, and Lady Ritchie says that her father always considered himself rather as a lay preacher. Indeed, he was severely attacked by the British matrons of both sexes as it was.

When we read in the *Quarterly Review* about Jane Eyre that "no Christian grace is perceptible upon her," that "the book is permanently an anti-Christian composition, there is throughout it a murmuring against the comforts of the rich and the privations of the poor, which, as far as each individual is concerned, is against God's appointment," and the inference that "if it was written by a woman it must have been written by one who, for some sufficient reason, has forfeited the society of her own sex," one appreciates in some small degree the difficulties which the novelists of those days had to contend with.

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Mr. Thackeray, always his own severest critic, writes once that he wonders whether he will ever write the really complete good book which he ought to. That wonder should have been set at rest for ever when he produced *Esmond*, the best historical novel ever written. It gained undoubtedly in form by not being produced in numbers. His own view was it was much too grave and sad. He complains it took "As much trouble as Macaulay's history and he has the vast advantage of remembering everything he reads, while everything but impressions slips out of my head." But if it was hard writing, it certainly made easy reading, and when he created Beatrix he gave us for all time the supreme picture of the minx.

Esmond raises a very nice point as to the limits of an author's licence in treating historical facts. Every one will remember how Beatrix became engaged to the Duke of Hamilton, who is killed by Lord Mohun in a duel. But the Duke was a married man.

Swift, in his *Journal to Stella* (Letter LV.), tells us how he sat with the heart-broken wife after the tragedy. "They have removed the poor Duchess to a lodging in the neighbourhood, where I have been with her two hours. I am just come away. . . . She has moved my very soul. The lodging was inconvenient, and they would have removed her to another, but I would not suffer it, because it had no room backward, and she must have been tortured with the noise of the Grub Street streamers, mentioning her husband's murder in her ears." A curiously modern touch.

If the author had given the Duke another name, he would clearly have been justified in using the actual

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facts for his fictitious character, but to make a real character play a part historically impossible is surely a mistake. The sense of reality is shaken.

It must have been very galling for Dumas not to be able to allow his musqueteers to save Charles the First, but he bowed to facts. To allow the Pretender and Esmond to cross swords was legitimate. It might have happened, but Esmond could never have been allowed to kill him, even if the story had demanded such a travesty of history.

The Newcomes was described by the *Quarterly Review* as his masterpiece. It is the test book of Thackeray's works. Every one should read it first—if you don't like it, salvation is not for you. In none of his books do we find more delightful people—Clive himself, the genial Fred Bayham, James Binnie and the Painters. Of all his heroines Ethel Newcome is the most charming, and no author ever drew a truer lady than Lady Anne Newcome.

The odious Barnes is found in every club. Colonel Newcome is often voted too unworldly, but if you read Lord Roberts' Indian reminiscences, you realise what a very accurate picture he is of an Indian colonel before the Mutiny.

It was after *The Newcomes* that Mr. Thackeray was invited to start the *Cornhill Magazine*, at what he called a princely stipend, by Mr. George Smith, the famous publisher. *Philip* was not ready, but Mr. Trollope got up at five with his rail-rug round his knees and turned out *Framley Parsonage*. Of the *Cornhill Magazine* it may be confidently said that no magazine has ever attained such a continuous success, which in no small measure is due to the admirable

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lines on which it was started by its first editor. *Philip* is the book which I should recommend last to those who are anxious to study the genius of Mr. Thackeray. It was written when Mr. Thackeray was in indifferent health, and while there is much admirable work in it, it strikes one as rather the work of a tired man. It has, at any rate, one indisputable claim to our gratitude—that it discovered Mr. Fred Walker, who drew some of his most charming sketches in its illustration, and in the little sister we meet one of the author's most charming women.

The Virginians is said by those out of sympathy with our author to be too long, and the return of George in the second volume to be rather a repetition of the first, but nothing was ever more entertaining than the reception of Harry Warrington at Castlewood, or more interesting than the sketch of the Bradock Expedition in Virginia, which recalls many an incident in a recent unhappy war.

The story perhaps suffers from being written in numbers, but the different characters of Harry Warrington and George are used with great skill in showing us both the fashionable and literary society of the period which their creator knew so well. One wonders whether he had this book in his mind when Esmond says to Beatrix : " I am not quite clever enough or not rogue enough—I know not which—for the Old World. I may make a place for myself in the New which is not so full and found a family there. When you are a mother yourself and a great lady, perhaps I shall send you over from the plantations some day a little barbarian that is half Esmond, half Mohock, and you will be kind to him for his father's sake, who

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was after all your kinsman, and whom you loved a little."

And to do the Baroness Bernstein justice she was kind both to Harry and George.

Even the moderns must concede there is no sentimentality in the picture of Beatrix grown old. It is masterly and perhaps inevitable, yet many a student of Esmond must have read it with a certain regret.

The genius of Mr. Thackeray was many-sided. His drawings would have made a substantial reputation and his verses were better than many people's poetry, but of all its phases the most gracious was his genius for friendship. No man ever had better friends, no man ever appreciated his friends more—Tennyson, Carlyle, Edmund Fitzgerald, the Bullers—the Misses Berry, socially omniscient, thought no party a real success without him; the Brookfields, his friendship with whom stands on record in the most delightful letters in English—Macaulay (do not we all remember when he was asked with the great man in Paris to meet an American lady who, with the curiosity of her sex and nation was dying to meet them both, how Thackeray proposed to change places with Macaulay, each to personate the other, to find, unfortunately, that the historian did not approve of practical jokes ?). They all loved him and he loved them, even grim Carlyle could find nothing worse to say of him than that he was a half-monstrous Cornish giant, but that was after he had reviewed *The French Revolution*, and Carlyle wrote of him after his death to Emerson : " A big fellow soul and body, a big weeping hungry man, not a strong one; he had many fine qualities, no guile or malice against any one, a big mass of a soul

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but not strong in proportion, a beautiful vein of genius lay struggling about him." His generosity was astounding. Never too well stocked, his purse was open to all. He lent Magin, "Father Prout," £500 at a time when he could very ill afford it. Trollope describes how he met Thackeray at a time when a friend of his was in great stress for the want of £2000 and told Thackeray. "Do you mean to say I am to find £2,000," said Thackeray angrily, and then, as Trollope says, as if half-ashamed of his meanness said, "I will go halves if any one will do the rest," which indeed, he did. We all know the story of his filling up the pill box with sovereigns for an old family friend "to be taken when wanted." What a wealth of kindness, too, in his description of Gore House after the downfall of Lady Blessington. "I have just come away from a dismal sight—Gore House full of snobs looking at the furniture. Foul Jews, odious bombazine women, driving up in mysterious flies which they had hired, the wretches, so that they could come in state to a fashionable lounge, brutes keeping their hats on in the beautiful old drawing-room—I longed to knock them off and say, 'Sir, be civil in a lady's room/' We recollect how the butler wrote to Lady Blessington and said that he noticed Mr. Thackeray at the sale with tears in his eyes and that he seemed the only one really affected by her departure.

In the last few years of Mr. Thackeray's life he seemed at last to have come into his own. Fame and fortune were his and his genius remained unabated. Almost a fresh spirit is noticed in the fragment of *Dennis Duval*. The genial wisdom of the *Roundabout Papers* places them among the most charming essays

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in English literature ; and we know he was looking forward in the well-earned leisure to devote himself to what would have been a work of love, the history of Queen Anne—and then the great master of irony was sacrificed by ironic fate, and on Christmas Eve, 1863, England was the poorer by his loss.

Mr. Thackeray had no fear of death. He had faced it before as he faced everything—sorrow, joy, failure, success—like a brave gentleman. He writes to Mrs. Procter : " Those we love can but walk down the pier with us—the voyage we must make alone. Except for the young or very happy I cannot say I am sorry for any one who dies."

The well-known lines :

" Then steal away, give little warning,
Say not good-night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me good morning,"

might almost have been written by the genius of Mr. Thackeray.

THE PLOTS OF DICKENS

FROM the year 1833, when Charles Dickens dropped *Mr. Minns and his Cousin* into the letter-box of the *Monthly Magazine*, that odd periodical, edited by a South American filibuster and true to type only in not paying for its contributions, until in 1871 he left unsolved the mystery of *Edwin Drood*, all England was his grateful public. Since his death his fame has not diminished. In the 'eighties, for a short space, he seemed to lose his hold on the public taste, but the clouds passed, and his sun shone brighter for the temporary eclipse.

fit was the fashion of the moment to divide fiction into two schools—Realism and Romance. Each claimed that within its walls only could be found the true literary faith. Dickens would not have been quite comfortable in either exclusively, and yet, in a sense, he belonged to both. In his stories of the day he gave the Romance of Realism, just as in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* he gave the Realism of Romance. To an idealist he almost seemed to reconcile the two schools, and perhaps in consequence, rather as one who tries to make peace between husband and wife, was attacked by both. The distinction was always unscientific. It merely amounted to a difference of observation and treatment; which you preferred was a matter of temperament and had nothing to do with the actual merits of the performance. The real test of the novelist's genius is surely the **creative**

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power : no author deficient in this can ever claim first rank in his own or receive the consideration of another generation. Given this the rest is immaterial. Treat if you like with realism, romance, or even sentiment. If you prefer a story well and good, it does not matter, but your people are the thing. ; It is by their characters that the great novelists and playwrights are remembered : we call good books our friends only because they contain our friends. This is what makes the immortal libraries so catholic. On their wide shelves is room for the exponents of every school, from Laurence Sterne to Arnold Bennett, who can breathe life into their creatures and give us what John Forster calls "rememberable figures." In this uncanny power of creation lay the strength of the great Victorians. At a period when the general level of literature was as low as it is high at present, the few possessed this supreme quality, and of them none in a greater degree than Charles Dickens.

No author has ever added more and more agreeably to the population of the world of fiction. His spacious treatment helped : the characters had room to turn, and the lack of form in itself gave a certain reality to the setting, for nothing can be more formless than existence. At the same time there is no doubt that Dickens took his plots very seriously. To the end he loved a mystery and a villain, and all through his books the characters have a disconcerting way of suddenly turning out to be some one else ; not infrequently a long-lost relative. They have been known to die early and enjoy a resurrection destructive to villainy in the last chapters ; and the arms of his coincidences are not merely long, but Briarean in

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variety. Dickens apparently held with Tim Linkinwater, " I don't believe there is such a place in all the world for coincidences as London is."

Yet all his plotting adds little to the value of the books. In general their merits vary inversely with the complexity of the story. To compare the *Pickwick Papers* with *Edwin Drood* in this connection is perhaps unfair, except by way of illustration. As a child reads on without bothering about anything beyond its comprehension, just as David Copperfield read Smollett, Fielding, and Gil Bias, so we pass the plots by for the opposite reason—our better judgment rejects them, they make no lasting impression, we forget them as easily as we remember the characters. It was a struggle between the convention of the day and genius which is for all time. Convention demanded a plot, genius obscured it by the human interest which would keep creeping in ; as you cannot see the wood for the trees, you cannot see the story for the people, they are too full-blooded to be bound by such artificial restraints.

As the immortal Pickwickians burst the trammels of the Cockney Club, and Mr. Pickwick, to his greater glory, refused to be thin at the bidding of the unfortunate Mr. Seymour, so the rest go their own delightful way, irrespective of story, time, or place, in the mere joy of their genial existence. Who minds very much whether David Copperfield marries Agnes, or what Uriah Heep's meekness portends ; we want to get back to Mr. Micawber and the Peggottys and go shopping with Dora.- The desperate machinations in *Nicholas Nickleby* only interrupt our enjoyment of Crummies and Squeers. Jonas Chuzzlewit's villainy

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and poor Pecksniff's testamentary ambitions interest us far less than the latter's moral sentiments and the humours of lodgers, which if " it can do it when it likes " does it for us all the time. Even in *Great Expectations* Miss Havisham and the convict call us in vain when we can sup with Wemmick or enjoy Mr. Wopsle's " massive and concrete " performance of the Prince of Denmark.

It is not too easy to place the characters always in the right volume. They are universal. The books are not separate histories, but a continuing record of the delightful Dickens world. Take *Oliver Twist*, a thoroughly characteristic Dickens story. Who that has enjoyed Bumble and his discovery that " the law is a hass " (is surely the foundation of modern feminism), admired the masterly advocacy of the Artful Dodger at the police court, shuddered at Sykes, tolerated the Maylies, perhaps the greatest tribute to the author's genius, has ever realised what it is all about ? Still the plot is there. With Dickens it always is, lurking and latent, breaking out from time to time, like an intermittent fever, as the books progress. This particular one is as fantastic as anything in Balzac.

Alphonse Daudet is sometimes compared to Dickens. Balzac has far more in common with our author. His method of characterisation ; the desperate villains and their vaguely grotesque schemes, the bigness of it all, the wonderful effect produced by setting and atmosphere ; the feeling for Paris, as in Dickens the sense of London, and the obsession of so many of his characters with one idea, with Balzac so often avarice, as with Dickens insensate hate, and in both this further

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resemblance that each was at his best when perhaps he least suspected it. Caesar Birotteau and Cousin Pons may be read when the Rastignacs and Vautrins are forgotten ; and the kindly humours of Boz enjoyed by many whom his Carkers and Chuzzlewits leave cold-

The story runs somewhat thus : It would appear that a Mr. Leeford, having married unhappily, seeks distraction with " a beautiful creature of nineteen," the daughter of a naval officer. Summoned abroad to attend to the affairs of a rich relation, Leeford dies in Rome, leaving a will—one of the oddest even in fiction, that land of irresponsible testators : £800 a year is given to Mrs. Leeford and her son, Monks, the balance to " the beautiful creature " and her unborn child. But in order to show his confidence in " the beautiful creature," the child, if a son, is not to inherit if he should stain his name by " any public act of dishonour, meanness, cowardice, or wrong," and to this testamentary confidence trick, all poor Oliver's troubles are due. Mrs. Leeford destroys the will. No one knew of this document, so she and Monks had merely to succeed to the money and live in happy, if dishonourable, affluence ever after; but then there would have been no story. So Monks devotes all the time available between his fits to finding and identifying Oliver, who is lost beyond all hopes of either, and in the absence of the will could have no claim to the money. The only motive suggested is wild hatred of Oliver, whom Monks has never seen ; that insensate hate also supplying the plot of *Nicholas Nickleby*, which, in the prodigality of genius, he was writing at the same time. It is quite clear that Dickens forgot in the bustle of the story that the will had been

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destroyed, otherwise there is no point in the plot between Monks and Fagin to involve Oliver in a criminal offence.

Then come the coincidences : Oliver runs away to London, meets the Artful Dodger, who introduces him to Fagin, oddly enough, an old ally of Monks. Coincidence No. 1. Oliver is then charged with picking Mr. Brownlow's pocket, who, with a generosity unequalled if it was not repeated by the Maylies, adopts him, the one man in London who was Oliver's father's friend and has a portrait of the beautiful creature, nose and all, just like Oliver, in his parlour. Coincidence No. 2. (The precise moment when Monks finds out that Fagin has met Oliver, or, indeed, how Monks ever identifies Oliver, we are not told.) Then Sikes employs Oliver to break into the Maylies' house—the one house which, in all England, is inhabited by Oliver's long-lost aunt. Coincidence No. 3. Why Oliver's mother died in a workhouse is never explained. Her sister, Rose, it appears, was adopted by Mrs. Maylie—in fact, all through this work there is an epidemic of adopting complete strangers of doubtful antecedents—and told that she is illegitimate, there being no conceivable reason or point in this except to prolong the love interest. Rose refuses to marry Harry for fear of wrecking his "brilliant prospects," which are very much in the air, especially as Harry afterwards turns out to be a curate. All this desperate tangle is cleared up by Mr. Brownlow reciting the facts to Monks, who at once admits everything—surely the feeblest villain in fiction ! All he had to do was to hold his tongue, and like Napoleon after the battle of Leipsic, could have made very tolerable terms; but

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then the story would not have ended. It is quite clear that Dickens himself felt the interest in the story finished with the breaking up of the Fagin gang, and realised the only thing to do was to wind it up as soon as might be.

In *Nickleby* convention and genius lie down together. In all Dickens nothing is found better than the Crummies passages. The absurd conventions of the stage have never been treated with such admirable humour. Yet Nicholas is the most conventional of stage heroes, and Kate exclaims, " Unhand me, sir ! this instant," in all seriousness to Sir Mulberry Hawk, who, with Lord Francis Verisopht and Pike and Pluck, are as frankly melodramatic as their names. They even refer to the innocent object of their attack as " the little Nickleby " and say " You take me ? " to the sympathetic listener. Until the middle of Volume II. there is no plot at all. Like *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Oliver Twist* it is a picaresque romance of the road. Without any plot it would have been a much better novel, and Squeers would have been spared seven years' penal servitude which, despite his deserts, we all resent, so engaging is the rascal. Smike is a bore, and an unnecessary bore ; Arthur Gride a dull repetition of Old Nickleby, merely introduced to continue the love interest with Madeleine Bray. Ralph's descent into criminality is frankly absurd. We are actually asked to believe that a hard-headed money-lender in his declining years conspires to destroy a will and suborn perjury, incidentally putting himself in the power of two villains like Snawley and Squeers, who are certain to betray him, as, in fact, they do, for no motive except hatred of Nicholas, who has really

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done nothing to annoy him. It is the hatred of Monks over again without the excuse of epilepsy, just as the adoptive habit survives in Nicholas and SMIKE, who, of course, turns out to be Ralph's long-lost son. Himself the kindest of men, Dickens' belief in the hatred motive is almost fanatic. It recurs in Hare-dale's hatred of Chester, and Quilp's for Kit, and every one's rabid hatred for the unhappy Pecksniff. Just as, the most temperate of mortals, we find him everywhere expounding the generous theory that hot brandy and water is the one panacea for all bodily and spiritual troubles. His doctors prescribe it, even for little Nell, and, be it said, always with most satisfactory results.

Of all the novels *Barnaby Rudge* is the most elaborate) in plot. It is certainly one of the least effective} The original interest of the story depends on the murder of Hare-dale by his steward, Rudge, but the affair gets into such a boggle that, in despair, the author switches our attention off to the Gordon Riots, and so ends the story and a good many of its actors. There can be no doubt Dickens was not a good story-teller. His friend, Wilkie Collins, did that sort of thing very much better. With little gift of construction he found it difficult to explain or develop a complicated entanglement and never had the patience or the ingenuity to end it plausibly. A general confession in public, even if characters had to be invented to bring it about, like Mr. Newsome in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, was his favourite device.

The Old Curiosity Shop is probably the only novel ever written with no hero and no love interest. It is merely an Odyssey of little Nell and her grandfather.

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Towards the end we have a mystery, like so many of the author's, quite unnecessary, in the behaviour of the single gentleman, who turns out to be Nell's long-lost grandfather. It is a curious fact that we are never told the name of the grandfather to whom so much time is given. In the beginning there is the hint of some scheme to marry Dick Swiveller to Nell, in the interests of Trent, but fortunately for Dick it comes to nothing, and the conspiracy to ruin Kit is quite outside the general purpose of the story. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the most uneven of all the novels, full of his best and worst points, the interest is always shifting. The Chuzzlewits never hold it, the American incidents are irrelevant, as also the finances of Montagu Tigg, nor is one easily convinced that such a craven as Jonas could murder any one. Old Chuzzlewit's behaviour is hardly consistent with sanity. He takes eight pages to explain it at the end, quite unsuccessfully. Why should he quarrel with Martin because Martin wants to marry Mary, the old man's own wish ? And if quarrel, why at once change his mind, and that secretly ? Then for some unintelligible reason he devotes himself, at great personal inconvenience and discomfort, to an elaborate plot for humiliating Pecksniff. It is extraordinary with what ferocity every one, including the author, pursues that unhappy architect. If he were an American, Dickens could not hate him more. After all, what has the man done ? There is abundant evidence that he was an affectionate husband to the late Mrs. Pecksniff. His home-life is almost idyllic. Who could be kinder to his daughters ? In fact it was his devotion to their interests which ultimately ruined him. His for-

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bearance to the shrewish Charity would soften a suffragette. True he allows Mercy to marry Jonas, but she wanted to, and all Pecksniff knew at that time about his son-in-law was that he had shown admirable feeling at his father's death and had a comfortable fortune. It is said he sometimes used his pupils' designs, a very reprehensible practice, no doubt, which no one could defend, but surely not the first, nor, one fears, the last of his profession to do the same ; and no one would suggest that Pecksniff is a perfect character—undoubtedly he turns Martin and Tom Pinch out of doors somewhat shabbily; still, it is his own house and he is within his strict rights. Let us admit at once he has an eye to old Chuzzlewit's fortune—but why not ? Pecksniff is a relation : he has his family to consider. He was obviously anxious about their future—not an unworthy motive surely—and, in fact, loses his fortune in endeavouring to increase his capital in their interests. The old man wants an heir, the other relations are intolerable; yet even the fact that Pecksniff is prepared to provide for Mary by marriage is somehow twisted against him. The worst that can be said is that he humours the absurd schemes of an old man for partially selfish motives, and yet Dickens allows him to be called, with obvious approval, " the very last and worst among the vermin of the world," " a lying, fawning, servile hound," " a crawling knave," " a ghoul," with an " e " which somehow makes it seem worse, and revels in his being publicly beaten and insulted. The man's social gifts are undeniable: how wholeheartedly he throws himself into the life at Todgers'; what tact he shows at the Grammar School ceremonial,

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his speech is an eternal model for such occasions, and in all literature there is no better instance of dignity under trying circumstances than his magnanimous exit after being struck "with a walking stick, which I have every reason to believe has knobs upon it, on that delicate and exquisite portion of the human anatomy, the brain." I have always hoped that Dickens was misinformed as to Pecksniff's future and that it was not he but some one else of the same name who became "a drunken, squalid, begging-letter writing man." The real Pecksniff, I have always believed, married Mrs. Todgers for whom he had undoubtedly a *penchant*, and helped to maintain the best traditions of that admirable house. This treatment of Pecksniff is part of the lack of balance which mars the book : the same intolerance we find in the American passages and the villainy of Jonas.

It is an odd thing that the Cockneyism of to-day, "I don't think," is found in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Tom Pinch says "I am a nice man, I don't think, as John used to say," quoting Westlock, to whom would seem to belong the doubtful honour of its invention. Whether Dickens realised that *Martin Chuzzlewit* was hardly a complete success or not, the next two books show a notable advance. The writing is simpler and the incidents nearer life. We have left the theatre, or at any rate melodrama, and progressed from farce to comedy. In *Dombey and Son* there is no mystery except the reason of Mr. Dombey's pride, and little to interfere with our enjoyment in Dr. Blimber's academy, Captain Cuttle, and Jack Bunsby, and some faithful souls even assert they find Major Bagstock amusing. In spite of Carker, one is not surprised

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that Dickens himself placed *Dombey* among his best work, but whatever preference he had the general public always leans towards *David Copperfield*. 'The first half is not merely the best thing Dickens ever did, but about the best thing any one ever did. In its development the story is handicapped by an unfortunate relapse into melodrama with the seduction of little Emily and her desertion by Steerforth, and the storm is true to the best Dickens coincidence in wrecking the bold and bad seducer on the Yarmouth beach.' Having read it at least three times, I cannot pretend to understand what Uriah Heep is at, why the Aunt loses her money or how it all comes right in the end. The only definite feeling one retains in the matter is resentment at the employment of our dear friend Wilkins Micawber as a detective, a job from which we all feel instinctively his generous nature would have recoiled.

In *Bleak House*, Jarndyce and Jarndyce is so overpowering that it crushes the poor reader in its unending toils. The two volumes are so long and the characters so innumerable that to retain a coherent whole is as difficult as to find out why the house creaks in *Little Dorrit* or to master the argument of *Our Mutual Friend*. It simply cannot be done. One forgets the beginning before the end, and the end if you hark back to the beginning. Both books show signs of fatigue and lack of inspiration, but no author ever had a more marvellous recovery, not even Smollett with *Humphry Clinker*. *The Tale of Two Cities* is not merely an admirable story full of atmosphere and interest, but it gave rise to the great Dickens heresy. There is a school that maintains it is his best novel. Of

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these misguided creatures let it be said at once they have not the root of the matter in them, and that for such is only the outer darkness of an existence without the mitigation of the true Dickens spirit.

Great Expectations is the only novel in which the story interests the reader almost as much as the people, and when we remember they number Joe Gargery, Mr. Wopsle, Pumblechook, old Bill Barley, Wemmick and Jaggers, no praise could be higher. If it be not his finest novel—and there is much to be said for this view—it is certainly the novel of most sustained interest, and the glorious Dickens fun, after its rest cure in *A Tale of Two Cities*', emerges fresher and more delightful than ever. The opening scenes, the tragic incident of Trabb's boy, Pip, and Herbert Pocket's system of accounts, and the description of the great nautical drama in which "the Swabs" play so ominous a part, have never been surpassed even by their author. But it is a pity that Bulwer Lytton was allowed to spoil the end by marrying Estella to Pip. It does not ring true, and one is sorry for Pip.

[There is a sort of tragic fitness in the fact that with Dickens's love of a mystery his last should remain insoluble. Of all the many explanations of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* none have been adequate. He remains to the end in insoluble company with the Man in the Iron Mask. It was a return to the novel of sensation, and one agrees with what that remarkable critic, Edgar Allan Poe, wrote of *Barnaby Rudge*: "That any fiction written by Mr. Dickens should be based on the excitement and maintenance of curiosity we look upon as a misconception on the part of the writer of his own many great yet peculiar powers."

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Perhaps because the appeal is to such a large audience there is an infinite variety of opinion as to the quality of his many books, but in proof of where his great powers found best expression would not all his readers, if one only of his books were to survive, unite for once in wishing it were that peerless classic, untrammelled by plot or purpose, the perennial *Pickwick*?

WILKIE COLLINS

FEW worked harder in their time to amuse the public than Wilkie Collins. Of his numerous books, some are admirable, all are readable. To a certain extent he was his own worst rival. Although he was not afraid of the author of *The Woman in White* it must have been a hard task to follow that masterpiece of sensational fiction. Only the historian of *The Moonstone* could have done so with success. Which is the better is still an open question. Those who only know his later works may have some difficulty in understanding the enthusiasm with which his earlier successes were received. Towards the end, his style, never his strongest point, was disfigured by mannerisms, which must have had rather an irritating effect upon the strident, whose criticism was not softened by a remembrance of the author at his best. There was a tone he was very fond of—for want of a better expression it may be described as a species of literary archness—which at times must have galled the gentlest reader ; and he developed an unfortunate habit of pointing his meaning by a dreadful use of capital letters and italics. A suspicion, too, became apparent of his readers' intelligence. In the later novels he was very fond of summing up, every few chapters, the story and its bearings, in an orgy of explanations its intricacies hardly warranted. At his best no one ever told a story better, if as well, and he never quite lost this delightful art.

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When Wilkie Collins deserted tea to turn his attention to literature, it was the golden age of the story-teller.

In a preface to *The Woman in White*, Wilkie Collins states his own views on this subject :

" I have always held the old-fashioned opinion that the primary object of a work of fiction should be to tell a story, and I have never believed that the novelist who properly performed this first condition was in danger on that account of neglecting the delineation of character. It may be possible in novel writing to present character successfully without telling a story, but it is not possible to tell a story successfully without presenting character."

This he may fairly claim to have done. If you read him principally for his story, the stories hold you because of the people they are about. In *Poor Miss Finch*, *Hide and Seek* and *Miss or Mrs.* there is little or no sensation. They are merely well-written stories of the day. In *Antonina* he even dallied with the historical. From time to time he tried his hand at what used to be called novels with a purpose. *No Name*, one of his most interesting books, deals with the grievance its title suggests. *Heart and Science* attacks vivisection. *Man and Wife* is a joint protest against Scotch marriages and athleticism—an odd combination for attack, but productive of some excellent reading, even if one is left in the end rather in doubt whether it was the Scotticism or the athleticism of the marriage which led to disaster—while in *The New Magdalen* we are less interested in the regeneration of the name type than the skill with which the ingenious penitent simulates the innocent victim of shell shock. But if Wilkie Collins was not very convincing as a controversialist the controversy generally made a good fireside book.

Wilkie Collins

One great literary gift Wilkie Collins had in no small degree. A sense of atmosphere. Of all qualities it is the most intangible, as perhaps is natural.

Few writers make the setting of their books more real. Heredity may have had something to do with it. The son of a painter and an academician, he painted himself and displays in many of his books a real knowledge of artistic technique. However this may be, he had an undoubted mastery as a writer of pictorial suggestion. The mere title *The Woman in White* is a lesson in the art, and if any budding novelist wants to know how to do it, let him read the account in Chapter VI. of that work of Walter Hartright meeting the "solitary woman dressed from head to foot in white garments" on Hampstead Heath.

That Wilkie Collins at his best was a novelist of sensation was quite enough to provoke the antagonism of the new school. Sensational novels, they argued, are often deficient in study of character. These novels are sensational: therefore we decide, off-hand, that the characters in them are puppets, and unworthy a superior critic's attention. This was the kind of reasoning by which it was sought to depreciate a success they could not deny. With the great novel-reading public Wilkie Collins has always been popular. Not long before he died the *Pall Mall Gazette* published a competition for the most popular living author; Wilkie Collins distanced all competitors. One may not agree with the verdict, but it shows that his best work had not been forgotten. Of nothing is the superior critic so fond as to find fault with a thing, excellent in its way, because it does not happen

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to be something quite different, which the critic prefers.

The truth is, critics are not the best judges of fiction, or at any rate of popular fiction. It is difficult for them to realise that books may be popular without being bad. They read too much. Like the epicure whose jaded palate only likes a champagne so dry as to be distasteful to the general, they become over-subtle in their tastes and in their horror of the obvious are apt to appreciate unduly the abnormal and bizarre. They have always resented the weakness of the average citizen for a good story, and towards the end of Wilkie Collins's life they had very nearly purged Mudie's subscribers of this amiable heresy.

They welcomed the American invasion of the 'eighties. Every critic became "a Howell and James young man." In vain did a wit of the period compare the new fiction with "American dry goods." We were led captive. With the intolerance of youth they trampled on our necks and destroyed our idols. Thackeray and Dickens were out of date, we were told, and Mr. Howell sealed our doom by announcing that all the stories had been told. In vain one longed with a certain shamefacedness for a good old-fashioned novel of incident, a novel, as Thackeray says, "without love or talking or any of that sort of nonsense, but containing plenty of fighting, robbing and rescuing." It seemed almost a cry of despair but the deliverer was at hand. It was the ingenious Mr. Labouchere, ever the champion of the oppressed, who was to slay with a shilling book our intolerable Goliath.

With Mr. Hugh Conway's *Called Back* began the revival of the sensational novel. The short review in

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Truth which first brought it into notice declared it was as exciting as anything Wilkie Collins had written in his best days. It was sufficient. The reading public threw off the yoke and returned to the fiction of incident, which in their heart of hearts they had always preferred.

It may not be the highest type of novel—Wilkie Collins was himself conscious of that; but at its best it is a very good thing. Nothing is probably easier than to write a bad sensational story, and nothing harder than to write a good one, and no one ever did it better than the author of *The Moonstone*.

At the commencement of *Fallen Leaves* these remarks were addressed to "readers in general": "The two qualities in fiction which hold the highest rank in your estimation are character and humour. I have always myself tried to combine the different merits of a good novel in one and the same work, and I have never succeeded in keeping an equal balance. In the present story you will find the scales inclining on the whole in favour of character and humour. This has not happened accidentally—advancing years and health that stands sadly in need of improvement warn me, if I am to vary my way of work, that I may have little time to lose. Without waiting for future opportunities, I have kept your standard of merit more constantly before my eyes in writing this book."

Fallen Leaves was not a success. The idea of a young socialist, Amelius Goodenheart, who has been educated in a body of primitive Christian socialists, of Illinois, U.S., and comes over to London to see the world, is full of opportunities. How Amelius uses them is a matter of opinion. The public did not agree

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with Wilkie Collins, and there was a good deal to be said for its view. Mrs. Grundy was shocked, and the second edition of his adventures has never been published. It might have been an interesting book, but would not probably have added to his fame. Wilkie Collins's touch was hardly delicate enough for his subject, though a more harmless book was never written. It is curious to note an occasional rebellion against the conventions in his books.

His favourite hero is the dashing Bohemian, and is evidently intended to thrill us with delicious apprehension, but the Bohemianism was of a very harmless kind.

Apparently in those simple days a refusal to wear a tall hat (even in the country) and a disinclination for Divine service went far to establish a reputation as an *esprit fort*.

His earliest success, *Basil*, is said to have offended some. The *Illustrated London News*, in which *The Law and The Lady* appeared, considered it necessary to apologise for certain passages, one doesn't quite know why.

In *The New Magdalen* a somewhat unfortunate title, one feels the moral is rather inverted. One ought to sympathise with Grace Roseberry, who rises from the dead to find that no one welcomes her tactless *renaissance*.

In *Belgravia*, a once popular but now extinct magazine to which he was a frequent contributor, he revenged himself on Mrs. Grundy by making the heroine of one of his stories marry her groom. This was bad enough; but not content with that, he allowed her to live happily with him ever afterwards,

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which was more than the polite public would stand.

The comparison with Gaboriau and Boisgobey is inevitable, but it is not one the English writer need fear. The interest in Gaboriau's tales is narrower ; he is solely the novelist of crime, and his stories are all police stories. Then, again, there is a sameness in his method. The plan of beginning at the end and devoting the rest of the book to explain how he got there (what Anthony Trollope called the cart before the horse method) becomes monotonous. With Gaboriau the story is everything. One is fascinated by his extraordinary ingenuity, and aghast at the circumstantial evidence piled up against the hero, although it never takes you in more than once; but the characters never interest except in so far as they are incidental to the tale. The immortal Lecocq himself, glorious and impassive as he is, proves but a shadowy acquaintance. One feels that if ever it became necessary to employ one of those gentlemen who are to be trusted (as the advertisements say) to conduct confidential inquiries for the nobility and gentry with discretion, we would probably get some one much more like our humbler friend, Sergeant Cuff.

Boisgobey had a marvellous gift of opening his story with a curdling effect, but too frequently allows his imagination to run riot. He has no self-restraint. There is a sublime disregard of probabilities that puts us unnecessarily on our guard. What could be better than the opening pages of *La Tresse Blonde* ? A party of young men, after a late supper, ride across the Bois de Boulogne. Meeting an old man with a basket, what more natural than that, out of sheer gaiety of

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heart, they should snatch the basket off his back and ride away with it. To their astonishment, instead of pursuing them he plunges into the forest and disappears. The basket is opened and a woman's head is found inside—a woman's head covered with resplendent golden hair. Could anything be fuller of more delightful promise? Somehow or other it is not fulfilled. In pursuit of the owner of the head, we wander into sewers, and somehow or other, after incredible adventures, get lost in the quicksands of Normandy. If we are conscientious we persevere to the end, but the temptation to skip is irresistible, and before we finish, we are rather sorry the lady in question was not like Captain Mayne Reid's horseman—without a head to cause all this bother.

Wilkie Collins, while his plots were marvels of constructive ingenuity, had, in spite of the superior critics, the gift of interesting us in his characters. They may be subordinate to his plot, but they are unmistakably there. In Count Fosco we have quite an original villain. Gone is the theory for ever that fat implies good nature. It is said that Fosco grew obese by accident. It has been suggested that a lady complained to the author of *The Woman in White* that in her travels in Novel-land she had never encountered a fat villain. We prefer to believe it otherwise: Fosco thin would lose much of his charm.

But Fosco is not merely a fat villain. He is much more, he is a living villain. Nor should his wife be forgotten.

How well the scene is done when she is summoned by Fosco after he has made his confession to Walter Hartright:

" The lady came in, cool, pale and venomous as ever. ' Amuse Mr. Hartright, my angel,' said the Count. He placed a chair for her, kissed her hand for the second time, withdrew to a sofa and in three minutes was as peacefully and happily asleep as the most virtuous man in existence.

" Madame Fosco took a book from the table, sat down and looked at me with the steady vindictive malice of a woman who never forgot and never forgave.

"* I have been listening to your conversation with my husband,' she said; ' if I had been in his place, I would have laid you dead on the hearthrug,' " and no reader of *The Woman in White* would doubt her words.

One thoroughly agrees with the Count's magnanimous appreciation of Miss Halcombe, the brave woman of the story : she is charming. How well the incident is told where she creeps along the verandah and listens to Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde plotting in the smoking-room below. Walter Hartright tells his story in a manly way, and Pesca, who saves the whole situation at the crisis, is delightful; even his wicked baronet, Sir Percival Glyde, that good old puppet of fiction, does not creak too obviously. His heroes are pleasant gentlemen, and we can understand their falling in love with the heroine. His humour has been described as forced and mechanical. Like most disciples of Dickens, he did not always imitate the best points of his master. Still, there is real humour in his books. If one is not quite so surprised at learning that Miss Clack's Diary, in *The Moonstone*, was written during a severe attack of rheumatic fever as the author intended, the steward Betteredge, whose *vade mecum* is *Robinson Crusoe*,

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in the same work, is full of fun. What can be better than Betteredge's account of his marriage? His courtship, actuated by "economy, with a dash of love;" his misgivings as the time draws near, and his attempt to get out of it, "in obedience to the laws," by offering his future wife "a feather bed and fifty shillings to be off the bargain." His misgivings were not altogether without foundation, according to his summing-up of the married state: "How it was I don't understand, but we always seemed, with the best of motives, to be getting in one another's way. When I wanted to go upstairs, there was my wife coming down; or when my wife wanted to go down, there was I coming up. That is married life according to my experience of it." The whole of Betteredge's story is spontaneously funny. There is none of that effort which one feels in some of the author's other studies.

Every one likes Sergeant Cuff, the detective, whose only ambition is to retire and grow his roses in peace. In *The Woman in White*, Pesca, the little Italian, with his zeal for everything English, including our athletic amusements, which he is firmly persuaded he can master by the light of nature, is decidedly amusing—conventional if you will, but still entertaining. Mr. Fairlie is a capital sketch of a thoroughly selfish hypochondriac; and after reading *Man and Wife*, one is not sorry to have made the acquaintance of Sir Peter Lundie.

In *The Evil Genius*, not one of his best-known books, there is an excellent account of a jury discussing their verdict. All the early part of the story is quite first-rate, and if the interest rather flags as the book proceeds, it still remains one of his lesser successes.

Wilkie Collins

For those who are curious upon the subject of coincidences, Wilkie Collins tells an interesting story in an appendix to *Armadale*. At the end of that fascinating work, Miss Gwilt has determined to murder Allan Armadale in Dr. Downward's sanatorium. It is to be done by introducing poisoned air into the room where he is sleeping. At the crisis she relents, and carrying him out of the fatal room, returns to die there herself. As a new method of murder this created considerable interest at the time. A year and a half, as the author tells us, after the end of *Armadale* was sketched, a vessel lay at Liverpool, which was looked after by one man, who slept on board, in the capacity of ship-keeper. On a certain day in the week this man was found dead in the deck-house. On the next day a second man who took his place was carried dying to the Northern Hospital. On the third day a third ship-keeper was appointed, and was found dead in the deck-house, which had already proved fatal to the other two. The name of that ship was *Armadale*, and the proceedings at the inquest proved that the three men had all been suffocated by sleeping in poisoned air.

There have been few writers who have written more engrossing books. His were bad books to pick up for the casual ten minutes before the dressing bell. The ten minutes went very quickly and found you still reading at the end, and before you knew where you were you found yourself distressingly late for dinner. He certainly had the gift of exciting his readers. He not only tried to make your flesh creep, but succeeded in that enthralling operation. The effect is produced by legitimate means ; he is no

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believer in the mere vulgar piling up of horrors for horror's sake. He has none of the thirst for blood of the modern sensationalists. In *The Moonstone*[^] perhaps his best story, there is only one murder, and that is done behind the scenes. The effect depends always more upon suggestion than circumstance.

Even the lazy boy at Chur, who by this time, if his kindly observer's prophecy be true, must know most plots, and is no longer surprised when the stranger turns out to be the rightful earl, would have to exert all his ingenuity—experience will help him little, as the idea of the theft is absolutely original—to find out who stole the moonstone. Our interest is secured from the moment we hear the history of the diamond. From its disappearance the most hardened novel devourer (it would almost excite a publisher's reader!) sits breathless while suspicion is tossed from one to another until the real culprit is traced by the boy with the gooseberry eyes. About the middle of the book an acute student might get a clue, but the trail is at once lost by the heroine saying to the hero: "You villain, I saw you take it," or words to that effect, under what circumstances all will remember.

In his more recent stories he relied perhaps too much on the introduction of the supernatural. This is generally fatal to a sensational novel. It destroys at once the sense of reality, its saving clause. Apart from this, the reader is apt to resent it. It throws out his calculations. It is no good speculating on the probable course which will appeal to the intelligence of a ghost. He feels the author is not playing fairly with him, and he does not like it. Still, for weird horror there is an early story of his called *The Dream*

Wilkie Collins

Woman, almost unsurpassed. It is bound up with a number of other short stories in a volume called, we believe, *The Queen of Hearts*. Even if our memory is at fault the reader will not be hard on us. It is an admirable collection of short stories, introduced by the quaint method so dear to the Christmas serial. Did Dickens invent it in the beginning of *Nicholas Nickleby*? Sheridan le Fanu, in that extraordinary series, *In a Glass Darkly*, may be more appalling, but *The Dream Woman* runs him hard.

Wilkie Collins had a considerable measure of success in writing for the stage, but it was not a success apart from his novels. His plays were simply his novels dramatised. *The New Magdalen* was probably his most successful effort; but *Armada* and *The Moonstone* both held their own amid their new surroundings.

The Frozen Deep was written originally as a play for amateurs, and Charles Dickens acted the leading part. That the success it enjoyed was not merely a *succes d'estime* was shown by its reception when it was produced ten years afterwards by Mr. Horace Wynn at the Olympic Theatre.

Rank and Riches, his only real original effort as a play, was damned. It is said to have had considerable success in America. Still, it is as a novelist and not as a dramatist that Wilkie Collins will be remembered. Your true lover of novels, to whom every kind of novel is dear, provided it be good of its kind, who can love his Thackeray without quarrelling with Dickens, and can enjoy *Daniel Deronda* with still a laugh to spare for Miss Broughton, will always keep a corner of his heart and a place on his shelves for Wilkie Collins's novels. Whether his novels will

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be read by future generations is another matter. It is rash to prophesy what future generations will read ; but this one can say with confidence, if they are not, so much the worse for future generations. If his novels may not represent the highest possible development of fiction, he did an excellent thing in a better way than any one else, and on that must rest his title to fame. As in all good books honestly written, there is a personal note in his works. All who know them will have a kindly feeling towards the author who worked so hard for so long to amuse them. Those who do not may be grateful that they have before them such a rich vein of interest still unquarried.

A RED-FACED NIXON

"WHAT is a red-faced Nixon ? " asked Mr. Calverley in his famous examination paper on *Pickwick*. The late Sir Walter Besant, who, we have always understood, took honours in *Pickwick* (a classical, if not the classical tripos), had no doubt a satisfactory explanation at his fingers' ends, but thousands of less erudite readers must have shared the elder Mr. Weller's curiosity and felt disappointed for once with Sam, when he made the somewhat meagre response: " Never mind who he was—he warn't a coachman: that's enough for you." His father, however, took a broader view of things—this was not enough for him.

" ' I know'd an ostler of that name,' said Mr. Weller musingly.

" ' It warn't him,' said Sam ; ' this here gentleman was a prophet.'

" ' Wot's a prophet ?' inquired Mr. Weller, looking sternly on his son.

" ' Wy, a man who tells what's a'goin' to happen,' replied Sam.

" ' I wish I had know'd him, Sammy,' said Mr. Weller. ' Perhaps he might ha' throwed a small light on that ere liver complaint as we was a-speaking on just now/ "

A reference, of course, to the shepherd's state of health, aggravated by an injudicious treatment of pineapple rum.

" Hows'ever, if he's dead and ain't left the business to nobody, there is an end on it."

Every one, or every reader of *Pickwick*, which should be the same tlyng, will remember how Mr. Weller senior, with some half-dozen of his professional brethren, attended the insolvent court in the interests

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of an unfortunate gentleman named George, who had "contracted a speculative but imprudent passion for horsing long stages." Also the accidental meeting between Sam and old Weller which commenced by Sam unconsciously bonneting his father, who was engaged in fighting his way into the court. "A preparatory ceremony which has been calculated to occupy in ordinary cases from 25 minutes to 30," and ended in the incarceration of Sam in the Fleet, at the suit of his father, with the assistance of Mr. Solomon Pell. At that interview old Weller indulged in certain comments on Mr. Pickwick's position which called from Sam the remarkable statement, which led to the above discussion.

"Well now," said Sam, "you've been a prophesyin* away wery fine, like a red-faced Nixon as the sixpenny books gives picters on."

From internal evidence these facts appear established—that Nixon was masculine in gender and a prophet by profession—that he had a fresh colour, and was a person of such importance that "the sixpenny books" gave pictures of him. From old Weller's remarks it may be inferred that at that time he was dead. Ingenious commentators have suggested the allusion was to Robert Nixon, the Cheshire prophet. Granted Robert Nixon, the rest is simple. To a commentator who knows his business it is easy to suggest the prophecies were published (probably at the prophet's own expense) at a popular price : and what more likely than that they should have been embellished with a coloured representation of the prophet calculated to catch the eye, after the method of the railway novels of to-day ? If this theory be accepted

A *Red-Faced Nixon*

the " sixpenny books " were a kind of *Old Maoris Almanac*, as highly coloured as the predictions for purposes of sale. The only defect of this explanation was its ingenuity. It seemed too good to be true.

For years we maintained an unworthy scepticism, and then a gleam of sunshine—a second-hand bookstall—an unassuming volume—and the clouds were dispelled. There was nothing suggestive in the slender volume picked up with the languid interest of a bookstall lounge, which never takes the proprietor in, as he watches out of the corner of his eye. They are only looking for the place where they left off yesterday. He knows only too well they don't intend buying. The poor man is merely concerned to see they carry away nothing more substantial than information.

On the title-page we read :

" Nixon's prophecies
the
Original predictions
of
Robert Nixon
commonly called
The Cheshire Prophet:
Published from an authentic manuscript, found among the papers of
A Cheshire Gentleman, lately deceased ;
together with
Nixon's Cheshire Prophecy at large,
From Lady Cowper's Copy,
in the reign of Queen Anne
with
Historical and Political Remarks
and many instances
wherein it has been fulfilled
also
Some Particulars of his Life."

It was enough, the book was ours. On the opposite page was the red-faced Nixon himself. Not so very red-faced after all; depicted as leaning out of an

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upper window, and addressing an elderly person of uncertain sex in a pink dressing-gown. The prophet is clothed apparently in his *robe de nuit*, set off by a red night-cap. In his right hand is a flat candlestick, and he is addressing the intruder (who has no boots on), whether in a spirit of prophecy or remonstrance does not appear. In a pleasing contrast to the fervour of the prophet, who is shaking his left hand in a minatory manner, is represented the caution of the law in the person of an elderly watchman, who from behind his box is taking a professional interest in the absence of the boots by the light of a lantern.

The authorities do not mention a Mrs. Nixon, or it might be the wife of the prophet who has forgotten her latchkey. On the other hand it may be a devout inquirer who has selected midnight as the most obvious time for consulting the oracle. There is no elucidation of this picture, which is as mysterious as one of Nixon's own utterances. It may be in the nature of an allegory. A letter included in the volume throws some light on the question of the wife. One hardly gathers that the sage was a marrying man.

The letter is dated Nantwich, March 24th, 1714, and is signed W. E. It is addressed to one John Oldmixon. W. E., it appears, has met a man who actually remembers the prophet in the flesh and that was "Old Woodman of Copnal," who, with a deplorable lack of charity says: "Nixon was a short, squab fellow: had a great head and goggle eyes: that he used to drivel as he spoke which was very rarely and was extremely surly." Old Woodman has quite the modern touch. "He particularly had a spite against children and would run after them to beat them, when they came

A Red-Faced Nixon

in his way, especially if they made sport with him as he said they used to do, and himself among the rest when he was a lad," which perhaps may account for the somewhat unfriendly estimate " Old Woodman of Copnal" formed of poor Nixon.

Even allowing for the personal bias, our prophet does not appear to have been a very amiable character. He commenced life as a plough-boy to Farmer Crowton of Swanlow, and was so stubborn " they could make him do nothing without beating," like people one has met (without the excuse of divination). " They seldom could get anything out of him but yes or no," which would appear of the less importance as " if he spoke much more it was unintelligible." On one point at any rate Old Woodman cannot withhold a grudging admiration. " He had a very good stomach," this stern critic is fain to confess in face of a popular report " that he could eat up a shoulder of mutton at a meal if they would let him and a good luncheon of bread and cheese after it." From which we cannot help feeling that Nixon, as he had no conversation, must have been rather an unprofitable guest. His reputation seems to have been acquired somewhat easily. Nixon was out with Farmer Crowton in a field " near the River Weaver in Swanlow parish." The worthy farmer was ploughing and Nixon following, when we read : " The boy stopt on a sudden, dropt his bottle and budget, which he carried to the field with him, and stood motionless with his eyes fixed towards heaven—neither words nor blows could get him out of his trance for the spaje of an hour. His master ajid the men that were at work, stood by him all the while taking him to be in a fit; but wondered still that he

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stood upright and did not fall down." From that moment he was a made man. " People had a strange reverence for his stupidity even," and somewhat good-naturedly " took his silence to be like that of an oracle as portentous as if he prophesied."

There must have been a great opening for prophets in Cheshire just then. Shortly afterwards the seer, who up to this time had had the proverbial lack of honour of the profession in his own country, attracted the notice of a Mr. Cholmondeley, a local magnate. " Mr. Cholmondeley hearing what a prophet Farmer Crowton had, sent for him and kept him at his place." The farmer was the more reconciled to his loss as he had already begun to realise a prophet has his disadvantages.

Nixon appears to have been like a barometer on a holiday. He developed a melancholy vein and beating did him no good. On one occasion there was a difference of opinion between the prophet and a ploughman as to the prophet's treatment of an ox. The ploughman threatened to lay impious hands on the prophet, to which the prophet retorted, " My master's beast will not be his in three days." A life estate fell in within that time, and the Lord of the Manor took the self-same ox for a heriot. One wonders if Nixon gave him a hint; at any rate Farmer Crowton had had enough of prophecy. With the best intentions, no doubt, but a little presumptuously, his new master endeavoured to improve the prophet's mind. " He told his steward to teach the prophet to read."

We are not sorry to learn Nixon showed his independence of the alphabet as " his stupidity increased the more the steward endeavoured to improve him."

A Red-Faced Nixon

To him prophesying was not merely as easy but actually easier than ABC. He does not seem to have resented this ill-advised attempt, "as he was very grateful to his master Cholmondeley." If he could not read Nixon was not such a fool as he looked. It was an anxious moment in the annals of the Cholmondeley family.

Mr. Cholmondeley had married the daughter of Sir Walter St. John, "A lady not esteemed very young." Cheshire would appear to be rather a gossiping county. It was feared the old family might become extinct. Nixon rose to the situation like a man. With considerable acumen he saw his chance and threw off the following: "When an eagle shall sit on the top of Vale Royal House (the family mansion) then shall an heir be born." The prophet must have felt a little nervous, but the double event came off. An eagle did sit on the housetop, an heir was born, and Nixon's position in the Cholmondeley family was assured. Encouraged by this success he seems to have extended the scope of his predictions: "A boy shall be born with three thumbs on one hand, who shall hold three king's horses while England is three times won and lost in a day." A boy was born in the neighbouring parish of Bedworth with three thumbs, but declined to assist the prophet any further, and the arithmetical problem was never solved.

After this *success t'festime* he became a little more indefinite in method. "When a raven shall build in a stone lion's mouth, on a church top beside the grey forest, then shall § King of England be driven from his crown and return no more." Mr. John Oldmixon tells us a raven did build in a stone lion's mouth

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in the steeple of a church near the forest of Delamere and, as James II. " not long afterwards " abdicated, it would be captious to deny the connection between the two. We fear Nixon was trading on his reputation when he perpetrated this :

" In a forest stand Oaks three
Beside a headless cross,
A well of blood shall run and ree
Its cover shall be brass,
Which shall ne'er appear, till horses' feet have trod it bare,
Who wins it will declare,
The eagle shall so fight that day
That ne'er a friend from him away.
A hound without delay shall run the chase far and near.
The dark dragon shall die in fight."

But even Oldmixon can make nothing of this.

The first Napoleon is clearly indicated here :

" The weary eagle shall to an island in the sea return,
Where leaves and herbs grow fresh and green."

Though we do not remember any incident of this nature at Elba or St. Helena :

" There he shall meet a lady fair,
Who shall say, Go help thy friend in battle slain."

There seems no reason why " a great scarcity of bread corn" should not refer to the condition of England before the abolition of the corn laws.

" The bear, that hath long been tied to a stake, shall shake his chains,
That every man shall hear, and shall cause much debate "

can only mean the Crimean War.

Nixon was no believer in the future of land and scored a great success in foretelling agricultural depression.

" One may have a house for lifting the latch of the door.
Landlords shall stand
With hat in hand
To desire tenants to hold their land."

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And again :

" Forty pounds in hand
Shall be better than forty pounds a year in land."

" A great tax shall be granted, but never gathered," is a clear reference to Walpole's Excise Bill. Autumn Sessions seem indicated here: " There will be a winter council, a careful Christmas," the addition " and a bloody Lent," may merely point to the natural objection of one who " had a very good stomach " to that ascetic season.

The fame of Nixon's prophecies at last reached the ears of no less a person than James L, and orders were given for him to be brought to Court. Poor Nixon was by no means elated at his good fortune. Of course, being a prophet, it was no surprise to him. " At the time the king gave his orders he was in the town of Over, about which he ran like a madman, declaring the king had sent for him and that he must go to Court and there be starved to death." This amused in no small degree the inhabitants of Over. " To think," as they rather unkindly put it, " that His Majesty, so noted for his wisdom, should send for a dirty drivelling clown to Court, and that being sent for he should fear to be starved there." Nixon may have heard that the British Solomon had the frugality of his race. The laugh was decidedly on his side when the king's messenger arrived, and we are not sorry to hear the superior people of Over " were confounded on finding the most ridiculous of all he had ever foretold (in their opinion) become a truth."

King James, with all the caution of a Scotchman, determined to put his prophet to the proof; accordingly he hid a valuable diamond ring in the palace,

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and after pretending to look for it, sent for Nixon and told him of his loss—adding, by way of encouragement, " that if he would not help him to find it he (which we fear must mean Nixon) has no hopes left. This must have been a nasty crisis in Nixon's career. If he failed there was no hope for him on the word of a Stuart, upon which for once he may have been justified in relying. While even in the event of success he must have felt there was always a chance of the Royal Witch-finder " adopting a certain course " as judges say, and burning him for a magician. Nixon, however, was too old a bird to be caught with such chaff as this and distinctly scored with the rejoinder, " He who hideth can find." This so impressed James that he ordered everything that Nixon said after this should be put in writing.

Even the pleasure of seeing himself in print, or its equivalent, did not satisfy Nixon. Perhaps the fact that he could not read, in spite of Mr. Cholmondeley's steward, lessened his pride in the circumstance of publication. He was always haunted by the idea of starvation. In vain did James, apparently nettled at this reflection on his *menage*, appoint an officer especially to see to his wants. Liberty was given to him to range through the whole palace, and " the kitchen was to be his more constant dwelling." With this privilege Nixon should have felt secure, yet one day when the King was going to his hunting seat Nixon " ran to him crying, begging in the most moving terms that he might not be left, for that if he was, His Majesty would never see him again alive : that he should be starved : that now was the time, and if he was left he must die." James, however, would not

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take Nixon with him : probably feeling there was no precedent for a prophet in a hunting box, and Nixon's disposition was a little uncertain, as we have seen : he might have taken to forecasting " Frost locally," Still James did everything he could and " commended him strongly to the officer's care," but alas, poor Nixon fell a victim to his own prescience.

The servants of the Royal household, in the absence of their master, with deplorable irreverence made fun of the oracle and annoyed him so much, that the officer to whom he had been entrusted locked him up in a closet and suffered no one but himself to attend on him. Unfortunately for Nixon a message of great importance came from the king to this very officer, and he, in his readiness to obey the Royal command, forgot to set poor Nixon at liberty and though " he was but three days absent, when he recollected his prisoner, he found him at his return dead, as he had foretold, of hunger."

Why the other servants did not let him out does not appear. Perhaps as he had been entrusted to the errant officer it was " not their place." Perhaps the conscientious prophet felt his reputation was at stake and refused to budge. His biographer rather confirms the latter view. " Thus, evidenced by what has passed, stands his prophecy in every mouth in Cheshire," he writes, with somewhat vague ideas as to the nature of evidence. Whether Sam Weller had any Cheshire blood in him we do not know. He may possibly have had Cheshire belongings on his mother's side. If so, this would explain his unusual reticence on the subject of " the red-faced Nixon." We learn " a greater affront cannot be given than to ask a copy (of the

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prophecies) from the families said to be possessed of them. Every means, it is well known, has been used to smother the truth, perplex the curious, and even to abolish the very remembrance that such a one ever existed, but for what reason cannot appear, except that it is "foretold the heir of O—is to meet with some ignominious death at his own gate, with other family events, which, though no person or time being distinguished, may perhaps occasion this secrecy."

We can only throw ourselves on the mercy of the Cheshire families and hope that they and even the anonymous "heir of O—" may forgive this attempt to rescue "the red-faced Nixon" from oblivion.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

WORK so admirable as Anthony Trollope's can never be forgotten. It is true literary taste is apt to be capricious, and no author is safe from temporary neglect. There have been times when superior people refused to read Dickens, and some moderns pretend they do not like Thackeray. Intolerant youth turns to strange gods, and the repudiation of old faiths is part of the ritual. As regards the general public, appreciation seems to vary inversely with its atmospheric surroundings. Did not Archdeacon Grantley lock himself into his study in Barchester Close to read Rabelais ? As Mr. Birrell says in his delightful essay on " The Office of Literature " : " Self-forgetfulness is the essence of enjoyment." Cinderella appeals to the drudge for whom the fairy godmother never calls. One suspects that when she did and Cinderella landed her Prince, the story lost much of its savour for the royal bride. Stories of the sea make their appeal principally to land-lubbers, the mariner preferring the detective stories of *terra firma*, while novels of passion, we are given to understand, are composed for the most part by elderly governesses for coeval spinsters. So in the comparative calm of the 'nineties the feeling was for romance. The quiet sanity of Trollope's method made little appeal, and for the moment Barsestshire ceased to be a home county. With the strain of war people found distraction in more placid literature. " Trollope's top-hole! " a soldier wrote from the

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trenches, " particularly when you have just come out of the line and wish to delete everything from your memory as cleanly as the censor deletes injudicious remarks in your correspondence."

Trollope's autobiography, published soon after his death, without doubt damaged his reputation for the moment. It was written some years before, with the fulfilled intention that it should not be published during his lifetime. This enabled him to write with a freedom which makes the book of unique interest; but at the time it did the author harm. The public found this picture of an author in undress somewhat disillusioning. Trollope is one of the few people who has suffered from his virtues. Nothing could be more unjust. What does that modern genius, Mr. Arnold Bennett, whose sane realism often recalls the older writer, say on this point ? " There is no reason why great literature should not be produced to time with a watch on the desk. Persons who chatter about the necessity of awaiting inspirational hypersthenia don't know what the business of being an artist is : they have only read about it sentimentally." True as this is, sentiment is often unjust, and Trollope's industry was so merciless that human nature recoiled aghast at so devastating an example.

In the first shock of the revelation people refused to credit any work produced under such industrial conditions with literary merit, and when the author made matters worse by explaining it was merely a question of early rising (a repulsive habit peculiarly alien to the literary temperament), his warmest admirers could only bend to the storm. Still, this repellent industry had amazing results of quality as well as quantity. In all fiction no finer work can be found than the

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opening chapter of *Barchester Towers*, where Archdeacon Grantley is watching by his father's bedside, the dying bishop, all too conscious that his own future is in the balance. It is a masterpiece of art, a model for all time of how to do it. As for quantity, it may be doubted whether any man has ever done more in the sense of varied and actual performance than Anthony Trollope. Most people, having filled with distinction an important post in the Civil Service, would have drawn their pension at sixty with a comfortable feeling of having deserved well of their country. Yet Anthony Trollope managed to write, out of official hours, forty-eight novels (and it must not be forgotten that the novels of that time were at least twice as long as the average novel of to-day), four biographies, four works of travel, and five volumes of miscellaneous writings, besides articles political, critical, social, and sporting without number. It is very characteristic to read: "In the spring of 1871 we, I and my wife, had decided we would go to Australia to visit our shepherd son. *Of course* before doing so I made a contract with a publisher for a book about the colonies." The labour of writing his study of Csesar went for so little that he made a present of it to his publisher, an instance of misplaced generosity so unique one wishes it were incredible.

He remained with the Post Office thirty-three years, till 1867, and it must not be thought that he was a negligent Civil Servant. If anything, his official energy was a little aggressive. "You have never permitted your other avocations to interfere with your Post Office work, which has been faithfully and *indeed* energetically performed." This complimentary letter,

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sent him on his retirement, he characteristically treats as "official flummery," but a year after, when some one was wanted to negotiate a postal treaty with America, Anthony Trollope is asked to go to Washington, which shows that in saying : " You have for many years ranked among the most conspicuous members of the Post Office, which on several occasions when you have been employed on large and difficult matters, has reaped much benefit from the great abilities you have been able to place at its disposal," there was the sincerity of future preferment. For him retirement did not imply leisure : of all his busy life the years 1867 and 1868 were the busiest. He establishes and edits a magazine, contributing to it constantly, stands for Parliament at Beverley, writes five novels, hunts three days a week in England, establishes a postal treaty with America, besides doing work for the Foreign Office on behalf of international copyright. Such is the result of what he says were also the two happiest years of his life. Nor does all this satisfy his insatiable energy. " I also made an engagement with an editor of a London daily paper to supply him with a series of articles, which were duly written, duly published, and duly paid for." Even in his old age, when he was taken on a holiday by Mr. Burns on one of his steamers to Iceland, a book has to be written all about it for private circulation. In addition to this he finds time to make himself a very fair Latin scholar and resumes the study of the classics.

It is true his industry was hereditary. His mother wrote some forty novels and a vivacious book on the manners and customs of the Americans, which, after the manner of such works, perceptibly widened the

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Atlantic. Still, to the abashed reader the wonder was not how it was done, but that it could be done at all. The explanation is simplicity itself—early rising. As a conscientious official, for the greater part of the day his time was not his own, but ten thousand words a week had to be written all the same. "A week passed with an insufficient number of pages has been a blister to my eye, and a month so disgraced would have been a sorrow to my heart/" Fortunately he could work anywhere, and as his duties involved a good deal of railway travelling, an ingenious desk made writing possible in a railway carriage. Wherever he went the work went too. "As I journeyed across France to Marseilles, and made thence a terribly rough voyage to Alexandria [on important Post Office business], I wrote my allotted number of pages every day."

With Trollope even sea-sickness included a literary output. "On this occasion more than once I left my paper on the cabin table, rushing away to be sick." But the great secret was the early start. An old servant was paid five pounds a year extra wages to call his master and make the five o'clock (in the morning) coffee. At five the punctual start, and by breakfast time the daily task was finished. Most people, if they could have found such a method tolerable, would have degenerated into a mere drudge, but what saved Trollope was he played as hard as he worked, and the severity of his method was largely adopted so as to give him time for play. In his busiest years he always hunted regularly, played his rubber of whist, was a well-known and popular figure at his clubs, entertained a great deal and mixed freely with the society of the

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day, besides being a considerable traveller. He says of Ms hunting:

" The cause of my delight in the amusement I have never been able to analyse to my own satisfaction. In the first place, even now I know very little about hunting. ... I am too blind to see hounds turning, and cannot therefore tell whether the fox has gone this way or that. Indeed, all the notice I take of hounds is not to ride over them. My eyes are so constituted that I can never see the nature of a fence. I either follow some one or ride at it with the full conviction that I may be going into a horse-pond or gravel-pit. I have jumped into both one and the other.'

Short sight was not his only difficulty. " I am very heavy, and have never ridden expensive horses. I am also now old for such work, being so stiff that I cannot get on my horse without the aid of a block or bank." But the same indomitable spirit which conquered the difficulties under which he wrote comes to the rescue. " I ride still after the same fashion with a boy's energy, determined to sit ahead if it may possibly be done, hating the roads, despising young men who ride them, and with a feeling that life cannot, with all her riches, have given me anything better than when I have gone through a long run to a finish keeping a place [this is very characteristic], not of glory, but of credit among my juniors." It was the way these Victorian writers lived, as well as the way they worked, that gave their writings a spaciousness of outlook and comprehension that the modern writers, with all their astounding cleverness, often lack. There is a certain provincialism among the best of them. They are too often intellectual outsiders ; apart from their one particular set and experience they become priggish and ineffective *. there is no general inside knowledge. They see life acutely, but do not see it whole.

The autobiography came at an unfortunate time.

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It was the dawn of the artistic temperament, and the irresponsibility of genius was its creed. Such theories were intolerable to Trollope. Inspiration was all nonsense. Cobbler's wax in your writing chair was much better. If inspiration did not come it was because the genius had drunk champagne the night before or smoked too many cigars. "When I have heard such doctrine preached I have hardly been able to repress my scorn. To me it would not be more absurd if the shoemaker were to wait for inspiration." He seemed to take a curious pleasure in comparing a writer's task with the most repulsive trades. Tallow-chandlers, and even on one occasion coffin-makers, are called in to reproach the halting geniuses. This feeling was in his very bones. For no writer has he such an admiration as for Thackeray. In his view *Esmond* is the finest English novel. "Among all our novelists his style is the purest, as to my ear it is also the most harmonious." Yet he finds Thackeray's methods of work hard to forgive. In his volume on Thackeray this spirit is always lurking. One almost detects a resentment at a success which was attained by such different and, to Trollope, almost immoral means. Magnificent as it was, would not it have been still more magnificent if the author had got up at five in the morning ? seems always at the back of his mind. There may be something in it. The readers of *The Virginians* might have been a little surer in their minds as to whether Mr. van den Borsch was the father or grandfather of Lady Castlewood, and Lord Farintosh's mother might not have died in one number and enjoyed a disconcerting resurrection in the next; but what Trollope could not realise was that some gains

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may be dearly bought, and that for the real thing when you get it you must not grudge some form of payment; and Trollope is a little ungrateful, because it was the unbusinesslike qualities of genius that gave the precise Trollope his great chance of opening the new *Cornhill Magazine* with *Framley Parsonage*, from which moment his position as a successful novelist was assured ; but then Trollope suffered a good deal from geniuses. *Once a Week* was to produce *The Vicar of Bullhampton* on July 1st in a certain year. Long before that date the manuscript was ready, with every comma in its place. Then a terrible blow fell. The magazine was under treaty to produce Victor Hugo's *Uhomme qui rit*. " This sententious French Radical," as the outraged Trollope describes him, after the blow fell, was not ready when it should have been, and in consequence its appearance would clash with the *Vicar*'s, and it was suggested the English author should give way. This was too much. Victor Hugo was not merely in default; he was a defaulting Frenchman. " The Frenchman had broken his engagement; he had failed to have his work finished by the stipulated time. From week to week, and from month to month, he had put off the fulfilment of his duty, and because of these *laches* on his part—I was to be thrown over." In the result " *The Grinning Man*" as Trollope now calls the offending work, came out in the magazine, and the punctual *Vicar* withdraws in a dudgeon to appear in separate numbers by himself.

In reviewing his own work a few years before his death, he is distressed to find out that a Latin writer called Varro had written 480 volumes—but consoles himself by questioning their length and the reflection

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that there are still years of work left, years of which, it need hardly be said, he took full advantage. The weak spot in the system never seems to have struck him. The poor Muse, superwoman though she was, lagged at times. Some of the work did become mechanical and lost its directness and actuality, his greatest gifts as a writer. If you have to write so many words in so many hours you are apt to write a good many of the words a good many times. This weakness is noticeable in much of his later work, and especially in the political novels. One has the feeling of being told the same thing rather too often, and there is a recurrent recitation of what happened a few chapters back which at times is rather tedious.

Then the mere number of the books has interfered with his fame. In few libraries is there room for sixty-odd volumes from one pen, and no complete edition of his works has ever been attempted. The Barchester series, his best work, have been published separately. It is quite time the political novels and a selected few of his general works were produced, in uniform. Still, with all his industry, Trollope was an artist. He tried to give of his best, if at times the conditions of his work precluded it. At the height of his reputation he published two novels, *Linda Tressel* and *Nina fialatka*, anonymously, at considerable pecuniary sacrifice, in order to see whether his success was merely nominal, and one is glad to know they justified the experiment. At his best there is a real vein of genius, although he would very likely have resented the imputatioji; at his worst a wealth of agreeable reading. It must be remembered, as is often most unjustly forgotten in criticising those who

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write—they do not do it merely to annoy critics. Trollope was a poor man, and wrote frankly for money: every sixpence he ever had he made by hard work. A modest man (his criticisms on his own books are far from lenient), he never seems to have taken his literary work quite seriously.

In *The Warden*, one of his best novels, he introduced the three children of Archdeacon Grantley^r in order to give them the personalities, caricatured, of three well-known bishops of the day, and this absurdity is emphasised so that the reader shall share in the facetiousness. The result is not very amusing, and an air of unreality is at once introduced into a masterpiece of reality. Trollope himself appreciated the mistake. One of the sons, Henry, is reintroduced as the hero of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, but no one could trace any likeness between the childish caricature and the dignified Major Grantley, V.C., while the infant Samuel has passed into discreet oblivion. A similar perversity occurs in his use of names. Dr. Pessimist Anticant is not a much more subtle disguise for Carlyle than Mr. Sentiment for Dickens. Trollope himself was very proud of his sketch of the Old Bailey barrister in *Orley Farm* and other books—he is very well done, but it is difficult to believe he was called Chaff-and-Brass. Stewem and Sugar Scraps, from whom Lopez in *The Prime Minister* orders the bad dinner his unfortunate father-in-law has to pay for, recalls the humour of the backcloth in a pantomime, and if Mrs. Montacute Jones had had a shooting in Scotland called Killancodlem, I think she would have changed the name. Labelling a coachman Hayanotes, and a tailor Kneefit, does not matter so much, but Mr.

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Quiverful, the poor clergyman with a large family, is an important character in *Barchester Towers*. As Mr. Henry James says in his admirable paper on Trollope : " We can believe in the name, we can believe in the children, but we cannot manage the combination." It would provoke an interesting literary competition to offer a prize for the worst name in Trollope, but Killagent for the manager of an Irish estate ought very nearly to win. The plain fact is that he had no feelings for names. Even when he borrows one, " Cinqbars," from Thackeray, he spells it wrong. The name of suggestion he undoubtedly copies from Thackeray, who is very fond of that device, and uses it with great skill, but Thackeray never makes the mistake of allowing his names to become grotesque. Even in his burlesques they are plausible. He could not have called a solicitor Bideawhile. This failing may perhaps be explained by a certain limitation in his humour. Trollope had very little sense of broad comedy. The fun of Dickens, he admits, made no appeal to him, and although he has rather a weakness for his own efforts in that direction, they have one fatal defect—they do not amuse. No one had a better sense of humour than Trollope, or employed it with more effect. Mellow and tolerant, it pervades all his work, but low comedy was not within his compass.

One is not surprised to hear he had a great admiration for Jane Austen. Although he worked on a broader canvas they had much in common. It is the difference between a water-colour drawing and the broader brushwork of, the stronger medium. But at his best there was a real vein of genius in the man. The truth about Trollope was, he was a man of

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genius who mistook himself for a craftsman ; an artist who insisted on being a tradesman. He strikes one as largely unconscious of his own powers, and as to his genius, regarding its possession (rather as the unfortunate people who were possessed of devils) as a troublesome affair which had to be kept well in hand. His greatest gift as a novelist was his meticulous realism. No writer ever produced more exactly the life and habits of the well-to-do classes of his day. With his humbler folk he was not so successful. His ladies and gentlemen talk and act exactly as such people would. Even when he places them in unusual positions they never let you down. In *Orley Farm*, Lady Mason for certain reasons forges a codicil to a will. As she is a charming woman the situation is a bold one ; yet it is so treated and developed that we feel as we read that not only it might have happened, but that if it did it could only have happened in that particular way and with precisely the results that follow.

His stories are mostly devoid of plot or incident. Yet they are curiously engrossing. The people are so alive and so interestingly human that the desire to know what is going to happen next becomes imperative. It was not merely in compliment that Thackeray wrote to him: " There was quite an excitement in my family one evening when Paterfamilias (who goes to sleep on a novel almost always when he tries it after dinner) came upstairs into the drawing-room wide awake and calling for the second volume of *The Three Clerks*" In *Barchester Towers* the main interest is the revolt of the Bishop against Mrs. Proudie, and yet how it holds the reader! The story of *The Last Chronicle of Barset* depends solely on whether or not

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an elderly and impecunious clergyman stole a cheque. In many hands it would have been a tedious affair, yet it is almost impossible to put the book down till Mr. Crawley is absolved, and one learns the explanation with a sensible feeling of relief. Trollope considered this his best novel: it is certainly the most remarkable instance of the author at his best and worst. The two chapters where Archdeacon Grantley goes to interview Grace Crawley about her marriage to the son and afterwards tells his wife and discusses the Plumstead foxes with Henry could hardly be 'better, but the Lily Dale and Johnny Eames incidents are not so good, and the Conway Dalrymple, Dobbs Braughtons, and Van Sievers very much worse. This part of the book is only introduced as relief to the clerical passages—a relief that only the modesty of the author could have thought necessary. Whether a dissenting conventicle is or is not built outside the vicar's gate would not seem a promising subject for a novel, but you are made to feel what it meant to the Vicar of Bullhampton and to share his relief when the disaster is averted.

In *The Warden* you are asked whether Mr. Harding is justified in drawing his salary for an office which is alleged to be a sinecure. The insight and delicacy with which Trollope deals with the matter is amazing, all the more so when one considers the robust and almost aggressive common sense of the man, but deep down in his soul there was an innate delicacy of thought which few writers have reached, and which gives their peculiar charm to his studies of English women. They are not merely charming women, but they are charmingly English—from Lily Dale to Lady Glencora,

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friends one is glad not only to make but to keep. Nor is his understanding of the sex confined to the virtues. Lady Euston, who lost her diamonds, is an excellent minx. And what a wonderful picture of the masterful old maid is Miss Stansbury in *He Knew He was Right*.

Trollope, the essentially Victorian novelist, would seem to have little in common with Mr. Bernard Shaw, yet he anticipated him in recognising that man is at the mercy of woman. All through his books she stands out, in 'spite of her subsidiary setting, the superman. His favourite situation is her victim driven to behaving badly in self-defence, the only and inevitable way out, as the butler explained to the young man in *Fanny's First Play*. The truth is, in these questions of sex it is often a choice of evils—the man being a reasonable animal chooses the less, the woman, irrational, resents his rejecting the greater. He had a real understanding of the sex. How subtle his observation: "There is nothing a woman won't forgive a man when he is weaker than herself." He realised how lawless women are at heart. Lady Mason feels that she is unjustly treated by her husband's will. She forges a codicil to put the matter right. In spite of her trial and trials, one feels she would do it again if the occasion arose.

The Barsetshire stories are without doubt his best work. In these six distinct stories, with the same characters acting and reacting on each other in the same mellow setting, the genius of the author makes every reader feel with him: "To me Barset has been a real county, and its city a real city, and the spires and towers have been before my eyes, and the voices

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of the people are known to my ears, and the pavement of the city ways is familiar to my footsteps."

The political novels had a considerable success, but compared with the others they strike one as rather wooden. *Can You Forgive Her?*—the first of the series—is not a good novel. The contest between the "wild man" and the "worthy man" is repeated in three stories, and becomes monotonous, and the melodrama of George Vavasor does not ring very true, nor does one see why Alice requires forgiveness at all, but one would forgive her much more—indeed, 'almost anything—for introducing us to Lady Glencora, the best of all his women and one of the most delightful in fiction. But to be a jilt was a terrible affair in those days. It is a word now forgotten. That which it described has become a virtue rather than a fault; of all the Victorian conventions perhaps the oddest, and one that had little respect from Trollope himself. The condemnation came mainly from women, their view apparently being that having once secured a man, to let him go was an act of treachery to the sex, a species of black-legging. The charm of Phineas Finn one has to take rather on trust. Why all the women fall in love with him is not made too clear. He is a sad philanderer at best, a sort of respectable *bel ami* and in spite of her name and Mr. Frederic Harrison, he is very fortunate in securing Madame tGoesler as his second wife. If the Duke of Omnium becomes at times a trifle wearisome with his decimal coinage, Lady Glencora improves as the duchess. It is Difficult to forgive the author for killing her in *The Duke's Children*. There was no impatient member of the *Athenaum* to suggest her

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demise. No one could be tired of her, and the book would have been all the better for her survival. Trollope shows great ingenuity in managing the scenes in the House of Commons without introducing real persons, but it is somewhat at the expense of life and colour, and the fact that the measures discussed and the crises that occur have no relation to history rob the picture of the reality which his method requires. If you turn to Disraeli you feel the difference at once, although Trollope would have resented bitterly the comparison. "In the lower House, *Don Juan* may perhaps be our model; in the Upper House, *Paradise Lost*" tells us more about both than all Trollope's volumes. But the books are full of excellent reading, and the hunting scenes could hardly be better.

The "Bear Garden Club" might have started yesterday, and Quintus Slide of the *People's Banner* is an amazingly intelligent anticipation of the modern journalist. "It was a rule of life with Mr. Quintus Slide to persecute an enemy." It will be remembered that Phineas Finn for various reasons had incurred his enmity. When the murder case is pending, Quintus writes "various short articles with the view of showing how improper it would be should a newspaper express any opinion of the guilt or innocence of a suspected person while under trial: and he gave two or three severe blows to contemporaries for having sinned in the matter, but"—and here is the real modern touch—"in all these articles he had contrived to insinuate that the Member for Tankerville would, as a matter of course, be dealt with by the hands of justice, and he had been very careful to recapitulate all the circumstances which had inclined Finn to hate the murdered

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man." His leading article on Finn's re-election to Parliament after the acquittal is a masterpiece. While pointing out that during the trial they had always tried "to allay the feeling against Mr. Finn with which the public mind was then imbued, not only by the facts of the murder, but also by the previous conduct of that gentleman," it protests with great dignity "against the employment of an unfit person in the service of his country—simply because he has not committed a murder." It's the gutter Press of the day to the life. Poor Quintus lived too soon. A few more years and he could hardly have missed a peerage.

His lawyers are always good, and his trials have the real atmosphere of the courts, although he makes sad blunders in procedure. The trial of Lady Mason for perjury is a terrible muddle. Criminal proceedings are confused with civil, the junior counsel opens the pleadings in a prosecution ; counsel take it in turn to cross-examine ; Furnival, the leader for the defence, violates professional etiquette by expressing his personal belief in his client's innocence. This Trollope apparently thought was the usual practice, as he lectures the Bar solemnly on its iniquity. Lady Mason sits, not in the dock, but amongst her friends. Still, despite these mistakes, the trial as a whole is well told.

Just as he knew the minx as well as the lady, so his cads ring true—Crosbie and Lopez are unfortunately still with us—and he is especially happy with the well-born *mauvais sujet*, reformed or otherwise, the Mungo Fitzgeralds and Lord Chilterns, for whom he had rather a soft spot in his heart. In so indefatigable a worker it is pleasant to find a certain sympathy for this feeling that a gentleman has a right to enjoy himself

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if he likes, and that no one need work more than necessity requires. In the *Phineas Redux* there is an excellent illustration of Trollope's methods. When Phineas Finn is arrested on a charge of murder, he is wearing the same shirt he had worn on the night before the crime with his evening dress. The police make him change this in order to see whether there is any trace of blood upon it. The humiliation of this episode to Phineas Finn is described. No one but Trollope would have thought of an incident so trivial and yet so convincing. It is almost a touch worthy of Defoe himself.

But full of good matter as they are, the political novels have not the same sense of intimate actuality as the Barsetshire series. How he managed to create this clerical life is one of the greatest puzzles in literature. There was nothing clerical about Trollope. He had no ecclesiastical connection. As far as one knows he never went to church. His hatred of sermons was ferocious and irrepressible ; it bubbles over in all his novels. One fears his personal view of such matters was rather that of Sir Marmaduke Rowley in *He Knew He was Right*, who " manifestly looked upon church as a thing notoriously disagreeable." Yet there it is : apparently all evolved from his inner consciousness. The original inspiration is said to have come from a visit to the Cathedral Close at Salisbury when he was engaged upon Post Office work. If he had opened and read all the Close's letters the thing could not have been better done. *The Three Clerks* is more or less a reproduction of his early experience in the Post Office. His admirable stories, *The Small House at Allington*, *Dr. Thorne*, and the

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Bertrams, are all the result of his experience of country life, but that special insight into a class apart has never been explained, and can only be explained by the intuition of genius.

There is another distinction Trollope can claim. No books were ever more English. No author ever gave more exact expression of the English temperament, its sanity, its good humour, its limitations. He even does justice to its prejudices, its obstinacy, and its sense of a grievance. *He Knew He was Right* is a prolonged tragedy of mutual misunderstanding between husband and wife, in which neither is wholly wrong, and neither will give way. His men and women are not as a rule great romantics, though Lily Dale did refuse to marry Johnny Eames. The man attracted or distracted by two and even three women is his favourite theme, while his women are apt to prefer "the wild man" to "the worthy man," as he puts it in *Can You Forgive Her?* and find out their mistake in the last volume. "For the girl who has made a shirt for the man she loves, there comes a moment in the last stitch of it, sweeter than any that stars, haycocks, poetry, and superlative epithets have produced," is a characteristic passage.

His books are a real handbook to English life and character. Any one who wants to know what English men and women were and looked like, what they thought and what they did in the Victorian era, should turn to his agreeable pages. This is perhaps why he is so popular in America, where that interest—friendly or unfriendly, as the case may be—never varies. The best appreciation of his works was written by Henry James. Nathaniel Hawthorne, as

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Trollope records with pride, wrote of the novels : " They precisely suit my taste—solid and substantial, written on the strength of beef and through the inspiration of ale, and just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case with all its inhabitants going about their daily business and not suspecting they were being made a show of." Substituting England for the earth, the criticism would be almost perfect, for as Hawthorne goes on to say : " These books are just as English as a beefsteak," and to-day Mrs. Wharton makes the heroine of *Xingu* confound the New York highbrows by confessing she had been absorbed in a novel of Trollope's.

Trollope himself was just as English as his books, but in a different way—he was what used to be called a character. Choleric, tempestuous, but essentially an honest, kindly nature, and, above all things, human. There are few passages more pathetic than his account of that miserable childhood, which is so often the price of literary success ; miserable, not so much for its actual physical suffering, but for the absence of sympathy and affection for which his nature craved, and as we continue his autobiography we read with almost delight, as of the success of a personal friend, of the social success which was never better deserved or more thoroughly enjoyed. He was so English he was incapable of understanding Lord Beaconsfield's novels. All their wit and worldly wisdom was nothing to this uncompromising Briton. " To me they have all had the same flavour of paint and unreality. In whatever te has written he has affected something which has been intended to strike his readers as uncommon and therefore grand . . . but

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the glory has been the glory of pasteboard, and the wealth has been a wealth of tinsel. The wit has been the wit of hairdressers, and the enterprise has been the, enterprise of mountebanks." He treats them with a desperate seriousness. " Vivian Grey has had probably as many followers as Jack Sheppard, and has led his followers in the same direction." We live in an age which is hard on the politician, and one may yet live to hear the Ministers of the Crown ascribing their troubles to the pernicious literature of Lord Beaconsfield. Trollope was an anti-humbu'g, and like most anti-humbug men was rather inclined to think anything beyond his personal horizon was humbug. He had read *Coningsby* and resented Sidonia. He struck him as a fantastic and absurd creature. He certainly was not the Jew that Trollope knew, so he pokes fun at the character in *Barchester Towers*. The erratic Bertie Stanhope had met in Palestine " one of the family of Sidonia, a most respectable man " who had lent him money, but was also " a wonderful prophet." Sidonia, recommended to the Stanhope family, arrives at Barchester, but is neither " uncommon nor grand." " The Jew did come. . . . He was a dirty little old man who positively refused to leave the villa till he had got a bill from the doctor on his London bankers." This was not mere malice on Trollope's part; he is convinced that this was what Sidonia, apart from the Disraeli glamour, really was. He sees him as Thackeray saw Louis XIV.—stripped of his tinsel. To him the *Coningsby* portrait was not merely absurd, but insincere.

It was perhaps due to Trollope's sincerity of outlook that there was little of the sensitiveness of the author

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about him. He did his best, and if people did not like it and said so, he did not take it much to heart. His own books he discusses with a curious detachment. On the whole, he rather under-estimates their value. This very unusual quality explains his happiness and contentment. His early troubles never soured him. Of all writers he was surely the most friendly, just as his works are the most comfortable. He lived long as a prosperous and popular figure, and enjoyed it frankly. Slightly altering his epitaph on himself as a rider, he could say without fear of contradiction of his life as a whole : I have gone through a long run to the finish, keeping a place sometimes of glory, always of credit.

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IT is not perhaps extraordinary that Charles Dickens should have failed to appreciate the special advantages of his boyhood. You can read in his *Life* by Forster, that excellent, if much traduced work, and still better in *David Copperfield*, how terribly the delicate and sensitive child felt the squalid tragedy of those early years. The disadvantages were obvious enough. Of his father we are told: "In the ease of his temper and the strictness of his means he appeared to have utterly lost, at this time, the idea of educating me at all, and to have utterly put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him in that regard whatever." Still the law of compensation is unfailing. What Dickens lost in learning he gained in knowledge, and in the garret at Chatham he made friends with the immortals. Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, and Jom Jones were his companions in a school where Humphry Clinker and the Vicar of Wakefield were the good boys, and Don Quixote, Gil Bias, and *The Arabian Nights* supplied romance, while the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and kindly Johnson's *Idler* helped to form "A Citizen of the World" after Goldsmith's own heart.

There is no such valuable training for a clever child as the books beyond his years: what is comprehended is all to the good (a child's Tom Jones is a harmless creature, as *David Copperfield* points out), and what remains piques the curiosity and challenges intelligent youth to further exploration. All education

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is in its nature a gamble—or at the best a doubtful investment; while the 3 per cents, may be the best for most of us : on the whole, to let children loose in a library is as safe a venture as any other, and occasionally develops a genius for your money.

Although Dickens complains with some bitterness of his parents :

" It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me that even after my descent into the poor little drudge that I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me—a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate and soon hurt bodily or mentally—to suggest that something might have been spared ... to place me in any common school. . . . My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar school, and going to Cambridge."

One cannot help wondering whether, if it had been Winchester and Balliol, the immortal books would have been quite as good—it is a little difficult to imagine Boz with the Oxford manner. To be a direct descendant of Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Nickleby was worth a considerable sacrifice, even if they did neglect their child's education.

" Pray, Mr. Dickens, where was your child educated ? " " Why, indeed, sir—ha, ha—he may be said to have educated himself," is said to have been his father's explanation. It certainly proved an admirable education for a budding novelist. It is curious how a neglected childhood makes for good literature, but perhaps not so curious as at first sight it seems. The mind is driven in upon itself at the most receptive time, and the lonely child is observing life and storing impressions when more fortunate children are playing nursery games or learning the multiplication table. So it was his early experiences in a solicitor's office

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which gave Dickens his singular insight into law and lawyers. ' With the introspection of genius he realises the spirit and essence of the legal world, and what must always be a source of gratification to two learned yet modest professions, with his real knowledge he rejects altogether the conventional absurdity of the second-rate novelists that the lawyer must always be the villain of their pieces. On the contrary, Sydney Carton is his most romantic hero, and Traddles, whom we leave with hints of a judgeship in the distance, not his least delightful character, while Eugene Wrayburn, although his practice was not considerable, was an undoubted barrister. Nor has the inferior branch anything to complain of. Mr. Perker, if a little unfortunate in his choice of counsel, is distinctly an agreeable personality. And we must always remember this about Perker : it is by no means clear that court work was his speciality. Mr. Pickwick met him originally as election agent for the Hon. Samuel Slumkey in the Eatanswill election, work he did admirably, but a class of work quite distinct from a litigious practice. Indeed, he as likely as not only undertook Mr. Pickwick's case on account of the personal friendship between them ; so it is unfair to blame him for not being altogether a match for those astute practitioners Messrs. Dodson and Fogg. Agnes's father, Mr. Wickfield, in spite of his sitting a trifle too long over his port, remains a gentleman all the time, even in his cups, and personally I never could refuse a certain regard for Miss Sally Brass, no mean partner in the eminent firm of Sampson and her brazen brother.

Of all writers Dickens is the most immoral in one

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particular—the irresistible appeal of some of his worst characters. Reputable people of blameless lives are to be found who frankly avow an unblushing partiality for Quilp, and I have heard a colonial bishop (who had been a head master) defend Squeers *contra mundum*.

After such schooling as he got, we are told that Dickens obtained employment with a solicitor of Gray's Inn, Mr. Edward Blackmore. "I was well acquainted," writes his employer, "with his parents, and being then in practice in Gray's Inn, they asked me if I could find employment for him. He was a bright, clever-looking youth, and I took him as a clerk." And Gray's Inn was the richer by another addition to its many literary associations. "He came to me in May, 1827, and left in November, 1828, and I have now an account book which he used to keep of petty disbursements in the office in which he charged himself with the modest salary, first of 133. 6d., and afterwards of 155. a week." Even then the future novelist was at work. "Several incidents took place in the office of which he must have been a keen observer, as I recognised some of them in his *Pickwick* and *Nickleby*"

These eighteen months gave an opportunity we may be sure he did not lose, and later on his observation of the law became general, as we are told: "After he left me I saw him at times in the Lord Chancellor's Court taking notes of cases as a reporter." In Gray's Inn he found the various grades of lawyer's clerks he describes in *Pickwick*. "The articled clerk who has paid a premium and is an attorney in perspective, who runs a tailor's bill, receives invitations to parties,

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knows a family in Gower Street and another in Tavistock Square." Then . . . "The salaried clerk who devotes the major part of his thirty shillings a week to his personal pleasure and adornment, repairs half-price to the Adelphi Theatre at least three times a week, dissipates majestically in the cider cellars afterwards, and is a dirty caricature of the fashion which expired six months ago.' There is a touch of tragedy in his description of "the middle-aged copying clerk with a large family who is always shabby and often drunk," and one sees the lad's contemporaries in "the office lads in their first surtouts, who feel a befitting contempt for boys at day schools, club as they go home at night for saveloys and porter, and think there is nothing like life."

Out of these generalities we can see emerging Mr. Guppy and young Smallweed, and that agreeable clerk of Dodson and Fogg, Mr. Jackson. The way in which he effected personal service on the Pickwickians and Sam Weller was a model of tact and efficiency in a difficult situation. Poor Guppy is not very generously treated by Dickens. The fun made of him is rather merciless. With regard to Esther Summerson, he strikes one as quite good enough for that gushing young lady, whose arch complacency is at times almost insupportable. As to the whole incident we are frankly at one with Mrs. Guppy.

[But it was while acting as a reporter that Dickens acquired that wonderful understanding of court work, in a layman almost uncanny. No author has ever reproduced so surely the atmosphere and feeling of a trial. Nor is the art merely imitative. On the contrary, it is easy to criticise minor points. His counsel

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have a bad habit of asking leading questions, and are allowed to cross-examine their own witnesses in a most unaccountable manner. But this in no way affects the truth of the picture as a whole any more than the odd way in which Mr. Fodder played the bowling of Dingley Dell detracts from one's enjoyment of the famous cricket match. There is hardly an aspect of the Law Courts that is not caught and crystallised for ever in the *cause celebre* of *Bardell v. Pickwick*.

(We all recollect that immortal description of the Bar as "presenting that famous variety of the nose and whisker for which the Bar of England is so justly famous." Owing to the dictates of fashion the whiskers have gone, but the noses are still there, perhaps a trifle more uniform than of old, but still there. What an admirable judge was Mr. Justice Starleigh ! One feels instinctively he had been through the mill—no political appointment there. His summing-up is a model of such exercises. "He read as much of his notes to the jury as he could decipher on so short a notice, and made running comments on the evidence as he went along. If Mrs. Bardell were right it was perfectly clear Mr. Pickwick was wrong, and if they thought the evidence of Mrs. Cluppins worthy of credence, they would believe it, and if they didn't, why they wouldn't"—and so on. If only some of our modern Solomons would study this model the Court of Appeal would be far less busy. That learned judge's famous ruling on hearsay has made *Bardell v. Pickwick* a leading case on the law of evidence : "We must not have what the soldier said, because it is not evidence."

In the French translation "We must not have

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what the soldier said " is preserved, but " because it is not evidence " has been omitted from the text for the simple reason that a sensible Frenchman realised at once that it was impossible to persuade his countrymen that what every one said to every one else was not only admissible but the best possible evidence in any case whatever. In the German translation the whole passage was deleted, because it was considered so unpatriotic that no reputable publisher could be found to print it.

About Serjeant Snubbin one is not so sure. He undoubtedly made a mess of Mr. Pickwick's case. While making every allowance for the fact that he seems to have been badly instructed by Perker (no counsel of experience would have cross-examined Mrs. Sanders about the baker if he had known the baker had been married since the suggested flirtation with the plaintiff), it is impossible to acquit him of serious blunders. First of all he allowed Mr. Skimpin to cross-examine his own witness in the most scandalous way. He then let an incompetent junior cross-examine the leading witness on the other side with most disastrous results. It is true he seems to have made an effective speech to the jury, " A long and very emphatic address," but the harm had been done already, and no speech, however " long " and however " emphatic," could have put the defendant's case on its legs again. One has fears for his future—at the best a county court judgeship seems indicated. But the ideal counsel is the incomparable Buzfuz, who, oddly enough, is very generally misunderstood. Buzfuz is too often regarded as a sort of legal buffoon. There is no greater error. His presentment of Mrs. Bardell's case is a model of

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what an opening speech should be. All legal students should study it with meticulous care. It is a gem of forensic oratory. A good many years ago in an important case an awkward controversy arose between opposing counsel, and one of them in the heat of combat referred to his brother as a Buzfuz, but the consequent unpleasantness was dissipated at once by the judge—a subsequent Lord Justice—pointing out that so far from the comparison being a reproach, it was, on the contrary, the very highest compliment.

So in the case of Mr. Skimpin, "a promising young man of two or three and forty." This is often regarded as an instance of the author's fun. On the contrary, it is really the true and grim tragedy of an arduous and competitive profession.

Supposing one were unable to secure the services of Serjeant Buzfuz, I think I should be inclined to send a retainer to Mr. Stryver from *The Tale of Two Cities*. The Attorney-General who prosecuted Charles Darnay had, it is true, all the ability that one would expect Li the leader of the English Bar, but law officers are not now allowed to take private practice. His opening for the Crown was a fine performance—how admirably he discounted the attacks on the spy witness : "That he (the Attorney-General) was prepared to hear some disparagement attempted of this admirable servant, but in a general way he preferred him to his (Mr. Attorney-General's) brothers and sisters, and honoured him more than his (Mr. Attorney-General's) Father and Mother." Of course no counsel ever talked like this, nor did Dickens mean you to believe that this particular one did. But it is a splendid instance of how the author at his best gets home. It conveys better than

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any pedantic accuracy the effect desired. If you were to walk down to the new Old Bailey when the next sessions fall due, you would find this being done every day by the Treasury Counsel in just the same way.

But Stryver's cross-examination is equal to the occasion: " Ever been in prison ?—Certainly not.—Never in a debtor's prison ?—Did not see what that had to do with it.—Never in a debtor's prison—come, once again—Never ?—Yes !—How many times ?—Two or three times.—Not five or six ?—Perhaps.—Of what profession ?—Gentleman." Then note what follows—how crisp, how demolishing : " Ever been kicked ?—Might have been.—Frequently ?—No.—Ever kicked downstairs ?—Decidedly not. Once received a kick on the top of a staircase and fell downstairs of his own accord.—Kicked on that occasion for cheating at dice ?—Something to that effect was said by the intoxicated liar who committed the assault, but it was not true."

* Stryver, it is clear, had plenty of material, but how well he handles it. Dickens, as we know, took Stryver from a famous advocate, Edwin James, who made a great reputation by defending Dr. Bernard on a charge of conspiracy against Napoleon III., and afterwards was disbarred for misconduct. James, like Stryver, had a devil—no less a person than the late Mr. Justice Hawkins, who was certainly as useful, if not quite so altruistic, as Sydney Carton. With Stryver to lead, his law prepared by Carton, and with him Mr. Skimpin, one could have faced the redoubtable Buzfuz himself with equanimity.

For company work and the Court of Appeal, although stress is laid on his " jury droop," the

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barrister in *Little Dorrit*, who, as far as I remember, has no name but is referred to comprehensively as "the Bar," strikes one as a safe man whose manner would have carried weight with the judges.

For criminal work the Old Bailey man who prosecuted Kit was worthy of the best traditions of that famous court. His cross-examination of Dick Swiveller and Mr. Garland was masterly. Dick Swiveller was perhaps an easy victim, but how well he disposes of Mr. Garland's evidence as to character, by eliciting the fact that he took Kit without a reference. With what vigour he attacked his case : " Being in dreadfully good spirits (for he had in the last trial very nearly procured the acquittal of a young gentleman who had had the misfortune to murder his father), he spoke up, you may be sure." But then one would insist on having Jaggars to instruct him. With any case at all to work upon, " Jaggars would do it if it was to be done." The red-eyed little Jew had all the sagacity of his race when he cried: " Oh Jaggerth, Jaggerth, Jaggerth, all otherth ith cagmaggerth, give me Jaggerth."

Don't we remember that magnificent witness who was disguised as a reputable pieman, of whom it was finely said, when inquiry was made as to what he would swear to, " Well, almost anything " ? It shows the strength of Jaggars that he felt able to reject him after he had been marched past the office window, with the disqualifying black eye " in the green stage and painted over." {Among all the endless characters created by Dickens, no one is more vivid or actual than Jaggars. A real if odd product of civilisation felt and expressed by genius,

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With regard to Dodson and Fogg it may be doubted if they were as black as the author of *Pickwick* paints them. It may be conceded that they were of the class of solicitors who nowadays generally appear in what are known technically as "running down cases," and more often for the plaintiff than the defendant. But still, even speculative work has its uses. It is often the only resource of poverty with a claim. They certainly managed Mrs. Bardell's case admirably. It may be urged against them that they imprisoned her in the Fleet because she could not pay her costs. This is not quite fair; it was a question of tactics that nearly succeeded.

Mr. Pickwick was in the Fleet because he would not pay the solicitor's costs, but also because he would not pay Mrs. Bardell's damages, £750. Dodson and Fogg, by imprisoning Mrs. Bardell, may well have hoped to get both in exchange for a few hours' imprisonment. That they did not was the fortune of war. Mrs. Bardell was too weak. Perker was too strong, and if a certain anxiety as to costs is to be used against them what firm would be safe from criticism? Nor were they without a certain magnanimity. When Mr. Pickwick lost his temper, and in their very own office described the firm as "swindlers," his language was undoubtedly actionable, yet no proceedings follow, although they had the^r ideal combination of a case that hardly admitted of a defence with a well-to-do defendant.

Tulkinghorn, of course, belongs to the other wing of the profession, but except in his appreciation of good port, remains a shadowy and unconvincing figure. There is hardly any point in that very long

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book, *Bleak House*, where he can be reconciled* to reason. What motive is there for his relentless persecution of Lady Deadlock ? Two reasons are suggested—his hobby for disentangling mysteries, and his devotion to Sir Leycester. The first does not explain his cruelty to the lady, and the second is oddly served by involving him in a scandal and breaking up his home.

, There is another branch of the law besides Chancery to which Dickens is invariably hostile, and that is the administration of summary jurisdiction. In fact he dislikes magistrates even more than Lord Chancellors. The latter he concedes on occasion may be the victims of the system, but for the former he has no mercy. In all his many books the only thing to be found in their favour is a vague and obviously despairing hope " that some day even magistrates may be taught to shake hands with common sense and justice."

One recalls Mr. Nupkins, who was a justice of the peace in Ipswich. In private life credulous and a fool—on the Bench a pompous and futile creature, although the masterly way in which he squared the case after his interview with Mr. Pickwick showed he had the root of the matter in him. It is true he belonged to that odd body, the unpaid justices, which performs its duties for nothing, and, further, being a mayor, he may have been only an *ex officio* magistrate for his year of office. But when we come to Mr. Fang, who tried *Oliver Twist*, defence is difficult. Perhaps the best thing that can be done for him is to suggest that he probably got through his list, and I dare say was popular with his clerks, whose only test of magistrates is the number of cases they can try in an hour.

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Any. one must not forget that whatever his defects of manner may have been, in fact no injustice was done, as Oliver was acquitted.

With the foibles of witnesses one would expect "Dickens to be at home. How profound the observation that" Lawyers hold there are two kinds of particularly bad witnesses, a reluctant witness and a too willing witness," among both classes of which the unhappy Winkle, was destined to figure ; while Mrs. Cluppins presents for all time the complete figure of the eternal feminine in the box, *teres atque rotunda*.

Nor can we forget the usher who summoned her under the name of Elizabeth Tuppins, whilst " another one at a little distance off demanded Elizabeth Jupkins : and a third rushed in a breathless state into King Street and screamed for Elizabeth Muffins till he was hoarse," inasmuch as he not merely did it then but has been doing precisely the same thing ever since.

• Even the camp-followers of the law are not forgotten, who, although Chancery Judges nowadays are said to arrive at an occasional conclusion, still haunt the Gothic corridors of the Law Courts. In his observation of Miss Flite and the man from Shropshire, we find the only types still lacking in the complete picture by Charles Dickens of the law and lawyers.

